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A Red Flag That You May Be Getting Scammed: They Want Payment Through a Gift Card

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Gift cards are a great way to give a gift. But did you know they are also a scammer's favorite way to steal money?

According to the FTC's new [Data Spotlight](#), more scammers are demanding payment with a gift card than ever before — a whopping 270 percent increase since 2015.

— *This article is from the Federal Trade Commission's [Consumer Information blog](#). The author, Cristina Miranda, works in the FTC Division of Consumer and Business Education.*

Gift cards are for gifts, not for payments. If someone calls with urgent news or a convincing story and then

pressures you to pay them by buying a gift card, like an iTunes or Google Play card, and then giving them the codes on the back of the card – stop. It’s a scam.

Gift cards are the number one payment method that imposters demand. They might pose as IRS officials and say you’re in trouble for not paying taxes; or a family member with an emergency; or a public utility company threatening to shut off your water; or even a service member selling something before deployment.

Or they might call with great news — you’ve won a contest or a prize! But to get it, you need to pay fees with a gift card. Scammers will say anything to get your money. And they know how to play into your fears, hopes, or sympathies.

They like gift cards because, once they’ve got the code on the back, the money is gone and almost impossible to trace.

But knowing how these scams work can help you avoid them, and you can help even more by passing on the information to people you know.

Report Scams

[Darienite.com editor's note: The first thing to do if you've been scammed is call Darien police. The non-emergency number is (203) 662-5300. The vast majority of scamming cases don't result in arrest, but you might get valuable advice that limits financial damage to you. The following advice from the Federal Trade Commission may also help authorities try to stop scammers in the future.]

If you paid a scammer with a gift card, report it as soon as possible. Call the card company and tell them the gift card was used in a scam.

Here is [contact information](#) for some of the gift card companies that scammers use most often. Then, [tell the FTC](#) about it — or any other scam — at [ftc.gov/complaint](https://www.ftc.gov/complaint). Your reports may help law enforcement agencies launch investigations that could stop imposters and other fraudsters in their tracks.

Amazon

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- Call 1 (888) 280-4331
- Learn about about Amazon gift card scams [here](#).

Google Play

- Call 1 (855) 466-4438
- Report gift card scams online [here](#).
- Learn about Google Play gift card scams [here](#).

iTunes

- Call 1 (800) 275-2273 then press “6” for other, then say “operator” to be connected to a live representative.
- Learn about iTunes gift card scams and how to report them [here](#).

Steam

- If you have a Steam account, you can report gift card scams online [here](#).
- Learn about Steam gift card scams [here](#).

MoneyPak

- Call 1 (866) 795-7969
- Report a MoneyPak card scam online [here](#).