

NOVEMBER 2018

How to Protect Yourself from Skimmers at Gas Pump & ATM



Date/time to schedule: Sunday, November 4 @ 7:30 p.m.

Preheader Text: Foil those skim-skim-skaroo-ers!

Facebook Share Text: Skimming is definitely on the rise, but simply using your eyes, fingers, common sense, and even a new mobile app can reduce your risk of falling victim to skimming. >>Get informed...

Body Copy:

Skimmers are small, electronic devices installed secretly at gas pumps and ATMs. Skimmers capture a swiped payment card's protected data. Thieves then return later to retrieve the devices or transmit it remotely via Bluetooth, before using the information to make purchases.

Although fraudsters' use of skimmers is reportedly on the rise, consumers can be proactive in protecting themselves from this growing type of fraud. As personal finance writer Susan Ladika points out in a recent *creditcards.com* article, simply using your eyes, fingers, common sense, and even a new mobile app can reduce your risk of falling victim to skimming.

Use your eyes: look before you insert your card

Before you slide your card in a fuel pump or ATM, take a good look at the keyboard and card reader to see if anything looks different than normal. Crooks can use a 3-D printer to create a new keyboard to put on top of the real one. The keyboard might look different from the rest of the ATM or gas pump, such as the keys looking slightly bigger.

At the fuel pump, check to see if the seal is broken. To place a skimmer inside a fuel pump, fraudsters must open the fuel dispenser door to insert the skimmer. Station employees may place serial-numbered security tape across the dispenser door, so check to see if the tape has been broken. If there's no tape, check to see if the dispenser door looks as though it has been forced open. Also, look inside the throat of the card reader to see if you can spot anything hidden there. A skimmer inside a gas pump or ATM can steal the information off the magnetic stripe of your credit card or debit card.

Use your fingers: if something doesn't feel right, move on

Wiggle the ATM card reader to see if it's loose. Fraudsters might place a card reader on top of the existing one. Also, be wary if it's hard to insert your credit card or debit card.

Use your phone: apps can alert you to possible skimmers

In the past, criminals had to return to the fuel pump or ATM to retrieve skimmers. That's not always the case now. Thieves have begun to use Bluetooth technology to glean credit card or debit card information. The crime

is called bluesnarfing or blue skimming, and the crooks can sit 100 yards away in their vehicle while credit and debit card information is transmitted to their laptop.

A free Skimmer Scanner Android app released in September 2017 scans for available Bluetooth connections looking for a device with title HC-05. How does it work? A blog post from SparkFun, the app maker, explains:

“If found, the app will attempt to connect using the default password of 1234. Once connected, the letter ‘P’ will be sent. If a response of ‘M’ then there is a very high likelihood there is a skimmer in the Bluetooth range of your phone (5 to 15 feet).”

If your smartphone detects a skimmer, use a different pump or go to a different gas station.

Use your common sense: use fuel pumps & ATMs in safe places

Avoid gas pumps that are out of sight of the clerk and ATMs in areas with little traffic.

It’s particularly important to be cautious at ATMs that are no near financial institutions, such as those located in convenience stores, nightclubs or other businesses where no one is around for long periods of time, making it easier for thieves to place a skimmer. It’s also important to always cover the keyboard when you type your PIN at ATMs. Fraudsters have been known to set up concealed pinhole cameras near ATMs in order to record consumers as they enter their PIN.

There are a few other precautions consumers can take to protect their card information at the gas pump:

- Pay inside with cash or credit card rather than at the pump
- Choose pumps closest to a physical building
- Use a credit card rather than a debit card to pay for gas
- Use your card issuer’s fraud alerts & check card statements regularly

[Click here to read the full article.](#)

Be an Educated Homebuyer: Get the 411 on Mortgage Lingo



Date/time to schedule: Wednesday, November 14 @ 10:10 a.m.

Preheader Text: Key terms you should understand.

Facebook Share Text: Whether you're buying a home for the first time, or haven't bought/sold in a while, it's good to understand the home-buying lingo before you begin. Here's a great "cheat sheet" for you.

Body Copy:

Whether you're about to tackle the mortgage process for the first time or the fifth time, understanding the lingo can give you an edge as a homebuyer.

In a recent *cuinsight.com* article, contributing writer Myriam Digiovanni, highlights some key mortgage terms every homebuyer should understand.

1) Principal

The original total amount borrowed from your lender, before interest.

2) Interest

This is the cost of borrowing money. You repay the principal amount of the loan, plus interest.

3) Interest rate

This is the rate you are charged for borrowing the principal. The percentage rate, whether high or low, depends on a variety of factors that include your credit score, the size of your down payment, the length of your loan and the current economy. Interest rate is very important because the higher your interest rate, the higher your monthly mortgage payment will be. Plus, a high interest rate means you'll end up paying more over the lifetime of the loan.

4) Private Mortgage Insurance (PMI)

This extra fee is designed to protect your lender if you aren't able to make your mortgage payment. Most lenders require PMI if your down payment is less than 20% of the value of the home.

5) Down payment

You'll probably be required to pay a certain percentage of your home's total sale price upfront – this is called a down payment. In general, the larger the down payment, the lower your monthly payments. Traditionally, lenders have asked for a 20% down payment, but that's not always the case any longer. Depending on your credit score and the economy, lenders may let you buy the home with as little as 5% down, or even less if you

qualify for military discounts. However, if you don't have enough saved to make a 20% down payment, you'll need to pay PMI (see above).

