

Forum:[Hack Forums](#)

Thread: [How to reduce scams by 95%. \(Everything I've learned since 2010\)](#)

HazeFazeBRO - April 23, 2015, 5:33 pm

Lately I've noticed a lot of new users, non-upgraded users, and/or low trade-rep buyers & sellers. I want to send them all advice, but I think it's better if I make a thread to act as a sort of guideline. This way instead of manually writing lots of PM's I can just copy and paste a URL.

By posting this, I've allowed you guys to do the same - and have an easy way to refer back to the guideline in case you get lost. I encourage you to share this with new users.

To some of the older more experienced users, some of this will be common sense but I'm certain you'll find at least one valuable lesson in this thread.

Anyways, enjoy. ?

Introduction: Hackforums is a great place to find spectacular bargains and build good connections. Sometimes you just need some Xbox live or a gaming account and HF is a good outlet for a variety unique products.

If you're going to be trading, buying, or selling, you need to learn how to prevent yourself from being scammed. Generally you learn from your mistakes, but by writing this guideline I hope that many of you will prevent that process altogether.

Here are some tips on how to approach all trades with the wisdom of an experienced HF user:

Making threads:

1. Know what you can and can't trade.

Write it down somewhere. If you're coming back from a long vacation away from HF, study the rules and see what's changed.

If you're an idiot like me and struggle to navigate or understand the rules, just ask in the [Marketplace Discussions](#) section.

2. Make your threads clean, concise, and attractive:

Always state your intent. Explain how you want the trade to unfold in advance.

When people are upset, it's because they placed expectations. It's your job to make those expectations for them so there's no confusion as to what's going to happen. Less expectations means that there's a smaller chance expectations can potentially fail, and as a result everyone gets to experience a happier and smoother transaction.

3. The title of your thread only needs to attract the person who;

A. who owns what you want to buy ? or B. who buys what you want to sell. If you're selling something, say an Xbox live code for example, your title should be extremely simple: "Selling 12-month Xbox live code".

If you have lots of trade rep and are upgraded, do not place the price in the title. The title has one job: Inform them of what's inside, and entice the viewer enough to click.

If you put a price too high you will scare them away and they won't look inside to see who you are or why your asking price is worth-while.

When they click your thread to see the price, they'll see that you're a L33t/Ub3r with good reputation and will be more willing to trade with you at your asking price.

4. If you're a new user with low reputation:

Your title should have a cheap price in it. By that I mean, you should sell at a cheap price. It will entice them to click and hopefully reduce their odds of being skiddish when they see you're not upgraded and that you have little trade rep, both of which are non-desirable to any potential buyer.

5. If you're a trusted upgraded user with good reputation who's selling a large quantity of an item, a program, or offering an unlimited service:

Invest in a thread design. A beautiful thread design will only cost around \$8-15 and means people will stay and read, if people stay and read they're more likely to purchase your product.

If you don't want to purchase a theme and you have Adobe Photoshop (or you torrent software), you can use the search button at the top and always find free thread design templates. Just download them, open them up in photoshop, and just change the text.

If you don't know how to use the program, have a friend do it or find a beginners tutorial. Changing text is really basic stuff, shouldn't take more than 10 minutes to learn.

6. Always know the benefits of your product and present it to your buyer.

It needs to be clean, and it needs to be easily accessible. What makes your product superior to your competition? Don't have competition? Mention that.

Are you trusted? That's a product benefit, mention that.

Is the user worth trading with?

[How to run a background check]

Before you agree to any offer, you need to know who you're about to do a transaction with. In order to be safe you need to check a number of things ideally in order.

1. Check their reputation for credible "trade rep".

Click their reputation and browse through it.

Look for reputation with words like "They went first", "Trusted", "Transaction", "Trade", "Bought", and "Sold". There's a big difference between reputation, reputation that implies trading, and credible trade reputation. Often times people have non-valuable trade reputation that says something like "Good deal". It implies that a trade took place, but there's no details. You'd have to contact the person who left the feedback to understand it and that defeats the purpose of the reputation.

