

# As Holiday Shopping Fairs Go Virtual, Scammers Cash In

By Better Business Bureau

The holiday shopping season is upon us. With the pandemic, many local in-person events, such as popup holiday markets or craft fairs, have moved online. Scammers are creating phony copycat events that charge for admission and steal your credit card information.



## How the Scam Works:

You hear that your city's annual holiday market or another shopping event will be held virtually this year. You search for it online and find a social media post or event page. Besides moving online, one other big thing is different this year. The event, which has been free in the past, is now requiring a paid ticket. You enter your credit card number and personal information, such as full name and address.

Unfortunately, the "ticket" is a scam! The event information you found was posted by scammers and not affiliated with the real holiday market. Con artists are creating fake event pages, social posts, and emails to confuse attendees into sharing their credit card information.

In another twist on this scam, some virtual holiday markets have a website or social media page where vendors can post photos of their products and links to their websites. Be careful here too! Some consumers reported to BBB that they clicked the links provided, thinking they lead to an online shop. Instead, the sites downloaded malware.

## Tips to avoid holiday event scams:

- **Is there an admission fee?** Visit the event's website to see if you need to purchase an admission ticket for the virtual event. If not, watch for scammers trying to claim otherwise. If this happens, message the event coordinator to help prevent other virtual attendees from being scammed.
- **Research vendors and the host.** If the event is unfamiliar to you, research the host and list of vendors ahead of time. While virtually browsing from booth to booth, make sure you are only clicking on the links provided. If you are unsure if a shop is legitimate do an online search for that vendor's store rather than follow the link provided.
- **Use a credit card.** When making any purchases, use your credit card. This way if anything gets charged that wasn't supposed to be, you can file a claim with your credit card company.
- **Keep your receipts.** Make note of all of your purchases and save your receipts. If you have a question about a product or need to make a return, you will have the vendor's information readily available.
- **Know the return policy.** Before making a purchase, ask the vendor what their return policy is so you will not run into issues after the holidays.