6) Term

The term of your loan means how long your lender will give you to pay back your loan. Most mortgages have 30-year or 15-year terms. The longer the term, the lower the monthly payments, but you'll pay more over the lifetime of the loan because of interest.

7) Monthly payment

Your monthly payment will be the same every month, and it will include a portion of the loan principal, interest, mortgage insurance (if you put less than 20% down) and a portion of your annual cost of property taxes and homeowners' insurance – both are mandatory.

8) Purchase points

Points are a fee paid to the lender up front as a way to lower your interest rate. Each "point" is equal to 1% of your mortgage principal and generally represents a .25% drop in your mortgage rate. So, if you have a \$300,000 mortgage with a 5.00% interest rate, you could pay an additional \$3,000 up front and reduce your interest rate to 4.75%. Points can produce big savings down the road if you have the money saved up.

9) Fees

There are a number of fees you'll need to cover when you begin the mortgage process and at closing, when you finalize the loan. Specific amounts will vary based on the lender and other factors. It can feel overwhelming, but the good news is that lenders are required by law to provide a loan estimate and fee disclosure up front that breaks down all costs, fees and details regarding your mortgage. Here are a few fees that are typically part of your mortgage costs:

- **Lender charges/origination fees** — Including application fees, underwriting fees, processing fees, administrative fees and others.
- **Third-party closing costs** — These are charges for services you need to get your mortgage, like a home appraisal and title insurance.
- **Taxes/Government fees** — This is based on the real estate portion and related local government charges.
- **Prepaid expenses and deposits** — These costs are paid up front and held in an escrow account to cover things like your first homeowners insurance and property tax payments.

Many consumers believe it's a lot of work to buy or refinance a home, and plan to "tackle it" after the holidays. However, that's why now is a great time to get started & beat the busy mortgage season! Whether you're buying or refinancing, it's our job to take care of all the details, so answering a few questions and signing some paperwork is all the "tackling" you'll have to do.

Contact the credit union for more information or to get your paperwork started.

[Click here to read the full article.](#)

5 Ways to Shop Safely During the Holidays



Date/time to schedule: Tuesday, November 27 @ 3:30 p.m.

Preheader Text: Keep you & your packages safe this holiday!

Facebook Share Text: Unfortunately, the holidays are a peak time of year for theft. People are buying more, they're busy and distracted, and wallets and purses are filled with spending ammo. Don't be a target – take a look at these simple & wise tips to protect yourself.

Body Copy:

All the hustle and bustle of the holidays can give thieves exactly what they want. By being as nondescript as possible, they can move through big crowds of rushed and distracted people without anyone noticing them. They can pickpocket, shoplift and steal identities. By the time their victims realize they've been robbed, they'll have no idea who did it.

In a recent *moneycrashers.com* article, contributing writer Michael Lewis highlights 5 tips to help you shop safely during the holidays.

1) Carry a single credit card

Carrying large amounts of cash or multiple credit cards is neither wise nor necessary for most people. If your purse or wallet is stolen or the card number compromised, the process to stop charges on a single card is easier than having to deal with multiple cards and enduring the delay until new cards are issued. A single credit card with a low limit is perfect for most shopping trips and getting cash is relatively easy anywhere in the U.S., especially in large shopping areas or malls.

Also, pay attention to how your card is used – never let someone walk away with your card out of sight, whether in a store or a restaurant. And save your receipts so you can check them against the charges on your monthly statement.

2) Use Paypal for online purchases

While major retailers and online merchants offer secure connections, there is always the possibility that a commercial organization can be hacked – the more transactions, the more attractive target for an enterprising computer hacker. Open a Paypal account and tie it to a credit card with a maximum daily spending limit (not your checking account) for online purchases. There is no cost to you as a buyer for this extra level of security, and Paypal will reimburse you for the full cost of any item purchased online that doesn't arrive or match the seller's description.

3) Store presents in locked car trunks

Breaking a car window to gain access to presents or other valuable items is a common occurrence in shopping mall parking lots. Many shoppers, focused on their own shopping missions, fail to notice suspicious people just waiting for the right opportunity to break a window, reach in, grab packages, and be gone in less than a minute.

When storing purchases in your car, lock them in the trunk where they will be hidden. If you notice someone watching you stash your presents, consider getting into your car and driving to a new parking place – thieves are on the lookout for people who rush to store their purchases then rush to return to shopping.

4) Be aware of your surroundings

The best protection against theft or assault is being in well-lit places with plenty of people around. Some experts advise men to keep their wallets in a front pocket, and women to carry their purses with the strap over their shoulder and around their necks while grasping the purse with a hand. This practice can deter pickpockets who prefer easier victims. If you have any concerns about walking to your car with or without packages, ask a store security person to accompany you.

5) Use store delivery

Never load your arms with so many purchases that it's difficult to see, walk, or carry the packages safely. If you have to use both hands to carry the load, you will be vulnerable to falls, shoves, grabs, or purse snatching with packages scattered on the ground as the culprit makes his escape. Don't be hesitant to ask the store to make a delivery or store your packages until you can safely retrieve them.

[Click here to read the full article.](#)