Whether you are looking for an internship opportunity, your first job post graduation or you want to make a change in your career, finding a job is not always an easy task and job scammers are very aware of this. They pose as potential employers online and use job postings to solicit personal information from unsuspecting applicants. Depending on the nature of the role, job scammers may also try to get people to either pay for their products and services, send them money, or handle illegitimate financial transactions on their behalf.

To recognize and avoid these fraudulent tactics, here are 6 points to bear in mind when looking for your next work opportunity:

1. **Pay Attention To The Source**

All job sites are prone to being targeted by scammers so checking your sources is crucial because it significantly reduces the chances of you being scammed. A good place to start your job search as a student or alumni of Simon Fraser University is on MyExperience and MyInvolvement. The opportunities posted on these sites are verified by the university. You may also use other sites like Indeed, Eluta, WorkBC or LinkedIn which are very popular, but your best bet is to always refer to the organizations official website, to ensure that the job is also posted there.

Checking the organisations website gives you the opportunity to also see other employees, locate a physical address and get contact information. If there is none provided, then its best to pass on that opportunity.

2. **A Typo Is A Sign**

Spelling and grammatical errors in a job posting should be red flags for you because job scammers often use misspelled ‘email addresses or “spoofed” names which are similar to, but do not match the organisations actual name. This makes it easier for them to deceive you into giving up your personal information. Examples of suspicious addresses include “Info@company.net” instead of “Info@company.com,” or misspelled company names like “Info@companie.com” or Info@compaany.com.¹

Another way to check for legitimacy is to search ratings, reviews and customer/client complaints on the Better Business Bureau site. It lists a lot of organisations that operate in Canada as well as in the US and Mexico.

3. **Jobs Don’t Look For You, You Look For Them**

Sometimes scammers will contact you via email or on a job site congratulating you for being selected to take a position that you did not apply for. In this case, scammers will immediately ask you for your personal information to speed up the hiring process, this is more commonly known as phishing. You should exercise great caution if an ‘employer’ finds you and more emphasis is placed on obtaining your personal details or the reward/money you will earn, rather than the nature of the job.¹

---

¹ Indeed
4. Meet In-Person

The COVID19 lockdown that we are experiencing at the moment means that most interviews at this time are happening online. However, given normal circumstances, if an employer is unable to interview you in person or insists on hiring you on the basis of your resume alone, that is a cause for concern. Trustworthy employers want to meet their potential hire at least once before offering them a job, but scammers often avoid face-to-face interviews by using chat services, Skype calls or Google hangouts while offering “work from home” positions.\(^1\) Avoid negotiating any work opportunities with a person who you cannot see or meet with before you accept the position and start working.

5. There Should Be No Job-Related Costs

Scammers try to take advantage of job seekers by including other fees and charges as part of the hiring process. For example application and training fees, background-check fees, recruiter placement fees and interview reservation fees etc. This is illegal so if you are being charged for a position, decline it and report the incident to the Canadian Anti-Fraud Center. Uniforms and job tools are legitimate expenditures that an organisation may ask you to cover, but generally they give you the equipment and then the cost is ‘deducted from your salary after you begin working.’\(^1\)

6. Say No To Advance Payments

Sometimes scammers may try to gain access to your personal information by offering you payments in advance for work you have not yet started. They may ask for your SIN number, student ID, bank account number or credit card details which puts your identity at risk. Avoid accepting any upfront payments for work you have not yet done\(^2\) Also, if you suspect that your earnings are higher or lower than the average wage for a specific position, check the current wages on PayScale and discuss them with the employer before accepting the position.\(^2\)

Common Types Of Job Scams

- Counterfeit Cheque Scam

This scam happens when someone who has posted their resume online is offered a job as a Caregiver, Administrative Assistant, Data Entry Clerk or as a Mystery Shopper.\(^3\) With these types of scams the scammer sends a counterfeit cheque with a fitting story about why they need help cashing it and when the job seeker fulfills the request and either spends money or sends cash to the fraudster, they end up losing their own money if the cheque is not valid. “Never agree to perform any financial transaction on behalf of a potential employer. This includes accepting or making wire transfers or cashing cheques sent to you in order to make purchases on someone’s behalf.”\(^1\)

Example – USA Federal Trade Commission, Car wrap scam targets college students

\(^1\) Indeed
\(^2\) Edmonton Police Department
\(^3\) Canadian Anti-Fraud Center
• **Money Laundering Or Financial Agent Scam**

In this type of scam, you may be expected to receive money from your employers ‘clients’ and send it in Bitcoin form to a company representative. This makes you a money mule and you can be arrested for money laundering especially if the money can be traced back to compromised accounts or fraud victims. Sometimes in these scams, your personal finances may not be affected but your reputation might, scammers will be ‘looking for other people to perform scam related transactions so that they don’t have to.’

Example - USA Federal Trade Commission, [What’s a money mule scam?](https://www.consumerfinance.gov/educational/materials/money-laundering-scams/)

• **Shipping Scam**

For this scam, the ‘employer’ requires an employee to reship packages, of sometimes stolen goods, from their home to a foreign address on behalf of a ‘client.’ This normally leads to the employee losing their own money through shipping costs and if the employer does pay for the work done, they will use a fake cheque that will make you liable to your bank. If the organisation asks you to declare the packages as “gifts,” you may be found guilty of falsifying government documents. Pay close attention to job descriptions that advertise remote work under the title ‘package processing assistant’ or ‘merchandise manager.’


• **Bait And Switch Scam**

When a misleading job description is used to lure prospects into an entry level position that is vague and interpreted differently at every stage of the hiring process, it is called a Bait and Switch scam. In the interview, you may discover that the job you applied for doesn’t exist and the organisation tries to interest you in a completely different position. Another way this scam could happen is that after signing the necessary contracts you may discover that a marketing or public relations role for example is focused on door to door sales instead of what is promised in the job description.

Example – Workwrite Resume, [Job Search Scams: The Bait and Switch Offer](https://www.workwriteresume.com/blog/job-search-scams-the-bait-and-switch-offer)

---

1 [The Balance Careers](https://www.thebalancescareers.com)
What To Do If You Have Been Scammed

If you find yourself in a situation where your personal details have been compromised or you identify a job scam, please do the following:

- Contact your bank and credit card companies to close the accounts.
- Change your phone number(s).
- Contact SFU Career and Volunteer Services at careers@sfu.ca if the job came from either My Experience or MyInvolvement.

Report the matter to the following organizations:

- To recover from identity theft - Privacy Commissioner of Canada and Service Canada
- To file a police report contact your local police department – Vancouver PD
- To place alerts on your SIN number - Equifax Canada and TransUnion Canada

For More Information On Identifying And Avoiding Job Scams:

- Government of Canada - Competition Bureau Information Centre
- Government of Canada - Canadian Anti-Fraud Center
- Edmonton Police Department - Online Employment Scams
- Vancouver Police Department - Preventing Fraud
- The Balance Careers - Top Job Scam Warning Signs
- PayPal - What Are Common Scams And How Do I Spot Them?
- Indeed.com - Guidelines for Safe Job Search
- CPA Canada - 3 Current Scams To Keep On Your Watch List—And Avoid

References


