

# Dear Cybernauts: Do Not Trust Anything Online, At All

Say Cordero

## BEFORE YOU READ:

1. Who and what do you put your trust in? If you're not sure you can trust someone or something, what do you do?
2. A *cybernaut* is someone who uses the internet. Are you a *cybernaut*?

## I Was a Victim

The internet is not a safe place. There are many ways to be a victim of a scam. Criminals will steal money from your bank account, run up charges on your credit card, and open utility accounts in your name. These days, learning to be safe online is as important as learning to read and write.

When I was younger, I signed up to take a course about how to trade in the stock market. I trusted the school, and I shared my personal information. I also paid for the course, and the person who I talked to disappeared with my money. He also smashed my dreams.

## I Learned from the Experience

That experience made me sad, and I felt like a fool. But it also changed me for the better. After *the storm passed*, I thought about how vulnerable we are online. I realized the starring role that online safety can (and should) play in our life. I learned to be more cautious online, to use only verified sites and browsers, to read reviews, and ask my friends and family for advice. I also learned never to share personal information online unless I am 100% sure that it is safe.

These days, online fraud is increasing. The numbers do not lie. According to the Insurance Information Institute, "The Federal Trade Commission ... took in over 5.39 million reports in 2023, of which 48 percent were for fraud and 19 percent for identity theft."<sup>1</sup>

It looks like there are millions more people besides me who have been victims of scams and fraud! This is a problem that is getting worse. We need to pay more attention to it.

## Stay Safe Online

Criminals are waiting for you to make a mistake, so they can take everything from you. **Remember: if it sounds too good to be true, then it probably is.** Here are some useful recommendations to keep you safe online:<sup>2</sup>

- Be careful with emails from people you don't know.
- Be careful with links and new websites.
- Secure your privacy; use strong passwords.
- Stay informed on the latest cyber threats, and keep your anti-virus software up to date.

By following these tips your journey online can be a nice trip, dear *cybernauts*. Technology is better when we use it safely.

Sources: 1. Facts + statistics: Identity Theft and Cybercrime: <https://www.iii.org/fact-statistic/facts-statistics-identity-theft-and-cybercrime>.  
2. Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation <https://www.fdic.gov/resources/consumers/consumer-news/2021-10.html>.

## AFTER YOU READ:

1. What happened to the author *after the storm passed*?
2. What does it mean when something is *too good to be true*?
3. Read more about security in the article on p. 37 and try the free classes listed there.

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