



FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION
CONSUMER INFORMATION
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Job Scams

Scammers know that finding a job can be tough. To trick people looking for honest work, scammers advertise where real employers and job placement firms do. They also make upbeat promises about your chances of employment, and virtually all of them ask you to pay them for their services before you get a job. But the promise of a job isn't the same thing as a job. If you have to pay for the promise, it's likely a scam.

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Signs of a Job Scam

Scammers advertise jobs where legitimate employers do — online, in newspapers, and even on TV and radio. Here's how to tell whether a job lead may be a scam:

You need to pay to get the job

They may say they've got a job waiting, or guarantee to place you in a job, if you just pay a fee for certification, training materials, or their expenses placing you with a company. But after you pay, the job doesn't materialize. Employers and employment firms shouldn't ask you to pay for the promise of a job.

You need to supply your credit card or bank account information

Don't give out your credit card or bank account information over the phone to a company unless you're familiar with them and have agreed to pay for something. Anyone who has your account information can use it.

The ad is for "previously undisclosed" federal government jobs

Information about available federal jobs is **free**. And all federal positions are announced to the public on usajobs.gov. Don't believe anyone who promises you a federal or postal job.

Job Placement Services

Many job placement services are legitimate. But others lie about what they'll do for you, promote outdated or fake job openings, or charge up-front fees for services that may not lead to a job. In fact, they might not even return your calls once you pay.

Before you enlist a company's help:

Check with the hiring company

If a company or organization is mentioned in an ad or interview, contact that company to find out if the company really is hiring through the service.

Get details — in writing

What's the cost, what will you get, and who pays — you or the company that hires you? What happens if the service doesn't find a job for you or any real leads? If they're reluctant to answer your questions, or give confusing answers, you should be reluctant to work with them.

Get a copy of the contract with the placement firm, and read it carefully. A legitimate company will give you time to read the contract and decide, not pressure you into signing then and there. Make sure any promises — including refund promises — are in writing. Some listing services and "consultants" write ads to sound like jobs, but that's just a marketing trick: They're really selling general information about getting a job — information you can find for free on your own.

Know whether it's job placement or job counseling

Executive or career counseling services help people with career directions and decisions. They may offer services like skills identification and self-evaluation, resume preparation, letter writing, and interview techniques, and general information about companies or organizations in a particular location or job field.

But job placement isn't guaranteed. Fees can be as high as thousands of dollars, and you often have to pay first.

The National Career Development Association (NCDA) [offers some tips on finding and choosing a career counselor](#), and explains the [different types of counselors](#) active in the field.

Check for complaints

Your [local consumer protection agency](#), [state Attorney General's Office](#), and the [Better Business Bureau](#) can tell you whether any complaints have been filed about a company. Just keep in mind that a lack of complaints doesn't mean the business is on the up-and-up. You may want to do an internet search with the name of the company and words like *review*, *scam*, or *complaint*. Look through several pages of search results. And check out articles about the company in newspapers, magazines, or online, as well.

Where to Look for Jobs

You've read the many resume and interview tips from respected sources available for free online, and scoured online job boards and newspaper classifieds. Some other places to look for leads in your job search include:

CareerOneStop

Sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor, [CareerOneStop](#) lists hundreds of thousands of jobs. It also links to employment and training programs in each state, including programs for people with disabilities, minorities, older workers, veterans, welfare recipients, and young people. For federal jobs, all open federal positions are announced to the public on [usajobs.gov](#).

State and county offices

Your state's Department of Labor may have job listings or be able to point you to local job offices that offer counseling and referrals. Local and county human resources offices provide some placement assistance, too. They can give you the names of other groups that may be helpful, such as labor unions or federally-funded vocational programs.

College career service offices

Whether it's a four-year university or community college, see what help yours can offer. If you're not a current or former student, some still may let you look at their job listings.

Your library

Ask if they can point you to information on writing a resume, interviewing, or compiling a list of companies and organizations to contact about job openings.

Report a Job Scam

If you've been targeted by a job scam, [file a complaint with the FTC](#).

For problems with an employment-service firm, contact the appropriate state licensing board (if these firms must be licensed in your state), [your state Attorney General](#), and [your local consumer protection agency](#).

To learn about credit and background checks when you're looking for a job, read [What to Know When You Look For a Job](#).

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