Credit Cards, Venmo, and Scams

Your No-Stress Guide to Staying Smart with Money (and Not Getting Played)

Adulting in college means managing money, mystery credit scores, and sketchy Venmo requests.

This guide helps you spend smart, stay safe, and dodge scams—like that cousin who got burned once and now trusts nothing.

Credit Cards 101 – Your Future Self Cares

Credit cards aren't bad. They're just powerful. Like fire. Use with caution.

Good stuff:

- Builds your credit score (which helps with apartments, car loans, and grown-up things)
- Helpful for emergencies
- Often includes fraud protection

Rules to live by:

- Never spend more than you can pay off that month
- Pay on time, every time
- Start with a student credit card or one with no annual fee
- Keep your credit utilization under 30% (don't max it out)

Credit cards are for building credit, not building outfits.

Venmo, Cash App, Zelle—Friend or Fraud?

Peer-to-peer apps are great - until someone ruins it.

Do:

- Double-check usernames before sending
- Set payments to private (nobody needs to see your ramen transactions)
- Use two-factor authentication
- Only send to people you actually know
- Be wary of overpayment/refund scams

Don't:

- Send money to "buyers" or "sellers" you met on Marketplace or Discord
- Trust anyone asking you to "verify" your account by sending money
- Click sketchy payment links in DMs or emails

If someone says "I'll send you money, then you send it back," just block and keep it moving.

Spot the Scam Before It Spots You

Scammers are creative—and fast.

Red flags:

- Emails or texts with weird links (even if they look like your bank or school)
- Pressure to act urgently (“Your account will be deactivated!”)
- Being asked to pay with gift cards or cryptocurrency
- Too-good-to-be-true job offers or giveaways
- “Friend” messages that feel off—check if they got hacked

Smart moves:

- Use strong passwords
- Don’t share login info, ever
- Turn on fraud alerts with your bank
- If unsure? Call the official number—not the one in the message

No real company will ask you for your password. Ever.

Build Good Habits Early

The best way to avoid money drama is to stay one step ahead.

- Check your bank account at least once a week
- Set up spending alerts to catch fraud (and your own bad habits)
- Track your subscriptions (and cancel the ones you forgot about)
- Use budgeting tools like Mint, Rocket Money, or a simple spreadsheet

If you wouldn’t loan it to someone in real life, don’t send it digitally.

Ask Questions, Always

If something feels sketchy, you don't have to figure it out alone.

- Ask a trusted adult, RA, or campus advisor
- Google it - someone else has probably posted about the same scam
- Check websites like FTC.gov or your bank's fraud center
- When in doubt, don't send money, click links, or share personal info

Asking questions now saves you a headache and a bank account later.

Last but Not Least...

Your money is your power. Protect it, grow it, and spend it wisely.

You’re smart, capable, and totally allowed to say “nah” to sketchy stuff—even if you feel awkward.

Scammers count on confusion. Confidence shuts them down.

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