



HOW TO PROTECT AGAINST SCAMMERS: A GUIDE FOR AUTHORS

Introduction

The Society of Authors (SoA) and the Writers' Guild of Great Britain (WGGB) are receiving a worrying number of reports about scamming attempts. The development of technologies like Artificial Intelligence means that scams are ever more sophisticated and convincing, taking various forms to appeal to the targeted category of individuals.

We all know about scams claiming to be from one's bank, or a stranger with money they want to send you. Now, for authors, this can take the form of someone giving the impression that the emailer has personally read and loved your book and has the means to influence future sales through connections, promotions, book clubs, securing glowing reviews or readers.

Scams sometimes also impersonate publishers, agents, festival organisers or even authors.

The SoA and WGGB have produced a checklist to help authors navigate and assess whether the unsolicited offers they receive are genuine, or a scam.

In this guide:

- Checklist
- Actions you can take
- Useful resources

Checklist



Assess any unsolicited offers warily and sceptically. If an offer looks too good to be true, it probably is. Experts in publicity and marketing, reputable publishers and big-name authors very rarely cold-call or cold-email people.



Consult the SoA or the WGGB. Both unions are happy to examine offers that members receive and we are (sadly) becoming adept at spotting scams. Reach out for help if you feel something is off or that you are being bullied or pressured into agreeing for services. Contact the SoA via info@societyofauthors.org and the WGGB via casework@writersguild.org.uk.



Be wary of seemingly convincing email addresses. Scammers can use email addresses that look like a genuine publisher's or agent's address, but be aware that publishers, agents or producers are highly unlikely to make spontaneous offers or try to acquire rights in books that have not been submitted to them.



Be on your guard even when there is no request for money. Just because you are not being asked for money upfront, it can still be a scam. Scammers can be patient when building trust.



Watch out for familiarity with your work. AI technology scrapes online reviews, book blurbs and directory listings which allow scammers to give the impression that the sender of the emails has read your work.








Be wary of links to fake company websites. Some scammers are using AI-generated content to create professional-looking websites, including staff profiles and testimonials. In particular, beware of what seem to be 'book club' or Amazon sites. If you cannot independently verify the organisation, it may well be a scam.







Be certain before making any commitment. Never pay money or sign a contract unless you are clear and confident about what you will receive in return, particularly if they intend to exploit your rights. Don't settle for vague promises and aspirational jargon, but only for specific undertakings.



Do not rely on glowing online reviews. Searching for a company name alone may generate results curated by the scammer's paid advertisements and potentially paid-for reviews. Similarly, reviews on review platforms such as Trustpilot can be helpful, but do be aware that positive reviews can be uploaded by scammers. Instead, search for 'is it a scam?' or 'is it legit?'

-  **Watch out for pressurising sales tactics.** 'Urgent' deadlines and upselling (i.e. suggesting that you pay more for just one extra 'benefit') can be signs of a scam.
-  **Be wary of uploading your work to third-party platforms.** Check the platform's terms and conditions to see whether you are inadvertently granting permission for the platform to exploit your rights, or to scrape your work for the purposes of training AI.
-  **Don't hit reply on emails or phone calls until you are confident they are genuine.** Scammers can change the number that appears on your screen and make the caller ID match, for example, your bank name or number.
-  **Spot phishing attempts.** Only open a link or attachment included in an email if you are absolutely sure it is from a reliable source.
-  **Check your contact details are correct.** Verify your royalty statements to ensure your publisher and agent have the correct contact details as they can also fall prey to scams. If you are expecting payment from your publisher or agent and it doesn't arrive, chase as soon as possible.

Actions you can take

-  Provide a 'contact me' form (on your website, social media, professional directory) rather than revealing your email address.
-  If you are an established author who might be impersonated by a scammer, include a clear notice on your website – and request that your agent and publisher do the same – that you never cold-call people.
-  If a scammer claims to be or cites a genuine agent or publisher, report the matter to the real agent or publisher (most big publishers and agencies have a 'report a scam / fraud' link which can be searched for online). Likewise, if you receive a flattering email from a famous author or an agent, check with the author or their agent whether the communication is genuine.
-  [Report phishing emails](#) to the UK Government and mark any suspicious emails as spam in your inbox.



Use resources such as Writer Beware and its [List of Overseas Scams](#).



Consult the SOA on info@societyofauthors.org or WGGB on casework@writersguild.org.uk if you are ever unsure whether something is a genuine communication or a scam.

Useful resources

- [Author Beware: latest scam updates - The Society of Authors](#)
- [Report It! - WGGB](#)
- [Competition or cut-price commission? - WGGB](#)
- [Fraud, tricks and scams: guidance - GOV.UK](#)
- [Citizens Advice – Report a scam](#)
- [Report Fraud](#)

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