

# Donating To Charities

Stay safe when donating this holiday season

## Do Your Research

To ensure your donations make a meaningful impact, it is essential to research charities before giving a donation.

The following tips will help you to make informed decisions, avoid scams, and contribute safely.

**Identify charities of interest.** Search online for causes you care about along with the terms “best charity” or “highly rated charity.” When you find a specific charity, search its name with terms like “complaint” or “scam.” If you find poor reviews, consider donating to another organization.

**Review the charity’s website.** Look for detailed information about how your donation will be used. If details are vague or missing, proceed with caution.

**Research if the charity is registered.** In some states it is required that charities and fundraisers are registered. You can check registration status with your state’s charity regulator.

**Check if the donation will be tax deductible.** If tax deductions are important to you, verify the charity’s tax-exempt status through the IRS’s Tax-Exempt Organization Search.

## Be Cautious

If you receive a call and someone is asking for a donation, ask them the following questions:

**What is the exact name, web address, and mailing address of the charity?**

Be aware that some telemarketers may use names that sound similar to reputable organizations.

**How much of my donation will go directly to the program I want to support?**

After you get an answer from the caller, try to verify the information online or by calling the organization directly.

**Are you raising money for a charity or a Political Action Committee (PAC)?**



Remember that PAC donations are not tax deductible, and funds may be used differently than for charitable purposes.

## How To Pay When You Donate

**Use trusted payment methods.** Donate only to charities you know and trust. Avoid wire transfers and gift cards, as scammers often use these untraceable methods.

**Donate by credit card or check.** After researching the charity, the safest way to give is by check or credit card.

**When donating online, make sure the webpage has “https” in the web address.** This ensures that your information is encrypted and securely transmitted. It is important to remember that encryption alone does not confirm the charity’s legitimacy.

**Beware of cryptocurrency.** If a charity is insisting you donate with cryptocurrency, it is likely a scam. Similarly, it is likely a scam if a charity says that they do not accept credit cards or checks.

## Callers Must Follow the Rules

Even if your number is on the National Do Not Call Registry, fundraising calls are permitted. To stop calls from a particular fundraiser, simply request to be added to the charity's do not call list.

**When a charity's fundraiser contacts you asking for a donation, they must abide by the following regulations:**

- There are specific times they can call you. They cannot call you before 8 a.m. or after 9 p.m.
- They must clearly disclose their name, the charity's name, and that the purpose of the call is to request a donation.
- Fundraisers are not allowed to mislead or lie about:
  - The fundraiser's relationship to the charity.
  - The charity's mission or purpose.
  - Whether donations are tax deductible.
  - How a donation will be used, including what percentage will go to charity programs.
  - If the charity has any connections or endorsements from government entities.
- Fundraisers are not permitted to use robocalls or prerecorded messages, unless you are a previous donor or charity member. Even in those cases, they must provide an opt-out option for future calls.
- The caller ID must be accurate. It is required to display the charity's or fundraiser's name, along with a contact number that you can call to be placed on the charity's do not call list.

## After You Donate

Check your financial institution and credit card statements to confirm you were charged the correct amount you agreed to donate. Review your statements monthly to make sure that you did not sign up for a recurring donation if you did not mean to.

Keep a record of all donations you make. Save all donation receipts, especially if your contributions are tax-deductible.

## Avoid Donating to A Fake Charity

When donating this holiday season, protect yourself from being a victim of charity scams by keeping the following tips in mind.

**Do not be rushed.** Scammers often pressure you to donate quickly, that way you do not have time to think it through or verify their legitimacy. Take your time to make an informed decision.

**Be cautious with caller ID.** Caller ID can be spoofed to display a local area code even if the call is not coming from locally. Scammers can also fake the caller ID information to show a recognizable organization name.

**If they are claiming you have donated before, verify it.** If a fundraiser contacts you via phone or mail and claims you have already pledged a donation, pause and verify. Scammers may falsely say that you had pledged to make a donation or have donated to them before.

**Listen carefully to the name of the charity, write it down, and then research it.** Scammers often use names that sound like other charities to mislead donors. Always do research before you donate.

**Look at the details.** Be wary of vague, emotional claims without specifics. For instance, a charity might claim that they help families who cannot afford cancer treatment, but do not go into specifics about how your donation will be used. Legitimate charities can provide clear information about their programs.

**Avoid certain payment methods.** Scammers commonly request donations by wire transfer or gift cards. Legitimate charities will never use these payment methods.

**Be skeptical of prize offers.** If you are promised a prize or contest entry in exchange for a donation, it is a scam. Your donation money will go to a scammer, and you will not win anything.