

## **The Troublesome Ticket: How To Spot And Avoid A Fake**

After months of dreaming, wishing and praying; after a five-hour car ride without air conditioning and after waiting in line for what feels like a lifetime, you've finally gotten into the concert experience of a lifetime. Beaming, you step forward and hand your ticket to the security guard at the entrance. You begin to stride forward, but he stops you dead in your tracks. He can't let you into the concert because your ticket won't scan. I'm afraid to be the one to tell you this, but you've been sold a fake ticket.

In a world where almost everything can be accessed online, live performances are a valuable experience. Unfortunately, scam artists across the globe have realized this and are turning that value against people. Users on sites like Craigslist and eBay have been selling fraudulent tickets for performances and sporting events for years. Concert or sporting event tickets can cost hundreds of dollars at face value these days, and much more than that as the date of the event approaches. Scam artists have tapped into that market big-time. All they need to do is ask you to pay online or mail your payment to a private PO box, and they're almost untraceable.

So, without question, by purchasing tickets online, you're putting your wallet at tremendous risk. Shelling out hundreds of dollars for a piece of paper anyone can forge is a gamble any way you look at it, but using faulty tickets can pose other dangers as well. For example, if you pay with a personal check, an experienced con artist might attempt to use the information on it to steal your identity. Even if nothing else goes wrong with the sale, if you show up to the event with a faulty ticket, you could be arrested for trying to pass it off as real.

Given the spread of online ticket exchanges, it may seem that there's no alternative to buying tickets online. The era of the box office windows may be drawing to a close, but that doesn't mean the safety it provided has gone away. So, what can you do to protect yourself? Try these 6 handy tips.

### **1.) Do your research**

For starters, find out as much background information as you can. See if you can find out exactly what a real ticket looks like, so you can spot differences in a forged one. For sporting events, most national sanctioning organizations include holograms and other hard-to-fake pictures on their tickets. When in doubt, contact the venue.

### **2.) Spot the spec**

"Spec" tickets are being sold speculatively. These are not tickets that the seller has in his or her possession. They are tickets the seller expects to have after they come up for sale. If you see tickets for events that haven't been released by the box office yet, this is likely how they're being sold. Steer clear, as a "spec" seller is just as likely to take your money and run as they are to give you a ticket.

### **3.) Make sellers do their homework**

There are ways you can strike preemptively against fake ticket scammers. Ask for a copy of the seller's invoice, proving that the tickets have been paid for in full. This is no different than asking for a receipt to

prove the goods you're buying aren't stolen. For season ticket holders selling one event, you can also ask them for the ticket account number, which will always be printed at the top of the ticket.

Also, ask the seller why they're selling. Imagine yourself as a teacher and the seller as a child who's asking for a homework excuse. Be skeptical of reasons why the seller is missing the event. No one schedules a funeral a month in advance.

#### **4.) Deal with reputable websites**

Craigslist should be the last resort for buying tickets to events. Check reputable websites like Seatgeek, StubHub and Ticket Exchange before you dive into Craigslist. Better yet, ask your friends if they know anyone with tickets. It's always easier to deal with friends or coworkers than with anonymous strangers.

#### **5.) Trust your instincts**

Always be wary of people who are selling tickets at face value or less. Unless prohibited by state law, many people who resell tickets will do so at many times face value. Someone with a last-second conflict will still likely attempt to get at least face value for tickets to a popular event. Think like a scalper. If you saw a ticket for sale below face value, wouldn't you snap it up, knowing you could multiply your money at the event? If a deal feels too good to be true, you know what to do.

#### **6.) Manage the meet**

See if you can meet your contact in person. Aim to meet in a well-lit, public place. Many grocery stores and other large retailers offer their parking lots as safe spaces for all sorts of transactions and they would be excellent candidates for this one. As far as payment goes, cashier's check is the safest way to pay a stranger, since it contains little personally identifiable information and doesn't require the same level of trust as a personal check. With the rise of mobile payment apps like PayPal and Square, it might be wisest to pay through one of these in order to create a digital paper trail should something go wrong with the ticket. Always inspect the ticket carefully for signs of fraud before handing over any money. If the seller doesn't agree, walk away.

No matter how high-definition the video gets or how free of ads it is, it'll never compare to the thrill of being at a live performance. That being said, even a live performance is never worth giving up your account information and funds for the possibility of being arrested at the gates. Go enjoy your concert, but never stop being wary of scam artists in the digital age.

***Bonus Tip: Once you have your tickets in hand, you may be want to share your exciting news on social media sites like Facebook or Twitter. That's cool. You're excited and you should be. But also be careful not to post a picture of your ticket(s) containing all the relevant info that is unique to your purchase (such as seats and ticket serial numbers). Sophisticated scammers can replicate your ticket using that data and leave you facing a lot of questions when you try to attend the event.***

**SOURCES\*:**

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<http://consumer-law.lawyers.com/consumer-fraud/step-right-up-beware-of-ticket-scams-and-risks.html>

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