

Rocking the Online World Safely

How to avoid scams and shams when
buying rocks online (and in general)

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<https://www.geometricgeology.com/education/>

The internet is the new wild west

- Anyone can set up a website or an account on social media
- Websites are not reviewed or checked for accuracy by anyone
 - Social media sites run bots that screen content, but can't/don't stop garbage
- It is fairly easy to spoof email (send an email that looks official)
- Criminals are getting very sophisticated with their scams. Some even have "customer service"
- They can target you in your email, on your phone, on a website or through social media
- With how much people share online it is very easy to profile pretty much anyone
- This is made worse by information aggregator websites that pull information from public records and consolidate it in one place
 - You can look up pretty much everything about anyone and get the information for a pretty low price

FREEZE YOUR CREDIT

- Everyone should freeze their credit and only unfreeze it when you are planning to make a large purchase that requires a credit check
 - It is free to freeze and unfreeze your credit
 - Freeze it with all three major credit agencies (Experian, Equifax, TransUnion)
 - It is quick
- Freeze your children's credit, no matter how old they are
 - People are stealing children's identities and using their credit
 - Typically you don't realize it until your child tries to open an account or buy a car

My identity was stolen ~10 years ago

- My information was stolen from a hack of an insurance company
- Within weeks of getting notified, people started opening credit card accounts in my name across the country
- I filed a criminal report and got a notice put on my account stating I was a victim of identity theft. This locked my credit so I would get notified of any new activity on my account.
- It took over 3 years before people stopped trying to use my information (and countless hours on the phone with credit card companies)
- Since it is now **free** and **easy** to freeze your credit...**DO IT**

How to recognize a potential scam

- Someone is asking you to give them personal information (by phone, email or on a website)
- Someone is asking you to verify your account information
- Someone is offering you an investment opportunity
- Someone tells you they have an emergency and need you to send money
- You get a random email/text/call that they have found suspicious activity on your account
- Someone claims there is a problem with your account or payment information
- A text/email asks you to click on a link to make a payment
- A text/email says you are eligible to register for a government refund

- **All of these are asking you do give up information or money**

<https://consumer.ftc.gov/articles/how-recognize-and-avoid-phishing-scams>

How to recognize a potential scam

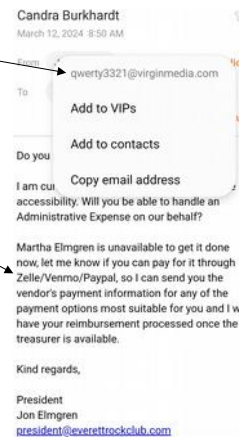
Look who the email is from.
This is a random email
address

They are looking for payment
with Zelle/Venmo/Paypal

Zelle is a person to person
transfer service. It was not
designed for business
transactions

