

How are your fraud-fighting skills?

Financial abuse is one of the most common forms of abuse of older persons by strangers and can consist of telemarketing scams, mail marketing scams and the phony bank examiner con.

Can you tell which statements are fact and which are fiction?

1. A person over the age of 65 is likely to be targeted by a con artist.
TRUE – Seniors are targeted by con artists because they are more often at home during the day, they may be more prone to loneliness, have more disposable income and are generally more trusting than the younger generation. The senior most likely to be targeted according to police is a widowed senior living alone.
2. A con artist can only get information on a potential victim from illegal resources.
FALSE – Marketing companies collect and sell information about consumers to legitimate companies as well as con artists. Con artists also get information from product registration cards, government statistics, telephone directories and obituaries.
3. Consumer fraud is by telephone or in person only.
FALSE – Consumer fraud can take place in person, by telephone, by mail or electronically.
4. Many people who lose money to con artists fail to report the loss to police.
TRUE – Many people may not report being scammed because they are embarrassed and feel stupid at having been conned. Some people think of the con artist as a friend and fail to report him or her out of loyalty. Sometimes people do not even realize they have been defrauded.
5. Con artists appear trustworthy, friendly and helpful.
TRUE – The old saying about catching more flies with honey than vinegar certainly applies in fraudulent situations.
6. One reason people fall for a scam is that they want to get something for nothing.
TRUE – The lure of making money or getting something for free is often too great for people to pass up.
7. Always check the identity of a person wanting to enter your house by calling the number they provide.
FALSE – Too often con artists work in teams. Calling the number they provide will only get you the team member who will assure the consumer the con artist is legitimate.
8. Con artists are always men.
FALSE – While many con artists are men, women are equally good at scamming seniors.
9. A con artist is unlikely to threaten or use physical violence if you say 'no'.
TRUE – While a con artist may pester someone to buy, he or she typically doesn't want to be noticed by police. Physical violence (or even the threat of violence) may bring the unwanted attention from the authorities and they know that a potentially easier target is just around the corner.
10. When a company gives information in writing a consumer is assured that no fraud will occur.
FALSE – Anyone with a computer can generate official looking documents designed to convince consumers a company is legitimate. Ask to see a business license and references and then check the information out with a few phone calls or site visits.