5 warning signs of a fake website

Be cautious when clicking on sponsored search results, social media ads, or unsolicited texts offering steep discounts, as scammers frequently use these channels to drive traffic to fake lookalike websites.

1

Suspicious website addresses

Look for misspellings, extra characters, unusual domain extensions, or URLs that imitate well-known brands.

2

Deals that seem too good to be true

Extremely low prices, unbelievable discounts, and limited-time offers designed to pressure you into buying are common scam tactics.

3

Poor website quality

Watch for spelling errors, inconsistent branding, broken links, generic product descriptions, and poorly designed pages.

4

Missing contact information

Be suspicious of websites without verifiable business addresses, telephone numbers, customer service information, or clear return policies.

5

Unusual or failed payment requests

Be cautious if credit card transactions repeatedly fail, especially if the merchant then pressures you to pay through wire transfers, gift cards, cryptocurrency, or other difficult-to-reverse methods.

Free tools to check suspicious websites

Investigate unfamiliar websites before making a purchase

SCAMADVISER

Best for assessing merchant trustworthiness

ScamAdviser evaluates websites using factors such as domain age, technical information, online reputation, and reported suspicious activity. It provides a trust score to help you assess whether an unfamiliar online merchant deserves further scrutiny.

Google Safe Browsing

Google checks whether websites have been identified as dangerous, including those associated with phishing and malware.

Best for identifying dangerous websites

VirusTotal

VirusTotal checks website addresses against numerous security vendors and threat databases, helping identify potentially malicious websites.

Best for comprehensive security checks

URLVoid

URLVoid checks websites against multiple security blocklists and provides additional domain and hosting information.

Best for website reputation checks

Remember: A safe website isn't necessarily a legitimate business. No automated checker can guarantee that an online merchant is trustworthy or will deliver what you purchase. Before buying from an unfamiliar retailer, also check independent customer reviews, verify its contact information, and research its business history.