If Your Online Love Interest Is Asking For Money, it Could Be a Scam

Reports to the FBI about scammers targeting users of online dating websites tripled between 2012 and 2016, and the Federal Trade Commission is warning people to be cautious about any online match who asks for money.

How does this scam work?
Because the nature of online dating sites, apps and chat rooms is connecting with people you’ve never met, scammers are creating fake online profiles to target people looking for romance on the internet.

The criminals begin to build a relationship, and they then try to convince victims to send them money. Sometimes, the scammers use the excuse of being in the military and being unable to get into bank accounts overseas but needing money fast.

The FTC reports the biggest sign of the scam is simply that the love interest asks for money, and he or she usually tries to rush the victim into sending it because of a supposed urgent need.

How can I protect myself?
Take it slow and talk to someone you trust. The scammers often profess their love right away, or they may pressure victims to move conversations off the dating site.

Never wire money, place money on a gift card or send cash to anyone you met online, as those methods of payment are nearly impossible to track.

What if I’m a victim?
Always report all scams and fraud to your local law enforcement agency’s non-emergency number. If you believe someone is in danger, call 911. Report all scams and financial abuse to the state attorney general, and file a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission at ftc.gov/complaint.