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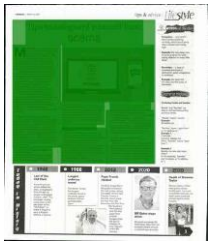
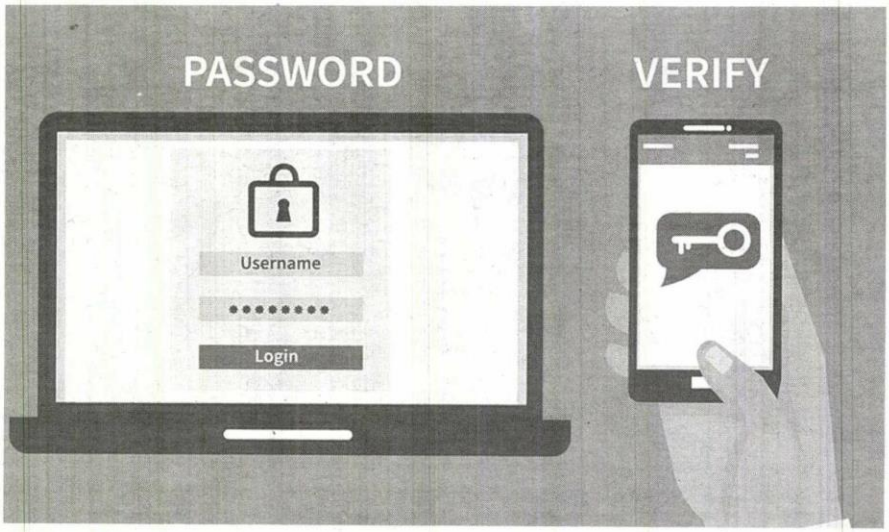


Tips to safeguard yourself from scams

MALAYSIA is seeing an increase in the number of online scams, on email, phone, messaging platforms and SMS. According to police statistics, scam cases have increased from 17,000 in 2020 to over 20,000 in 2021. Between January and July in 2022 alone, 12,092 cases were reported with losses of RM414.8 million.

Unfortunately, many people fall prey to scams as scammers use convincing messages, fake profiles, and phishing tactics to deceive their victims. They might ask for personal information such as passwords and verification codes, credit card details, or lure users into clicking on malicious links or downloading harmful attachments.

As scammers are convincing and persistent, it is important for us to remain vigilant and cautious. Here are some tips for Malaysians to stay safe from messaging scams (via SMS, messaging platforms or social media direct messages) — and to protect their friends and family.



1. Stop and think before you act

Scammers often create a false sense of urgency, tricking unsuspecting individuals into giving up sensitive information. They also use impersonation (pretending to a person or organisation you would trust) and often send fake phishing links. When you receive a text or request that looks suspicious, don't act right away. Stop and take five before you respond, think if this an unusual request, and avoid clicking suspicious links.

2. Check if the message is from an unknown person

Received a text asking for unusual information or with an odd request? Contact the organisation or person directly for clarification and, in the meantime, avoid sending any money or sharing any personal information. If the sender is not in your contact list, some messaging platforms, like WhatsApp, give you the option to block and report the sender right away to break the cycle of scams.

3. Block and Report Suspected Accounts

Reporting suspicious messages is an important step to effectively combat scams. For instance, WhatsApp provides a convenient way to report suspicious accounts. WhatsApp is end-to-end-encrypted, which means no one else, not even WhatsApp, can read the messages. It is only when you report a contact that WhatsApp receives the last five messages from the reported account, and may ban the account if it's in violation of their Terms of Service. This ensures that messaging privacy is maintained while keeping you protected from scams.

4. Turn on two-step verification

Enabling additional security measures is another great way to keep your account secure. This includes measures such as activating two-step verification on messaging platforms like WhatsApp. Two-step verification safeguards your account against phishing attacks and takeover attempts by scammers.

5. When in doubt, tap into the community

With the wide variety of scams today, it is possible that someone within your own network might have been a victim of a similar incident. An effective method to weed out scams is to seek help from communities you are active in, and not be shy about asking your family, friends or social groups.