

'Tis the Season to Shop Smart

As you shop for gifts for the ones you love this holiday season, be aware of scammers looking to take advantage of the rush. According to MobiLoud, over 124 million Americans made an online purchase during Cyber Week in 2024, the period from Thanksgiving to Cyber Monday. Online sales during this period totaled a record \$41.1 billion. Avoid scammers' schemes during the holidays by shopping on trusted websites, using secure Wi-Fi, and being aware of nondelivery scams.

Purchase From Trusted Websites

Black Friday and Cyber Monday drive billions of dollars in sales, thanks to discounts on popular brands and products. However, scammers want to take advantage of online shoppers by creating spoofed websites, often drawing customers in with flashy price cuts. Keep these tips in mind when shopping online:

- **Buy directly from the company's website** – instead of clicking links through social media or email, enter the company's URL and shop directly.
- **Look for errors** – websites with misspellings in the URL and flashy designs are often created to fool customers and steal their information.
- **Double-check discounts** – Cyber Week brings great discounts, but if the price seems too good to be true, compare the product to market value.
- **Investigate the details** – many fake websites skip over details like an "About" page, shipping information and return policies. If the page is missing important details, consider shopping elsewhere.

Be Aware of Delivery Scams

As customers anticipate packages in the mail, scammers may send fake delivery notifications, asking consumers to provide payment information or to update their address. These attempts are deceiving due to the high influx of shoppers expecting packages in the mail during the holiday season. Avoid delivery scams by knowing these red flags:

- **You weren't expecting a package** – scammers are sending fake delivery messages via text and email in hopes that the receiver recently ordered something. Don't open the text or email and delete the message.
- **You never signed up for notifications** – if you receive an unsolicited text or email, verify by contacting the package delivery company directly. Always double-check the communication policies of the delivery service being used.
- **Requests for personal information** – package delivery companies don't need personal or payment information to make a delivery.



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