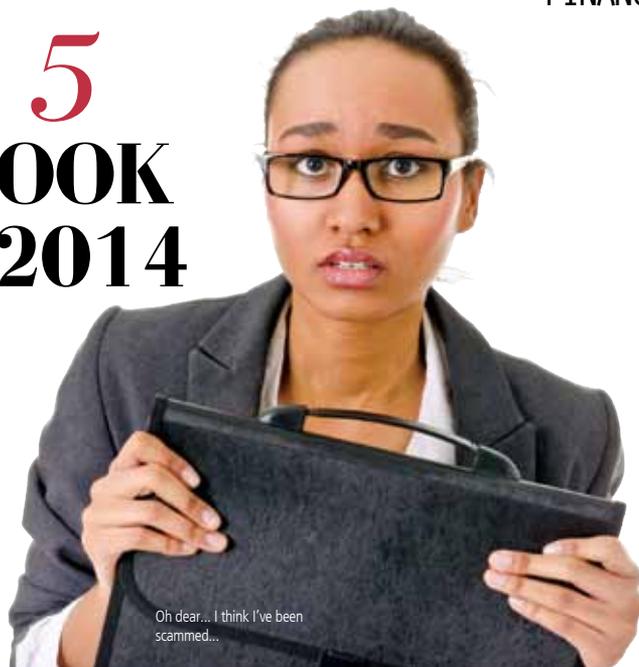


The top 5 SCAMS TO LOOK OUT FOR IN 2014

With April Fool's Day just around the corner, keep an eye out for pranks and scams a-plenty. You may have heard the one about the weight-loss water, or the launch of smell-o-vision, but have you heard about the scams that could you leave you hundreds of pounds out of pocket? No? Well read on as these are the ones that you should be on the look out for all through the year. To help you out, we spoke to the Financial Ombudsman Service – the free service that can sort out any money mishaps – for their guide on the top five scams to look out for in 2014.



SHOULDER SURFERS:

It may surprise you to learn that one of the most common ways for fraudsters to acquire your PIN is not through sophisticated techniques of card cloning but simply by watching you enter it in at an ATM or using a PIN pad. Always be wary of people standing behind you at cash points and when entering your PIN in a shop or a bar.

RUNNING A TAB:

Setting up a tab by leaving your card behind the bar is something many people do regularly – but, you shouldn't really hand over your card for safekeeping to *anyone*. Realistically, you may leave your card behind the bar in your local – but think twice before handing it over in a venue that you're not familiar with. And never let your card out of your sight on holiday. It's a sad fact that some bars are not as reputable as you'd

like to believe so if in doubt, keep the card with you. Every year the ombudsman receives a number of complaints from unfortunate holiday makers where massive bills have been run up by bars on 'the wrong side of town...'

PHISHING:

You're contacted by a high ranking diplomat who needs your help 'resting' his money in your account. Maybe you've won a lottery you've never heard of? How about a request from the "Royal National BestBanking Company" to confirm your details? Every year we're contacted by people who have lost out money through an email scam. It is very unlikely that an email request that requires you to enter personal information would be genuine. Some of the key things to look out for include the email originating from an unusual email address, or failing to address you by

your name. But these days, scam emails are far more convincing, and even make it look like they've been sent to you by friends. If in doubt, don't give your details out.

"HANG-UP - NO YOU HANG-UP:"

Most people would be wary of receiving a call from "their bank" asking them for their personal information, or claiming a card has been compromised – and the general advice is to hang-up the phone and call your bank back to check the request is genuine. But what if the fraudster on the other end, doesn't hang-up the phone? Many people have been duped by this scam into thinking they are calling their bank back when they're not – the scammer is still on the line. If you're wary of any calls, visit a local branch of your bank, or leave it a couple of hours before phoning the bank back.

ONLINE SHOPPING SCAMS:

Many of us are beating the queues these days by shopping online – and the good news is that the majority of transactions are completed with no problems. Just as you wouldn't announce your PIN number to the shop assistant, be careful when providing your personal details online. Always be wary of a seller (or buyer) who asks you to provide your bank details or complete transactions outside of the official payment channels like PayPal – as you may find you're not protected if the item you're buying, or the money for the goods you've sold, doesn't show up.

While we can't stop your nearest and dearest playing pranks on you, we hope that these tips will help you stay financially fool proof this year. If you do get stung, and you're not sure where to turn, the ombudsman could help on 0300 123 9 123 or tweet @financialombuds.