Spotting scams

Scammers call everyone, and they especially like to target seniors.

The grandparent scam

A call or text from someone claiming to be your grandchild — in trouble, begging you not to tell mom and dad, needing money fast. A real grandchild in trouble does not ask for gift cards in secret.

Fake tech support

A call out of the blue saying your computer has a virus is a scam — the pop-up is the scam itself; close it. Microsoft says it does not make unsolicited support calls — genuine support calls only happen when you contacted the company first.

Phishing texts and emails

“Your package could not be delivered” or “your account is locked” — with a link to tap. If you were not expecting it, do not tap — open the app yourself or type the address yourself.

Is that email or text real?

On iPhone (Apple Mail)

Tap the sender’s name at the top of the email. If it ends in @gmail.com or a jumble of letters instead of the company’s own name, delete it.

On Samsung (email app)

Tap the sender’s name or picture at the top, and look for the real address — usually shown just below. Same rule: a real company writes from its own domain — yourbank.com, not yourbank-security123@gmail.com.

Red flags in any message

- Urgent threats. “Locked!” “Act now!” “Your account will be closed.” Real companies do not scare you into clicking.
- Generic greetings. “Dear customer” instead of your name.
- Misspellings and odd wording. Sloppy writing is a giveaway.

Never tap links in a suspicious message. Open the real app yourself, or type the real website address yourself, instead.

Treat any text asking for your password or security code as fake. Legitimate companies generally will not text you out of the blue asking for those — and never read a code to someone who calls or texts you.

Block them — and unblock by accident

Blocking stops someone’s calls and messages from reaching you.

Block a text — iPhone

1. Open the text conversation.
2. Tap the name or number at the very top.
3. Tap Block Caller, then Block Contact.

Unblock: open Settings → Privacy & Security → Blocked Contacts. Swipe the name left and tap Unblock (or tap Edit, tap the red button beside the name, then tap Unblock).

Block a text — Samsung

1. Open Messages.
2. On the message list, touch and hold the conversation you want to block.
3. Tap Block, then tap OK.

Unblock: Open Messages, tap your profile picture or icon, then More options → Spam & blocked. Tap the number, then tap Unblock.

Older Samsung phones: on phones (Android 11 or earlier) still using the old Samsung Messages app instead of Google Messages, find blocking under Messages Settings → Block numbers and spam instead.

Block an email — Apple Mail

1. Open the email.
2. Tap the sender's name at the top.
3. Tap View Contact Card, then tap Block this Contact.

Unblock: open Settings → Privacy & Security → Blocked Contacts and remove the address.

Block an email — Gmail app

1. Open the email.
2. Tap the three dots next to the reply arrow.
3. Tap Block "sender name".

Unblock: find an earlier message from that sender (check the Spam folder if you cannot find one), open it, tap the three dots next to Reply, then tap Unblock sender.

Blocking is not reporting

Blocking only stops their messages from reaching you. It does not tell anyone the message was spam.

- Report spam on iPhone: in a text from an unknown sender, look for Report Junk under the message.
- Report spam on Samsung: open the conversation, tap the three dots, and tap Block & report spam.

The one rule that stops them all

- Hang up. Then call back on a number you know — the number on your bank card, or your grandchild's real number. Never use the number they gave you.
- Never pay with gift cards or wire transfers. Real companies and government offices do not normally ask for payment that way — be very suspicious of anyone who does.
- Never share a verification code. Those codes texted to your phone prove it is you — reading one to a caller hands them your account.
- When in doubt, stop. If something scared you or almost tricked you, do not click or pay anything — call the company on a number you already know.