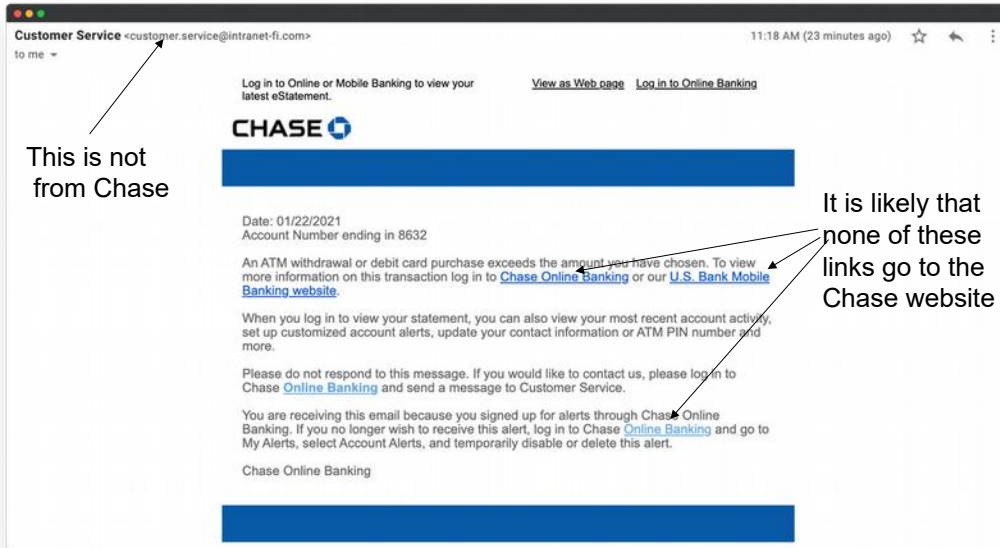
Zelle transactions cannot be
reversed

Venmo also can't be reversed,
but you can ask the user to
refund you



<https://consumer.ftc.gov/articles/how-recognize-and-avoid-phishing-scams>

How to recognize a potential scam



<https://consumer.ftc.gov/articles/how-recognize-and-avoid-phishing-scams>

How to recognize a potential scam



msusangrc9u@gmail.com
to me ▾

← This is a random email address

Why is this message in spam? You reported this message as spam from your inbox.

Report not spam

They don't say what company they are from

Dear Customer,

We hope this message reaches you in good health.

We are contacting you to alert you that as of today, your current account balance is \$86,315.

Please recognize that it is tremendously important for you to take quick action to manage these funds. There are numerous options for accessing or investing your balance.

To proceed, we urge you to visit your private account, where all the needed options and directions are ready for your ease.

To enter your personal account, simply access the link provided and log in with your credentials:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSd0A2noX5Ql2sjFinApCs1oqLDPetlpBvqLX56OyyLwKcrKLg/viewform>

This is a Google Docs Link

<https://consumer.ftc.gov/articles/how-recognize-and-avoid-phishing-scams>

What to do?

- **DO NOT** respond to any text/email that you suspect may not be legitimate
- **DO NOT** answer a call from a number you do not recognize
 - If they are someone you actually know, they can leave a message and you can call them back
- If your phone allows it, block the number
- Mark spam emails as spam
 - You can also report scams here: <https://reportfraud.ftc.gov>
- **DO NOT** click on any link that is requesting information or payment.
 - If you have an account with the company in question, **log into your account through the companies website** and check.
 - **Call the company on their official phone number** to ask if there is any problems with your account
- **DO NOT** open any attachment from someone you don't know or that you were not expecting
 - PDF, movie and image files can have embedded viruses
- If an offer seems to good to be true **IT IS**
- **DO NOT** assume someone who knows a lot about you is a friend
 - If they contact you out of the blue, block them. Do not respond.
 - If they claim they are someone you know, contact that person using another method (phone number, known email)

<https://consumer.ftc.gov/articles/how-recognize-and-avoid-phishing-scams>

What I've learned by
spending way too much
money buying rocks on
ebay!

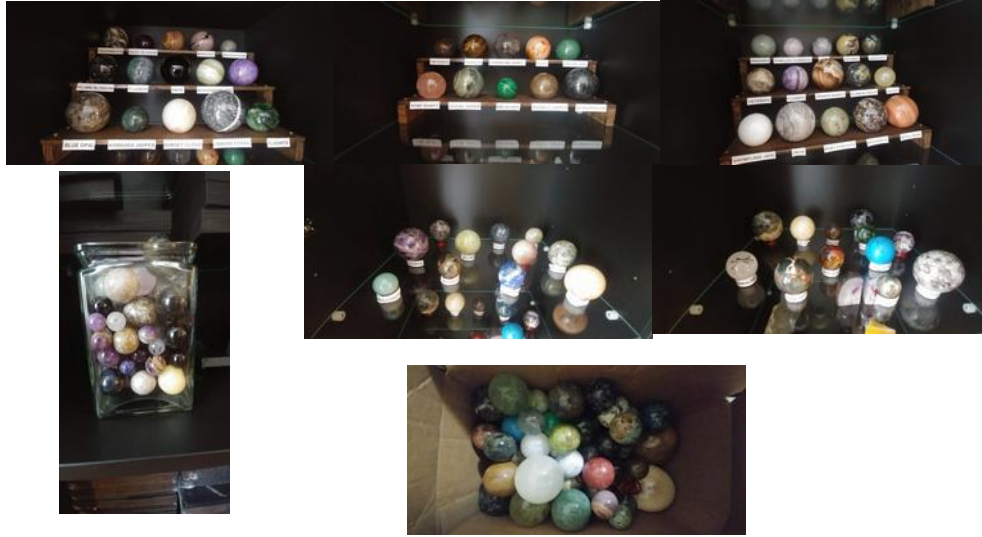
You don't always get what you want



Disclaimer

- I am not advocating for buying rocks online
- I will mostly cover purchasing on ebay
 - I do not work for ebay (but I have supported them quite a bit)
- This will mainly be focused on buying spheres, but applies to buying any type of rock or mineral online
- My qualification for this is I have purchased a lot of rock and mineral spheres on ebay

I mean a lot!





