

CONSUMER AFFAIRS

Consumer Alerts for LATTC Students:

- [Don't send your Social Security number to an "employer" on WhatsApp. It's a scam](#)
- [Got a barcode from your utility company to make a payment? That's a scam](#)

The following are tips to keep in mind when purchasing a car:

- A dealer must tell you the offering price, which is the full price of the vehicle. The offering price must include all costs and fees EXCEPT for required government fees, like taxes and license and registration costs.
- If a dealer is quoting monthly payments, they must tell you the total amount you'll pay for the vehicle. And if they offer you a lower monthly payment, they must tell you if it will raise the total cost of the vehicle.
- You have the right to refuse any products or services that increase the price of the vehicle. Like what? Rustproofing, protective paint coatings, extended warranties, guaranteed asset protection (GAP) agreements, and wheel and tire warranties.
- A dealer can't charge you for products or services that have no benefit like
 - a duplicative warranty
 - a service contract for oil changes on an electric vehicle
 - nitrogen-filled tires that contain no more nitrogen than normally exists in the air
 - a GAP agreement that doesn't cover your vehicle or your neighborhood or other parts of your deal.

To avoid overpaying for a car:

- Read the [sales contract and financing agreement](#) carefully. Ask for a printed copy. Make sure the terms you agreed on match what's in the contract. Get answers about any extra fees you don't recognize and tell the dealer to remove any add-ons you don't want.
- Know your [total cost](#), not just the monthly payment. Get it in writing and make sure it includes all charges, including any fees or add-ons. This will help you catch extra charges and add-ons dealers may try to tack on.
- Shop around for [financing](#). Dealership financing often comes with marked-up interest rates. It's not your only option. [Start with banks, credit unions, and other financing companies](#). Get pre-approved and use that offer to negotiate with the dealer.

- The best thing to do if you're [having trouble making your home mortgage payments](#) is to contact your servicer or lender immediately. Explain your situation and see if there's a way for you to catch up on payments or modify your mortgage.
- Keep in mind that scammers demand money before you get any services. That's illegal.
- Scammers promise they can stop foreclosure or guarantee you a loan modification. But they'll take your cash and won't deliver.
- Scammers may want you to pay only by cashier's check, [wire transfer](#), or a [mobile payment app](#). Scammers like these forms of payment because it's hard to get your money back.
- Scammers may try to convince you to transfer the deed to your home to them. The deed is the legal document that proves who owns the home. If you transfer the deed, you're not likely to get it back.

The following are tips about scammers and your federal student loan:

- Scammers use official-looking names, seals, and logos to seem more legit. If you need help with your federal loans, make sure you're working with a contracted [federal student loan servicer](#) listed on the U.S. Department of Education's website.
- Scammers will want to get your Federal Student Aid account credentials. Don't share your account username and password with anyone. If a scammer gets your account credentials, they can cut you off from your loan servicer — or even steal your identity.
- You don't have to pay for help managing your student loans. Get free help managing your federal loans at [StudentAid.gov/repay](#). If your loans are private, go straight to your loan servicer for help.

The following are about credit and debt:

- If you're already behind on your bills, don't wait. Call your creditors and explain your situation before a [debt collector](#) gets involved. Try to work out a payment plan with lower, more manageable payments.
- Never pay anyone who tries to collect fees from you before they do anything to help you deal with your debt. That's illegal.
- Don't share your financial or personal information with someone who calls unexpectedly, offering to help you settle your debts. That's probably a scammer.
- Don't do business with anyone who guarantees you results from a "new government program" for a fee, or tries to enroll you without first reviewing your financial situation.

- Is there a legit reason for someone to send you to a Bitcoin ATM? The short answer is NO. Will someone from the government send you to a Bitcoin ATM? NEVER. It's a scam.
- Did you get a call or text about a suspicious purchase on Amazon? It's a scam
- Never call a number on a security pop-up warning. Pop-ups that tell you to call tech support are always scams.
- Never move or transfer your money to "protect it." Only a scammer will tell you to do that.
- Never give someone a verification code to log in to your account. Scammers want it to get into your account.
- Call your real bank, broker, or investment advisor if you're worried. And use a number you know is real.

Here's a list of things that only scammers will tell you to do:

- ***"Act now!" That's a scam.*** Scammers use pressure, so you don't have time to think. But pressuring you to act now is always a sign of a scam. It's also a reason to stop.
- ***"Only say what I tell you to say." That's a scam.*** The minute someone tells you to lie to anyone — including bank tellers or investment brokers — stop. It's a scam.
- ***"Don't trust anyone. They're in on it." That's a scam.*** Scammers want to cut you off from anyone who might slow you down.
- ***"Do [this] or you'll be arrested." That's a scam.*** Any threat like this is a lie. Nobody needs money or information to keep you out of jail, keep you from being deported, or avoid bigger fines. They're all scams.
- ***"Don't hang up." That's a scam.*** If someone wants to keep you on the phone while you go withdraw or transfer money, buy gift cards, or anything else they're asking you to do: that's a scammer. DO hang up.
- ***"Move your money to protect it" is a scam.*** Nobody legit will tell you to transfer or withdraw money from your bank or investment accounts. But scammers will.
- ***"Withdraw money and buy gold bars" is a scam.*** Always. Every time.
- ***"Withdraw cash and give it to [anyone]" is a scam.*** Doesn't matter who they say: it's a scam. Don't give it to a courier, don't deliver it anywhere, don't send it. It's a scam.

- **“Go to a Bitcoin ATM” is a scam.** Nobody legit will ever insist you get cryptocurrency of any kind. And there’s no legit reason for someone to send you to a Bitcoin ATM. It’s a scam.
- **“Buy gift cards” is a scam.** There’s never a reason to pay for anything with a gift card. And once you share the PIN numbers on the back, your money’s as good as gone.

Take these steps to avoid losing time and money to a rental listing scam.

- **Search online for the rental’s address**, plus the name of the property owner or rental company listed. Do other ads come up for the same address? Maybe with a different owner or rental company name? Those are signs of a scam.
- **Look up the rental company’s website** and check to see if the property is listed there, too. If it isn’t, the listing is likely a scam.
- **Pay by credit card**, which gives you the best protections. Scammers want you to pay in ways that make it hard to get your money back — like with [gift cards](#), [wire transfers](#), [payment apps](#) like Apple Pay, CashApp, PayPal and Zelle, or [cryptocurrency](#).
- **Don’t pay for a property you’ve never seen.** And never pay someone you’ve never met in person. If you can’t see the apartment or sign a lease before you pay, see if a friend can see it for you, or keep looking.

Maintaining a car can be expensive. If you’re considering buying a [car service contract](#), like Car Shield, do some research and remember:

- **Never agree to a contract you haven’t looked at first.** Look for exclusions that deny coverage or restrict where you can get your car serviced. Does the contract match the coverage the salesperson described to you? If not, walk away.
- **You don’t need (or want) duplicate coverage.** Check to see if your car is already covered by an existing [warranty](#). You might already have the coverage you were looking to buy.
- **Don’t rely on celebrity endorsements alone.** It’s helpful to look at reviews from a variety of sources, like trusted websites with impartial expert reviews. Also be on the lookout for [fake reviews](#).

These “Consumer Alerts” are provided by our key federal protection agency, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), by way of the LATTC Consumer Resource Center (CRC) located in the Bradley Bldg. on campus. To obtain more details about these “alerts” from the FTC, go to [ftc.gov](https://www.ftc.gov). The CRC can be reached at 213-763-5945.

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