



Neighborhood Watch Groups of Syracuse

“Buying and Selling Online Safety Tips”

Buying & Selling Online

Over the years the number of apps offering people new ways to buy and sell personal items online has increased. While these apps have been beneficial to individuals looking to buy and sell items they've also created safety concerns for local police departments. Some criminals use these apps to set up meetings so they can commit crimes such as burglaries, robberies, etc. Anytime you set up a deal with someone online you have never met before you are increasing your chances of becoming a victim of a crime. Making a plan about how, when, and where you will buy or sell your items will help ensure your transaction takes place without any concerns. Please take a few minutes to review the safety tips found in this Educational Information Sheet which can help reduce the chances you will be a victim of a crime.



Advertising Items for Sale

- When creating an ad stick to the facts and remember this is a business transaction. This is a perfect example of less is best. The information you post should only focus on the item(s) you're selling.
- Never post or share details about yourself. Sharing information such as where you live, work, children attend school, etc. could give criminals information they can use to commit a crime.
- Never give out personal information such as social security number, bank account information, etc.
- Don't use your personal email address or phone number. Create a separate email address using a free service for communication. Pre-paid cell phones are also a great idea.
- Review photos before posting them online. Photos should only show the item you're selling. Be sure photos don't include family members, street names, house numbers, or any other personal information in the background.
- When communicating with a potential buyer get as much information as possible. In the event something goes wrong during the sale this information would be valuable.

Transportable Items

- Meeting in a well-lit public location such as a coffee shop, fast food restaurant, etc. with several other people around is highly recommended. Some police stations even allow you to meet in their lobby.
- Be sure to agree on a price before meeting and only bring that amount of money with you. If possible, consider using a cashier's check for payment.

[Addition information →](#)

- Whether you are meeting in a public location or someone's home always bring at least one other person with you. This helps ensure your safety and provides you with a witness if something goes wrong. If you must meet alone be sure to tell someone where you are going, when you are leaving, and when you are expected to return.
- Never agree to meet after dark in isolated areas. If a buyer or seller asks you to meet in a dark secluded area that should be a red flag something might be wrong.
- Be sure to bring a mobile phone with you and have tracking enabled. This is very important in the event you need to call for police assistance. Calling a friend and leaving your speaker phone on just before your meeting is another good suggestion.
- If something seems odd or you just get a funny feeling listen to your instincts. It's not worth risking your health or life for a few dollars.

Non Transportable Items

- If you're selling an object that can't be transported try moving it to an area such as a garage or porch. If it can't be moved be sure to remove any items from the room that can be stolen easily. Remember, the less they see the safer you'll be.
- Never let people you don't know see the inside of your home. This can provide them with valuable information such as layout and location of items they might be interested in.
- If more than one person shows up be sure to keep them together and in sight. A common tactic criminals use to gain access to your home is for one person to distract you while the other asks to use the bathroom. If they ask, tell them it's in use by another family member.
- Ask a neighbor or friend to stay with you while showing the item you're selling. Having additional people with you reduces the chances you will be a victim of a crime.
- Limit conversations to the item being sold or purchased. Some criminals are very good at engaging you in conversation so they can solicit information which can be used later.
- If a potential buyer wants time to think that's ok. Just remember, when they return be sure to follow the same safety guidelines as the first time you met. Never Let Your Guard Down!

What if You're a Victim of a Crime?

In the event you're robbed or your items are stolen the best way to help law enforcement is to be a good witness.

- Don't put yourself in harm's way. Never chase the suspect.
- Providing as many details as possible such as: physical & clothing description, direction of travel, etc. will be very helpful to law enforcement.