It's generally too much of a hassle to contact people who left reputation because they may be frequently inactive and they often forget how they knew the user.

Look for genuine reputation with specific details.

Also keep an eye out for negative trade rep. If a user leaves reputation that sounds too bad or too good to be true, check their rep as well to see how credible they are. It doesn't matter how amazingly trustworthy a person is if the person who left the feedback is very dishonest. On bigger trades it's recommended to do 2 or 3 tier background checks by checking the feedback of the person that left your potential buyer/ seller feedback.

2. Check for any scam reports.

Click their username and go to their profile. At the top you should see their UID# (User-Identification Number) in the URL.

Copy that number. Then go to the search button at the top of the site.

Paste their UID# in the search bar. Click the box below and Press and hold M + A on your

keyboard. It should bring you directly to the Marketplace. Just below it is the deal disputes section. Click that, then press the search button.

The spoiler below has an image in case you get lost.

Spoiler ([Click to View](#))

If nothing comes up, then then do the exact same thing again but enter the persons username. Scam reports are suppose to have UID#'s in the title in case a user changes their username, but sometimes people are stupid. When searching for username check the box that says "Search entire post".

You may also consider searching for older usernames they've had if you're being very thorough for a big trade.

If nothing comes up, move onto the next step. If you find a scam report or someone mentioning that they got scammed by the person you're reviewing then view the thread(s). When reviewing scam reports observe them with beginners mind ([Shosin](#)). Eliminate all bias and previous memories involving those members from your mind. Read the entire thread and be sure to read both sides of the argument. It's generally a good rule of thumb to ignore comments from anyone who is not the alleged victim and the alleged scammer as they will only conflict with your non-bias observations.

Read all posts from the person defending themselves from the scam report and come to your own conclusion. If you believe they had scammed another person, there are still a few things you need to consider; was it just that one person? (see their trade rep)

Was it along time ago? Was the user non-upgraded? Did the person scam upgraded users?

Most people only scam non-upgraded users because they cannot leave feedback and people are less likely to believe them. They can sometimes still be trusted if you're upgraded; but only with extreme caution or transactions of small value.

3. Check their account risk.

During a transaction you will be tying a buyer or sellers HF account to the transaction. If you get scammed then their account will be permanently labelled as a scammer. For some people, such as myself, this is a big loss because the account has had lots of time and money invested into it. For others, this isn't much of a loss at all.

Go to their profile and see how old their account is, check their post count, and check their upgrade status.

If they own a really old Ub3r account with lots of donation awards and a high post count, it's going to be very unlikely that they will scam you for \$40 unless you're not upgraded. The Ub3r alone costs \$40.

Weigh the value of the HF account and compare that to the value of the trade.

Also be cautious with members who were recently revenge fucked. Sometimes they adopt a "nothing left to lose" mindset and scam other others out of spite.

All transactions should be taken as seriously as you would take the loss of getting scammed.

I shouldn't even need to say this, but If you're trading something worth \$9, it's okay to take things lightly if \$9 isn't very much to you. Be as thorough in your background checks as you are willing to lose what's on the table.

Completing a transaction:

1. Make sure it's actually them.

Often times people talk over Skype or another program. Have them send you a private message on HF to confirm the Skype username you're talking to. There are a lot of copy-cat frauds out there.

Sometimes the only change in the username will be a single period or spacing.

I highly recommend only communicating via HF. Never communicate somewhere that messages can be edited or deleted. It will destroy any credibility your scam report may have.

2. Have them state the intent of the trade.

This can also be the way that you have them identify themselves. Have the buyer or seller send you a PM of them saying exactly what is about to go down and that they agree to it. It's also not a bad idea to have them include disclaimers like "If ___ happens, you are not responsible for a refund".

