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Facebook “Lotteries” - A Reality Check

Sorry folks – Mark Zuckerberg is not giving away money for forwarding or liking posts. He’s also not sharing his fortune. Facebook is not randomly drawing winners for \$100,000 each who are blind, veterans, or down on their luck. And, Facebook is not sponsoring a lottery, even if someone contacts you claiming to be a Facebook employee responsible for “giving away money.” It’s the internet; people lie.

They’re all scams; all of the above scams are going on today, as I am writing this article. Tomorrow it will likely switch to a different claim, but the same goal: to scam you.

Unfortunately, in the Help Center on Facebook I am seeing post after post of people who sent anywhere from \$400 to \$2,000, believing they actually won money. They never received the money and they learned the hard way. The very hard way.

If you are scammed, you authorized the payment. What that means is that you can’t get it returned. You are out this money. You will further be victimized if you fall for these scams because the scammers require your personal information, like your social security number, mother’s maiden name, and account numbers, claiming they legally must have this information for you to collect your (non-existent) winnings. You will out money and your identity will be stolen. It is that simple.

Don’t fall for these scams. Learn how to spot scam signs before they can get you. Here are some tips:

- “Send money now!” You will not be required to pay an up-front fee for a legitimate prize. All legal, legitimate lotteries take taxes out of your winnings. If asked to pay an up-front fee, it’s a scam (and totally illegal)!
- Act fast! There’s a big sense of a rush, with claims like “hurry, if you don’t act within 48 hours, you forfeit your winnings and they will go to someone else.” This is meant to fluster you and get you to act quickly; if you really did win, you will have much longer to collect your winnings. Don’t get bullied!
- Don’t discuss your prize with anyone! This is so classic to these scams; they don’t want you talking to anyone who would tell you “it’s a scam!” Real lotteries won’t care if you talk to your banker or local police officer; scammers however don’t want you to so they will claim that if you talk to anyone, you automatically forfeit the prize.
- Look it up. If you’re contacted about some type of supposed lottery or winning, check the site’s help center or FAQ page. For instance, if it’s through Facebook, visit their

Help Center. Right now there are hundreds of links and posts of people asking questions about supposed lotteries, all of which were proven fake.

- Look it up some more! Still not convinced it's a scam? Go to a browser page, like Google, and type in the supposed lottery. For example (I really typed this) "Mark Zuckerberg giving away his fortune". The first few pages that come up are "It's still not true" and "Mark Zuckerberg is not giving away millions to Facebook users."
- Never give out personal information to someone claiming you won something until you have thoroughly investigated it and know it's true.
- Be suspicious about any claim of winning something, especially large sums of money, when the claim comes to you via email or through social media, especially if you never entered a lottery. You can't win if you don't play!

For more information, contact your bank, or visit [AARP A Lotto Concerns](#) or [The Better Business Bureau](#).

About the Author

Rayleen is the CEO of RP Payments Risk Consulting Services, based in Orrick, MO. She travels the country presenting at fraud, payments and security conferences on topics ranging from Mobile, fraud, risk management, and information security. Rayleen has been writing and presenting for 9 years. Previously she worked financial crimes investigations for a community bank.