

## Helping Clients Avoid Common Real Estate Scams

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When buying a home, your clients are making one of the biggest financial decisions of their lives, which can be equally exciting and overwhelming. Unfortunately, scammers know this too, and they look for ways to take advantage of homebuyers and sellers when their guard is down.

As their trusted agent, you can be their first line of defense. Here are the most common scams we see in residential real estate, and how you can guide your clients to avoid them:

### **Wire transfer fraud**

This is one of the biggest risks for homebuyers. Fraudsters hack into email accounts and send fake wiring instructions. Once the money is sent, it's usually gone for good. At Ownright, we combat against this by including wire details in our clients personalized dashboard, removing the email vulnerability risk.

### **What to tell your clients:**

- If they get an email with “updated” bank details, they should stop and verify. Have them call their lawyer or title company using a trusted number, not the one in the email.

### **How you can help:**

- Set expectations early that wiring instructions rarely change, and share your preferred lawyer’s contact info.

### **Title fraud**

Title fraud happens when someone steals a homeowner’s identity and transfers the property into their name. They may then try to sell or mortgage it.

#### **What to tell your clients:**

- Watch for unusual mortgage statements or notices.

#### **How you can help:**

- Explain why title insurance matters, and let clients know some provinces offer alerts if their title changes. To help with that explanation, it matters in this case because it protects homeowners against financial loss from defects in the property’s title, such as title fraud. Put simply, with title insurance, there is financial protection if title fraud occurs; without title insurance, there’s not.

### **Rental and fake listing scams**

Scammers post fake listings — sometimes copying real ones — and collect deposits before vanishing.

#### **What to tell your clients:**

- If something seems too good to be true, it might be. They should never send money before confirming the property is real. The good news is that the risk is greatly mitigated by using a realtor in the first place.

#### **How you can help:**

- Encourage verification through public records when possible, and remind them to be cautious with upfront payments.

### **Foreclosure “rescue” scams**

Fraudsters target homeowners behind on their mortgage, promising to save the home for a fee or asking for the deed while they “negotiate.”

#### **What to tell your clients:**

- Anyone guaranteeing to stop foreclosure or asking for the deed is a red flag.

#### **How you can help:**

- Refer them to a housing counsellor or their lender, and encourage them to get independent legal advice.

### **Equity skimming and fake investors**

Some “investors” buy homes far below market value and promise the owner can rent or buy back later. Instead, they sell and keep the profit.

**What to tell your clients:**

- If approached with a quick-cash offer, they should slow down and get advice.

**How you can help:**

- Offer a market analysis so they know the real value, and suggest a legal review before signing.

**Build trust by being proactive**

Scams thrive on confusion. The most important role you can play when it comes to helping your clients avoid them is proactive communication. When you prepare your clients early, you help protect their money and strengthen their trust in you.

**Agent Tip:**

- Cailey Heaps of Heaps Estrin puts it this way:  
*“We encourage our clients to bring us any and all questions along the way. If something looks unusual or out of place, we’ll flag it right away. Open, ongoing communication is the best safeguard — it’s how we help ensure our clients feel protected and confident at every step.”*