Here's a state of intent to give you a general idea of what the message would look like:

"I (Seller UID#), am going to trade with (Buyer UID#). I will activate a 12 month Xbox live code on their Xbox account via Join.me. After it's successfully redeemed you will send me \$30 via Paypal to my Paypal address: (Seller Paypal Address). I confirm that this Paypal email address is correct and you are not responsible for a refund if this email address is incorrect."

This statement of intent shows that it's very clear what the transaction is going to be. They give you their correct Paypal address and they identify themselves.

Often times people see this as an extreme and scoff like "You don't trust me!? How dare you." Don't fold. This is the logical way to do a trade, and you should be very careful trading with anyone who feels like their pride is hurt because they have to do this additional step in the transaction.

3. Record your transactions.

If it's \$5 and they're very trusted, you don't really need to record but I personally record all transactions and store them away forever. Without a recording nobody can see how the trade really went down and a scam report is essentially useless.

If you don't have much hard drive space you can upload them to Youtube or use a live-streaming website that saves the videos. There are also currently lots of referral and seasonal promotion exploits for Dropbox. It's not too difficult to get a terabyte of space for a year for only \$5 via Fiverr.com or HF.

- You should especially record transactions when the trade involves something virtual that needs to be redeemed, like an Xbox live code. Imagine a scenario where you receive a code, attempt to redeem it, and it fails. You tell the buyer but he says it worked and that you are lying. When you record transactions you can send the seller the video and call-out their lie on a scam report.

Recording codes that need to be redeemed also shows payment providers like Paypal that the buyer or seller is a scammer when it comes to dispute cases.

Personally I have the other person enter in the code for me on my own computer via programs like Teamviewer or Join.me and then I record them agreeing to do it, and then doing it.

- When you record transactions, be sure to refresh the page a lot to show that it's not a temporary page modification like inspect element or firebug. Include the date shown in the top right corner of HF, some of the PM's, and proof that the person you're talking to owns the HF account they say they own.

4. Paypal

Paypal will almost never back you on trades for virtual items. If you're doing a virtual item trade it's recommended that you try to find an alternative payment service or currency; i.e. Bitcoin, Stripe...etc.

When purchasing with Paypal, people will request that you select the payment as "Friends and family" rather than "Goods and services". This is because the first option eliminates all fees, the second one allows Paypal to see that a transaction actually took place. If you mark a trade as "Friends and family" and then need to open a dispute, you're likely going to lose.

Using a middle-man:

1. Choosing a Middle-Man.

For bigger transactions or for transactions where the trade cannot be completed in small increments, a Middle-man is very desirable.

Obviously you must both choose a Middle-man that's very trustworthy. There's only one or two on Hackforums worth choosing, the most notable of which is [phybe?](#) and his [Middle-man service](#) (<https://hackforums.net/showthread.php?tid=2684893>).

2. Understand how a Middle-Man is suppose to do his job.

Not knowing is the easiest way for two people to get scammed at once. All three of you need to communicate on the same channel. Do not speak with the Middle man by himself unless it's to give him part of the trade.

In 90% of all trades, what happens is that the middle man holds the item of value and the buyer hands the money to the seller, then the middle man gives the buyer the item of value. Knowing this will prevent the middle-man from receiving both the money and the item; which is usually a scam.

If both of you have items, the person who initiated the trade should probably go first. If the middle-man has a service fee, the person who requested a middle-man pays for it.

How to leave good reputation:

It's discouraging that I even have to write this, but most people on Hackforums don't know how to do this.

All trade feedback should be 100% genuine.

DO NOT worry how they feel about it, it should be real. Do not write what they tell you to write and don't tell them what to write unless it's how to be detailed; in which case you can link them here, that's why I wrote this.

All trade feedback should be very detailed!

Explain who, what, when, where, and why. If you trusted them, say "trusted", if they trusted you, your rep should say "Trusted".

Help out the new guys who don't have much feedback and trust them on smaller insignificant trades.

The value or value range should almost always be presented. If you bought an item really cheap from the buyer, be courteous and don't ruin their future sales by presenting the world the great discount you received. Ask them for permission first. If they don't want the value posted then give a vague range "Bought this item for \$10-40, won't say how much to prevent disruption of his future sales but he went first, trusted user."

