

Consumer Alert: Counterfeit Coupons are Phishing Bait

Con Artists are spreading fake coupons on Facebook to steal personal and financial information from consumers. According to media reports, the latest version of this scam features a counterfeit \$75 coupon from Bed Bath & Beyond. The impact of this scam can reach far beyond the embarrassment of having a coupon refused at the store. Victims' information will likely be used for other criminal activities costing the victims time and money. Similar scams for \$75 Kohl's and \$100 Ross fake coupons have also been identified. The scam has even spread internationally with reports of fake £75 coupons surfacing in the United Kingdom.

Here's how to protect yourself:

1. If it seems too good to be true, it almost certainly is. There is no legitimate way to buy Free Product coupons on the Internet. They are almost always counterfeit or stolen. Save yourself the embarrassment of having counterfeit coupons turned down by the store or potentially facing prosecution.
2. Never provide your personal or financial information. In particular, do not provide your account numbers, passwords or security questions.
3. Verify the legitimacy of suspicious offers directly with the retailer or the manufacturer. Do not depend on the information, such as a phone number, internet address or link, found on the suspicious offer itself.
4. Beware of fake Internet addresses. Some con artists imitate legitimate ones by making small variations to them.
5. Be aware that coupons shared via social media are most likely counterfeits.

Want to learn more?

Here are some links to recent reports on this growing problem:

- ✓ Beware of the Mother's Day Facebook Scam Fake coupons could help scammers steal your personal financial information Link <http://www.consumerreports.org/scams-fraud/beware-mothers-day-facebook-scam/>
- ✓ **Yes, the \$75 Bed Bath & Beyond Mother's Day coupon on Facebook is a scam** Link: <http://myfox8.com/2017/05/02/yes-the-75-bed-bath-beyond-mothers-day-coupon-on-facebook-is-a-scam/>
- ✓ **Scam Alert: Social media ads offering fake coupons**
Link: <http://www.witn.com/content/news/Scam-Alert-Social-media-ads-offering-fake-coupons-421867953.html>

- ✓ **How you can spot fake coupons on Facebook -- and why it matters.** Link: <https://www.braddeals.com/blog/is-this-coupon-fake>
- ✓ **Lowe's warns of new Facebook scam: Fake \$50 coupons are showing up in timelines**
Link: <https://www.consumeraffairs.com/news/lowes-warns-of-new-facebook-scam-042517.html>

For more information on other social media coupon scams, please visit our consumer alert at:
<http://www.couponinformationcenter.com/media/Social-Media-Challenges-April-2017.pdf>