

PRODUCT & FRAUD · CONSUMER SAFETY

Spot a Scam: Field Guide

Red flags of romance-investment scams, for anyone who uses a phone. Share it with someone you care about.

\$75B+

traced to “pig-butchering” investment scam operations worldwide, 2020–2024 (blockchain analysis).

Massively under-reported. Shame keeps people silent.

The “pig butchering” playbook

1
FINDING

Random texts, apps, professional-network messages

2
GROOMING

Daily chats, pet names, “deep” trust

3
PITCHING

Mentions crypto, shows “profits”

4
EXTRACTING

Small wins first, then pressure

5
GHOSTING

Platform freezes, scammer vanishes

The 10 red flags, in order of appearance

1
Unsolicited contact

“Hey! Is this Sarah?” or “We met at a conference?”

2
Too-perfect profile

Model photos, luxury life, vague job title

3
Quick intimacy

Pet names (“Dear”), “I trust you” within days

4
Moves off-platform fast

“Let’s chat on WhatsApp or Telegram, it’s safer”

5
Casually mentions investing

“I made \$5K this week, just a side hobby”

6
Shows “proof” of earnings

Screenshots of trading apps, withdrawal receipts

7
Promises stable daily returns

“Like a fixed deposit but 3% daily” (impossible)

8
Fishes for financial info

“Do you invest? Which bank do you use?”

9
Flattery or guilt

“You’re smarter than most” / “I thought you trusted me”

10
Guilt trips when you pause

“Why are you ignoring me? I’m trying to help you.”

The scripts, decoded

"It's like a fixed deposit"	→ Making high risk sound safe
"Stable daily return"	→ No real market does this
"You also invest, right?"	→ Checking how much you have
"I respect you, but..."	→ A guilt trip is coming
"I want to share my luck"	→ I need to meet my quota

What to do

- 1 Stop all contact.** Don't explain. Just block.
- 2 Don't send money.** No matter the story.
- 3 Screenshot everything.** Evidence helps investigators.
- 4 Report it.** To the police, your bank and the platform.

The golden rules

- 1 Slow down.** Scammers create urgency. Real opportunities wait.
- 2 Verify.** Run a reverse-image search on their photo, and search their name with "scam".
- 3 Talk.** Tell a friend. Scammers isolate you.
- 4 Trust your gut.** If it feels wrong, it is.

The bigger picture

Many scammers are trafficking victims themselves, held in compounds in Southeast Asia and elsewhere and forced to run these scams. Breaking the cycle protects you and reduces the value of victims to traffickers.

Your local reporting contacts

Fill this in now, before you need it. Reporting routes differ by country.

Police / cybercrime unit	
Bank fraud hotline	
National scam-reporting service	
Trusted contact	

Stay curious. Stay sceptical.

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Save it. Share it.

Someone you know might need it.