

KNOW YOUR BUYER!!!

Be very cautious about offers to buy items you have posted on the internet. Unfortunately, you will likely be approached by at least one scam artist while your item is listed here; it is not uncommon for advertisers to be hit almost as soon as their ad appears on the site. The most common type of scam we see is the "overpayment" scam. Here is a sample:

My names is Linda Morris, i came across your advert on net,am highly interested in the purchase .i will like to know the cost price you are selling to me and the condition of it ,talking of payment Payment and shippment firstly payment will be informed of a Cashier Check Or Money Order wish is draw from Us Bank , that will clear fine in your bank .also i will like to know if its available for sale so that arrangement for the payment ans shippment can be made soon .however i will await to read from you with the detail in which Payment is going to mail to you?your fullname and Address Of where the payment will be mail to ,and including your # phone of where i can reach you anytime .hope to read from you soon and thanks once again for the reply.

Warmest Regards

Linda Morris

This email is typical of what our advertisers experience, not just on our website but many websites. It appears it was sent out to all advertisers on our website at the same time. The tell-tale signs are:

- The outright offer to buy with few questions asked, usually asking for a "final price"
- No concern about shipping costs, even to foreign countries; never suggest they will pick up the item themselves
- The involvement of a third party, such as a shipping agent
- Poor punctuation, spelling and grammar
- Most often, but not always, a male
- Almost never anyone from within our region; often from a foreign country, or in this case, the suggestion that the loom will be shipped to a foreign country.
- Often, a personal pitch to gain the advertiser's sympathy and/or trust.

This email does not give a clue as to what will happen next. However, from our experience we know that, should you respond positively, the next step will be to involve you in an overpayment scheme. With our advertisers, this usually involves the buyer sending a cashier's check for the price of the item plus "shipping" and sometimes other amounts for commissions, taxes, and other trumped up costs; some costs have nothing to do with the item itself. They then want the seller to deposit the check and immediately write a check for the amount of "overpayment". Of course, what happens is that the check is not good and the seller/advertiser is out the money including any overdraft charges from their bank, and the crook has the seller's money and perhaps your goods.

You are under no obligation to respond to anyone and we strongly recommend ignoring these inquiries. If you are not sure how to identify a scam, please send us the email and we will give you our opinion. Under all circumstances, screen potential buyers before agreeing to anything. Ask questions of the buyer to confirm a valid interest in and knowledge about your item. If you believe you have a valid offer, then we recommend a telephone conversation to finalize the offer and agree on how to ship or transport the item. Do not give out personal information to a complete stranger; request the buyer to give you her/his telephone number so you can make the call. If a buyer will not give you a telephone number, do not make further contact. If you are selling across international boundaries, you should consult your bank about the best method to safely transact a sale. For more information about scams in general, or this type of scam, visit Scambusters: <http://www.scambusters.org/overpayment.html>