

# BBB Offers Tips to Help Graduates Protect Their Money and Identity!

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**C**ongratulations to our high school and college graduates who are getting ready to start their new lives! It's a big transition that includes several important changes. Grads may be moving to a new city, finding a new place to live, or searching for a new job.

As graduates begin navigating these life changes, scammers are eager to exploit their inexperience. How can new grads avoid common scams during this time in their lives?

## Know the terms of your student loans

One of the most common ways scammers target college graduates is by offering fake loan-forgiveness opportunities. You may receive an unsolicited email, phone call, or text message stating that you can qualify for lower payments through a debt relief or debt forgiveness program. All you have to do is fill out a form and pay a fee to use the company's services. Some of these companies are real, but they pitch their services with false claims and incomplete information. Other companies are fakes, only hoping to get their hands on your personal information and money.

Understanding the ins and outs of your student loan - what kind of interest you owe, when you need to start paying (in most cases, you won't need to make a payment until six months after you've graduated), and for how long you'll be expected to make payments - will protect you from these scams. BBB offers additional [tips about student loan forgiveness](#).

## Be wary of unsolicited messages about unpaid tuition

Some con artists contact graduates or their parents, claiming some of their tuition was left unpaid and the graduate's degree will be revoked if it isn't paid immediately. Scammers may ask you to send money via wire transfer or prepaid debit cards.

Whether you are contacted by phone, email, or text message, be wary of anyone who contacts you out of the blue and demands money. Government agencies, as well as most higher education facilities, will contact you by mail. If you aren't sure if a message is legitimate, stop communicating with the individual and do some research by looking up information on the official school website or calling your school's bursar's office. Don't give in to pressure to make a decision or provide payment right away.

## Do research before accepting jobs or job interviews

Scammers may offer recent graduates high-paying, remote, and easy entry-level jobs. Con artists are skilled at drawing new grads in by promoting unrealistic wages for generally labeled job positions, such as "virtual assistant" or "customer service rep." Shortly after a very brief interview process, they may offer you the job on the spot and may ask for your personal information, including your bank account and Social Security number, claiming they need it to set up direct deposit or file taxes.

In other cases, scammers require you to pay for training or your office equipment. In yet another version, you may be "accidentally" overpaid with a fake check and asked to send back the extra funds.

If you are considering a job with a company you aren't familiar with, do some research before you complete an application or agree to an interview. Ensure the company has legitimate contact information and the position is posted on their corporate website. Scammers often steal the names of real companies for their phony job postings.

## Is that really a graduation gift? Don't accept every offer you come across.

Scammers often take advantage of graduation season by sending congratulatory messages that appear to offer free gifts, scholarships, or exclusive deals. These offers may come via email, text message, phone calls, or social media — and they can look like they're from well-known companies, universities, or even friends.

To claim it, they're asked to provide personal info or pay a shipping or processing fee. For more gifts and sweepstakes tips, see [BBB's scam study](#).

## **Moving soon? Know the signs of common moving scams**

It's likely that you'll be moving away from campus after graduating. With the amount of people moving during the spring and summer, the likelihood of falling victim to a scam increases. Common moving scams involve no-show movers after paying a deposit, being charged for more money than you were quoted, hidden extra fees, and even stolen items.

## **Watch out for rental scams**

Did you find a gorgeous apartment in a trendy neighborhood at an affordable price? Take extra caution because it could be a scam. In many cases, scammers copy the photo and description of a real property. Then, they post it online with their contact information and try to get a deposit and the first month's rent from the victim.

If you want to rent a home or apartment, find out how much other rental properties in the area cost before signing a lease. Scammers often lure victims by promising low rents, extra amenities, and a great location. It may be a scam if the price seems much better than elsewhere.

Also, be sure to see the apartment or house in person. Don't send money to someone you've never met for an apartment you haven't seen. If you can't visit an apartment or house yourself, ask someone you trust to go and confirm that it is what was advertised.

Finally, read the lease agreement documents before you sign. Don't be embarrassed to consult with friends or family members who may be more knowledgeable on the subject if you have doubts or questions.

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***Kelvin Collins is president & CEO of the Better Business Bureau serving the Fall Line Corridor, serving 77 counties in East Alabama, West Georgia, Southwest Georgia, Central Georgia, East Georgia, and Western South Carolina. This tips column is provided through the local BBB and the International Association of Better Business Bureaus (IABBB). The Better Business Bureau sets standards for ethical business behavior, monitors compliance and helps consumers identify trustworthy businesses. Questions or complaints about a specific company or charity should be referred directly to the BBB at Phone: [1-800-763-4222](tel:1-800-763-4222), Web site: [BBB.org](http://BBB.org) or E-mail: [info@centralgeorgia.bbb.org](mailto:info@centralgeorgia.bbb.org).***