How to avoid a bad romance

Top 10 tips for safe dating this Valentine's Day.

Online dating is as common as online shopping and is no longer a new phenomenon, having been around for around for 20 years, and increasingly identified by cybercriminals as fertile phishing ground.

Dating and risk are not two concepts that are easily married, the former associated with romance and fun, the latter with concern and negative outcomes.

Yet, the possibility of risk impacting your dating experience grows as the incidence of phishing increases constantly, with bad actors intensifying their activity around Valentine's Day.

The increased sophistication of cybercrime means that fraud now takes many different shapes, with e-mail scams, phishing, fraudulent websites and catfishing as a few examples. Educating users can help to stem the tide of incidents of successful dating scams. According to **Statista**, 22% of adults surveyed in Germany and the UK had fallen victim to online dating scams as of January 2023. This statistic rose to 25% for France and the United States.

In the UK, romance scam victims increased by more than a fifth (22%) in 2023, compared to 2022, according to new figures from **Lloyds Bank**. The average amount lost per incident was £6937 ($8847) last year, with people aged between 55 and 64 most likely to fall victim.

The importance of being risk-aware cannot be overstated, especially as cyber-criminals can now use new AI tools such as ChatGPT to enhance and automate romance scams. Bad actors are taking advantage of its capabilities to craft phishing e-mails and texts in multiple languages that are harder to detect - and created at volume.

Check out our Top 10 tips to learn how to spot a potential scammer.

1 **Question credentials.**
Check the sender's Cupid Credentials. Make sure the sender's email is legit.

2 **Beware of urgency.**
If the email declares love but demands urgent clicks, it's likely a phish. Real love can wait.

3 **Don't click yet.**
Hover over links before clicking to reveal their true destination.

4 **Human or robot.**
If the email reads like a love letter from a robot, it might be a phishing attempt.

5 **Too secretive?**
Be wary of someone who finds excuses to avoid meeting in person or show their face on a video call.

6 **Too good to be true.**
Be cautious of profiles that look too polished or model-like.

7 **Don't open attachments.**
If the email has suspicious attachments, don't open them – delete the message instead.

8 **Don't be steered off safe ground.**
Scammers will try and steer you off the safety of a legitimate dating site and onto unmonitored ground, whether email, text or phone.

9 **No personal or financial info.**
Remember, true love doesn't ask for your personal information or credit card details.

10 **Ask a friend.**
Ask the opinion of a trusted friend or family member if you feel unsure of someone's intentions or credentials.

Don't get caught by Phishy Valentine's Day scams.

Stay vigilant, keep your heart and details secure, and have a Valentine's Day free from phishy surprises.