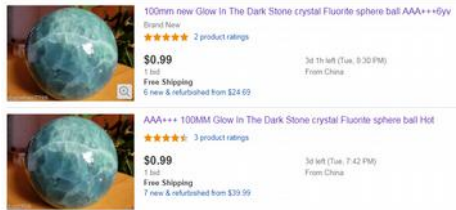
- You can get some great deals
- Anyone can sell on ebay
- Most rocks and minerals on ebay come from China
 - Starting to show up from India also
- Most Chinese sellers are individuals or small companies
 - The market is very competitive so most of them are just trying to survive
- However you do need to be careful

Things to watch for on ebay

- Duplicate posts
- Skill bidding
- Free shipping...that isn't free
- Lighting tricks in photos
- Sellers contacting you
- Seller advertising in non US \$
- Fakes
- Wrong item
- **What to do**

Duplicate Posts

wanfa888



wanmei188

- Look out for items with the same picture
- Duplicate posts often mean the item is a fake
- Can also mean you will not receive what you think you are bidding on
- Report duplicate posts

Shill Bidding

- Shill bidding is when the seller or a friend of a seller bids on their own item
- This often happens right at the end of an auction
- If you lose an auction at the last second and then minutes later get a notification that someone retracted their bid and you won = shill bidding
- ebay policy on bid retraction:
 - You can retract a bid if (Note: these options are only applicable for up to 1 hour after making the bid when the listing is ending in less than 12 hours):
 - The seller significantly changed the description of the item
 - You accidentally bid the wrong amount. For example, you meant to bid \$20, not \$200. In this case, enter the price you intended to bid as soon as you've retracted the incorrect bid

Any other bids can't be retracted, but you can still contact the seller to see if they'll agree to cancel a bid for you. Remember, the seller isn't obligated to cancel the bid so they may not agree.

Free Shipping... that isn't free

- Carefully check the amount you are paying before you click the 'buy' button
- Some sellers will advertise free shipping, but then default to paid shipping
 - The shipping charges are often very high
 - They will say it is because they assume everyone wants their item faster
 - If you contact them they will usually refund the shipping charge

What you see isn't what you get

Lighting tricks



- Sellers often take pictures under colored lighting to make the item look more colorful
- Look for color casts in the light halo
- Look for pictures taken outside in natural lighting

Sellers Contacting You

- Sometimes sellers will contact you after you win an auction
 - Offer discount if you purchase more from them
 - Offer to ship additional items for free
- Do not do this. Anything you purchase this way is not protected by ebay guarantees

Sellers Advertising in Non US \$

- Some Chinese sellers run auctions listed in Canadian dollars
 - Could be a ebay Canada listing

Fakes

- There are many fake items being sold on ebay
- What to look for:
 - Duplicate posts
 - Duplicate pictures
 - Claims that don't make sense
 - Prices way too low

Fakes – Case Study

46MM Glow In The Dark Stone crystal Fluorite sphere ball Hot + stand



Order status: Paid
Paid \$8.99 with PAYPAL on Feb 13, 2019 16:01 PST
Estimated delivery: Thu, Feb. 28 - Mon, Mar. 11
Tracking number: ES1000183615540NG01010001G0A

[View order details](#)



- Glow in the dark fluorite!
- Noticed the sphere wasn't cold
- Felt like plastic
- Scratched surface and it peeled like plastic
- Cut off piece and took it to my lab at work

“Glow in the Dark” Fluorite

- Outside is a polymer mixed with fluorescent powder
- Inside is CaF_2
 - Probably synthetic



Most Dinosaur Eggs on ebay from China are fake They sell from \$15 to hundreds of dollars

It is illegal to export dinosaur fossils from mainland
China



<http://www.thefossilforum.com/index.php?topic/69391-examples-of-commonly-faked-dino-eggs/>

But I wanted one...and I got



What to do if something goes wrong?

- First contact the seller
 - Most sellers will correct any problem
 - They are terrified of negative feedback
- If they do not respond or help, contact ebay



Be Safe Out There!