



LOVES AID

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FAKE PROFILES WHAT TO LOOK FOR

A visual awareness guide.

Prevent. Support. Empower.



Fake Profile Red Flags: A Visual Awareness Guide

Introduction:

This guide has been created to help you recognise common signs (before we are involved) on dating and social media profiles and in messages, especially those used by criminals and manipulative individuals. Whether you're using dating apps or social media, it's important to stay aware, trust your instincts, and understand how easily emotional and psychological manipulation can begin.

Common Language Red Flags

Watch for repeated phrases and emotionally loaded terms that criminals often use to build trust quickly:

- "Widowed" or "recently widowed"
- "God fearing" or overly religious language early on
- "Looking for serious relationship only"
- "I don't want to play games"
- "I believe in love at first sight"
- "Destiny brought us together"

These phrases are often part of the profile as well as a grooming script designed to fast-track empathy and intimacy.

Professions Often Used by Scammers

Criminals frequently claim to be in jobs that involve travel, isolation, or prestige. Be especially cautious if someone claims to be:

- Military personnel (deployed or peacekeeping missions)
- Oil rig or offshore workers
- Engineers, architects or contractors working abroad
- Pilots or captains, including with international aid agencies or military
- Surgeons or doctors, including with international aid agencies or military
- UN peacekeepers or contract consultants
- Celebrities
- Luxury goods dealers
- Widowed fathers or single parents overseas

These roles are chosen to explain why they can't meet in person, have inconsistent internet access, or need financial help.

📱 Platform Behaviour to Watch

- Moves you off the platform quickly (to WhatsApp, Telegram, Signal, Zangi etc)
 - Why? To avoid moderation, tracking, and losing a contact incase of being reported and removed. Also to pass on to a more experienced criminal after the spamming phase. Often done after the first conversation.
- Sends messages before matching (on apps with mutual opt-in)
- Sends ID documents (which are fake or stolen) and may ask for yours
- Shares explicit images early, or requests them from you
- Says they want you to "look after money" for them
- Asks for personal details quickly (address, email, job, mother's name, etc.)




🔍 Red Flags in Photos & Profiles

- Photos can look staged, filtered, or too professional
- Reverse image search shows them on stock photo sites or used in multiple profiles
- All photos might be uploaded on the same day
- Follows only or mainly one gender (usually their target)
- No tagged photos, from family members or family in friends list
- No comments or engagement from real friends or family
- Tagged photos can show an old owner of the profile
- Links to African profiles which seem outside the photo's demographic
- Profile is new or has few connections
- Uses two first names
- Check user names and links-sometimes these are mismatched when profiles are being recycled or have been hacked
- Check his/her matching profile, on posts (Facebook) can be mismatched
- Grammar and spelling can be off

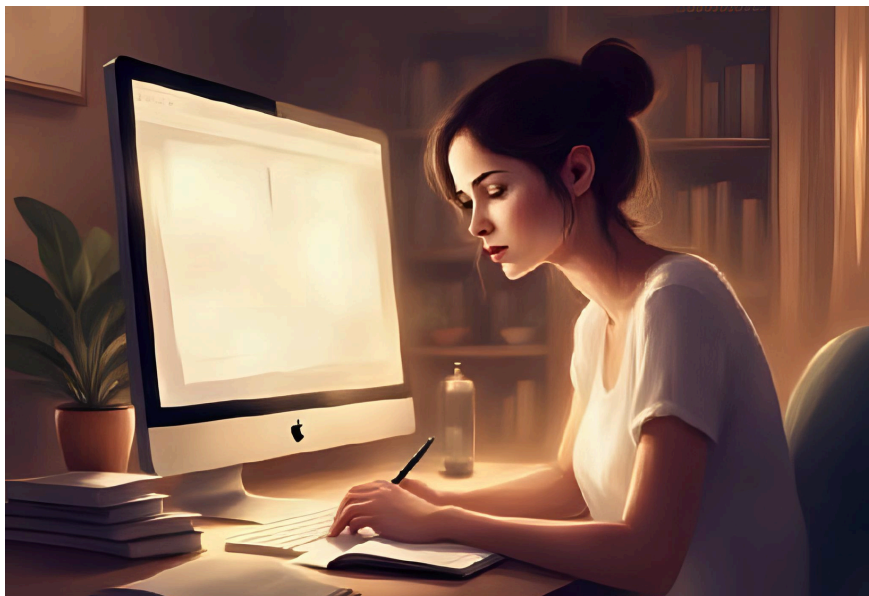
Psychological Manipulation Starts Fast

Uses grooming and love bombing to gain trust:

- Constant messages, grand declarations, fast emotional escalation
- Overwhelming you with praise, future planning, and "you're my soulmate" talk
- Creates emotional dependence before asking for anything
-  If it feels too perfect, too fast, it probably is.

Financial & Emotional Extraction Tactics

- Scammers may:
- Ask for money for:
 - Emergencies, visas, travel
 - Medical treatment for them/their child
 - Lost or stolen items
 - Investments
 - Customs/Import taxes and fees
 - Lawyer fees
 - Expenses, boarding school, nannies
 - Travel
- Request gift cards or cryptocurrency (which are hard to trace)
- Ask you to send money to someone else "on their behalf"
- They may test the waters with small requests first—then escalate.



How to Investigate:









- Reverse image search ([guide here](#)) their photos (try Google Images, Lens, Bing, Yandex, TinEye or see our guide for more extensive toolkit)
- Check profile dates, tagged photos, and friend lists-always be nosy!
- Look for inconsistencies in timeline, spelling, or grammar
- Ask questions they can't answer easily, about local places, details they should know

Reflect on Your Own Situation:

You may be more open to this type of manipulation if you are:

- Grieving, isolated, overworked, or recovering from past trauma
- Seeking connection or emotional relief
- Feeling hopeful but emotionally tired
- These are hot states, and scammers are trained to spot and exploit them.

Quick Checklist for a Suspect Profile:

-  Profile was created recently
-  Wants to move you to another app fast
-  Professes love within days
-  Asks for money or help
-  Shares overly polished or model-like photos
-  Life story sounds dramatic or tragic
-  Has no clear online presence outside the app
-  Something feels "off" or too intense too soon

Final Thought:

If you're asking, "Could this be a scam?"- pause. Listen to that voice. Talk to a friend. You deserve real love built on truth, not performance. Real love respects your pace, your boundaries, and your safety.

LET'S WORK TOGETHER

Working together with LoveSaid offers valuable opportunities for collaboration with a victim-centred organisation that prioritises empathy, safety, and recovery. By sharing best practices, insights, and resources, organisations can not only improve outcomes for victims of romance fraud but also enhance their own support services and credibility. Partnership with LoveSaid ensures that interventions are trauma-informed and ethically grounded, fostering trust and consistency across the sector. Ultimately, this kind of collaboration strengthens our collective impact in protecting and empowering those affected by online fraud.

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