Protect Your Parents From Online Scams

Go through this together, in person or on a call where you can see their screen. Tick each box as you go.

Start here: if you only do one thing today, agree on the safe word in section 1. It's free, takes two minutes, and stops the scam that costs families the most.

1. Set up a family safe word

2 MINUTES · DO THIS FIRST

- [ ] Agree on a word or phrase only your family knows, nothing guessable from social media
- [ ] If anyone calls in "a family emergency" asking for money or gift cards, ask for the safe word before doing anything
- [ ] No safe word, or they stall? Hang up and call that family member back on a number you already have saved
- [ ] AI can clone a voice from a few seconds of audio, so "it sounded just like them" is no longer proof it was them

Guide: securelysorted.com/protect-your-parents-from-online-scams-checklist

2. Before sending money

ANY UNEXPECTED REQUEST

- [ ] Hang up and call back on a number you already have, never one the caller gives you
- [ ] Real agencies and companies don't demand gift cards, wire transfers or crypto
- [ ] Government agencies don't threaten arrest over the phone
- [ ] No real tech company cold-calls about a virus on your computer

3. Lock down the accounts

ABOUT 20 MINUTES

- [ ] Set up a password manager with family or emergency access
- [ ] Turn on two-step login for email and banking
- [ ] Give every account its own unique password
- [ ] Save recovery codes somewhere safe, not a sticky note

Guide: securelysorted.com/password-manager-for-elderly-parents

4. Protect their identity

ONE-TIME SETUP

- [ ] Freeze credit with all three bureaus: Experian, Equifax, TransUnion (free)
- [ ] Never give a Social Security number over the phone or in an email
- [ ] Check bank and card statements together once a month
- [ ] Shred mail with account numbers before the trash goes out

Guide: securelysorted.com/identity-theft-protection-explained

5. Know the pressure tactics

THE REAL WARNING SIGN

- [ ] Urgency: "act right now or something bad happens"
- [ ] Secrecy: "don't tell anyone, not even family"
- [ ] Fear: threats of arrest, deportation, or a frozen account
- [ ] If a call doesn't give you time to think, that itself is the scam

6. Keep the door open

THE ONGOING HABIT

- [ ] Agree they can always call you to check before acting on anything, no judgment
- [ ] Talk about scams you've both seen in the news, normalize the topic
- [ ] If something did happen, report it: reportfraud.ftc.gov, and the FBI's IC3.gov