

# Artist Scams

By: Nadja Baer, JD Candidate 15'

## The illusion of “too good to be true!”

Even the most savvy small business owner can be tempted by the promises of a smooth salesperson. For artists, it can be even more tempting to believe someone who sounds like they have more business experience. There are many people who claim their help will put you on the fast track to fame and financial success. Don't be fooled—if a deal sounds too good to be true, it probably is.

## Tips to Avoid Scammers

- Always ask for references. Reputable businesses know word of mouth is the most powerful advertisement and should be willing to provide references.
- Find out how long the agent or the company has been in business under that name. Proceed with caution if the business has changed names multiple times in a few years.
- Search the internet for recommendations or warnings.
  - Predators & Editors is a free online resource that provides writers, composers, game designers, and other artists with complaints about businesses in the creative industry. Visit [www.pred-ed.com](http://www.pred-ed.com) for more information.
- Beware of some of the common scams listed below:
- Agencies or editors that charge an upfront fee just to review an artist's work.
- Agents who recommend or requires specific other services prior to providing any services.
  - For models, this includes requiring headshots with an on-staff photographer.
  - For writers, this includes charging fees to have an in-house editor proofread a manuscript.
- Agencies that require an artist to join an organization in order to gain promotional tools.
- Galleries that charge the artist a fee to show work in addition to commissions on sales.
- Equipment rental agreements that ask for payments in installments adding up to more than the worth of the equipment.
- Unless you've listed work for sale on a non-commercial website, be wary of strangers who contact you via e-mail with promises to immediately buy or to begin promoting your work immediately.

If you've been dealt with unfairly, it's not too late! Your experience could help prevent a scammer's next target.



## Resources

- Federal Trade Commission
  - The FTC is the nation's consumer protection agency. While the FTC does not resolve individual complaints, the agency does track complaints of wrongful activity that may lead to investigation or prosecution.
  - Visit [www.FTC.gov](http://www.FTC.gov) for more information or to file a complaint.
- Better Business Bureau
  - The BBB is a non-profit organization that collects and provides free business reviews directly to consumers.
  - Visit [www.bbb.org](http://www.bbb.org) to look up a business or file a complaint.