I've left some examples of detailed trade rep in the spoiler below. If your trade rep does not look like these example below then you are doing it wrong.

Spoiler ([Click to View](#)) "I bought a Thai girlfriend from this user for \$4/night, I went first. He was very good at communicating, the girlfriend is small just as described but a bit more talkative than expected. Thank you!"

"I sold Xbox live to this user for \$30, he went first, he's very slow at replying but in the end it was a smooth transaction."

"This user sold me a Steam account with 12 games on it for \$5. He went first. If you're reading this,

then the account has not been recovered ?"

If the buyer was not trusted in the transaction and can charge-back or the item can be taken back, marked as fraudulent, or destroyed, leave feedback saying "If you're reading this, this user has not charged-back."

HazeFazeBRO - April 23, 2015, 5:36 pm

[This comment is reserved space for extending the guide]

If you have any ideas or tips that should be added to the original post, please comment them below!

Let's make the marketplace a lot smarter.

MrKamarJ - April 23, 2015, 5:41 pm

All buyers and sellers should really take note to this! Very nice and clean guide!

HazeFazeBRO - April 23, 2015, 5:43 pm

(Apr 23, 2015 05:41 PM)ElloDer Services Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) All buyers and sellers should really take note to this! Very nice and clean guide!

Thank you for deleting your comment and giving me additional space.

As for bookmarking this guide, I hope your bookmarks aren't like mine, it's an utter mess.

MrKamarJ - April 23, 2015, 5:44 pm

(Apr 23, 2015 05:43 PM)HazeFazeBRO Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) Thank you for deleting your comment and giving me additional space.

As for bookmarking this guide, I hope your bookmarks aren't like mine, it's an utter mess.

Mine is becoming a mess but as for now, it's pretty clean haha.

The Host - April 23, 2015, 6:41 pm

(Apr 23, 2015 05:43 PM)HazeFazeBRO Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) Thank you for deleting your comment and giving me additional space.

As for bookmarking this guide, I hope your bookmarks aren't like mine, it's an utter mess.

Thank you for making this thread , it's helping me out a lot.

HazeFazeBRO - April 24, 2015, 3:05 pm

(Apr 23, 2015 06:41 PM)The Host Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) Thank you for making this thread , it's helping me out a lot.

Thank you for giving me the idea to make this. I'm glad it helped you.

DOSH - April 24, 2015, 6:03 pm

Deserves a sticky, could help hundreds of members.

Cameron - April 24, 2015, 6:59 pm

You should add Omni's new feature <https://hackforums.net/trustscan.php>

I've found it be be very useful when reviewing a users profile before doing a deal.

Kogan - April 24, 2015, 7:03 pm

Excellent thread, but you should also include and promote the use of BTC.

#Windows10 - April 24, 2015, 7:09 pm

thanks for advise, this is important for new user in marketplace.

HazeFazeBRO - April 24, 2015, 8:17 pm

(Apr 24, 2015 06:59 PM)Camer?n Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) You should add Omni's new feature <https://hackforums.net/trustscan.php>

I've found it be be very useful when reviewing a users profile before doing a deal.

(Apr 24, 2015 07:03 PM)Kogan Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) Excellent thread, but you should also include and promote the use of BTC.

I will add both of the features you two have mentioned:

Cameron, I didn't even know that existed, I haven't been reading HF news. Thank you very much for sharing that and I will add that feature into the next revision.

Kogan, this was the first draft and I didn't get to add Bitcoins and a bunch of other things because I reached the character limit. Fortunately [ElloDer Services](#) made a first comment and deleted it so that I could extend the guide. Big shout-out to him for that act of kindness.

Now that I have more space I hope to extend this guide sometime within the next week or so.

Any ideas on what I should add besides these two things?

Hopeful Goods - April 27, 2015, 6:53 pm

Amazingly helpful!

I am sure this will save a few noobs from a risky situation.