

THE OWL AND THE COPYCAT

A CAUTIONARY TALE ABOUT COPYCAT WEBSITES

WISE UP TO THE WEB.

COPYCAT WEBSITES ARE MORE COMMON THAN YOU THINK.

“Cunning copycats are poised to pounce on you online”



WHAT’S THE STORY, GOV?
For almost every official government service, from passport applications to tax disc renewals, there are many copycat websites out there waiting to con more cash from you than you need to spend.



You need to learn to tell the real ones from the fakes, and be sure it’s not a trick before you click!

WISE UP TO THE WEB

Make sure you’re one of the many people who use **GOV.UK** every day to find out how to renew a passport, apply for a driving licence or simply to look for a whole range of other government services.



REMEMBER
Cunning copycats analyse internet search traffic for keywords people use to search for driving licence renewals, passports, European Health Insurance Cards (EHICs) or car tax renewals to name just a few. They then pay to be listed at the top of the search results pages, above the official government search listings, for those words.

SO, because unsuspecting people are more likely to click on results at the top of the page, they end up on official-looking but copycat sites offering to save them money and/or time by processing applications or checking forms.

They look highly convincing, but they’re designed to trap you into paying more than you really have to.



COPYCATS

DON'T JUST OPERATE THROUGH THE BIG INTERNET SEARCH ENGINES. YOU MIGHT COME ACROSS ONE VIA SOCIAL SEARCH OR SOCIAL AD, VIA AN ONLINE ADVERT OR THROUGH A LINK ON A SOCIAL MEDIA POST.

THE DANGERS

- You could pay a lot more for what you can get cheaper or free from **GOV.UK**
- You could put yourself at risk of identity theft.
- You may inadvertently give permission for your personal details to be sold to third parties you don't want to hear from.

SCARY STORIES

Examples of copycat cons include:
People duped into paying for EHIC cards, which are actually free on nhs.org.
People paying up to **£150** after being promised quicker driving test bookings. In fact they're no sooner than those you book directly from **GOV.UK**

“What should i do?”

- 1** LEARN TO SPOT THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN NATURAL SEARCH RESULTS AND PAID-FOR SEARCH RESULTS.
- 2** **GOV.UK IS THE BEST PLACE TO FIND GOVERNMENT SERVICES AND INFORMATION ONLINE, INCLUDING:**
PASSPORT APPLICATIONS/RENEWALS
DRIVING LICENCE APPLICATIONS/RENEWALS
PAYING COUNCIL TAX
APPLYING FOR PRACTICAL AND/OR WRITTEN DRIVING TESTS
TAX DISC APPLICATIONS/RENEWALS
- 3** IT'S A SIMPLER, CLEARER AND FASTER WAY TO GET WHAT YOU NEED FROM THE GOVERNMENT, SO INSTEAD OF SEARCHING FOR THESE SERVICES VIA A SEARCH ENGINE, GO STRAIGHT TO **GOV.UK** AND SEARCH THERE. THEN YOU'LL KNOW YOU'RE ON THE OFFICIAL SITE.

Other things to look out for include:

- 4** DOES THE SITE FEATURE A DISCLAIMER SAYING IT'S NOT THE OFFICIAL SITE OR LINKED TO THE OFFICIAL SITE? THIS MAY NOT BE OBVIOUS AT FIRST, SO LOOK CAREFULLY. IF IT DOES, YOU'RE ON A COPYCAT SITE.
- 5** DOES THE OVERALL APPEARANCE OF THE SITE GIVE YOU THE CONFIDENCE THAT IT'S THE OFFICIAL ONE? IF YOU'RE NOT SURE ASK A WEB-SAVVY FRIEND OR RELATIVE TO HELP YOU MAKE SURE.
- 6** STAY ALERT FOR ANY INFORMATION OR NEWS STORIES ABOUT COPYCAT WEBSITES VIA SOCIAL MEDIA, BLOGS OR ON THE NEWS.
- 7** CHECK ON THE FOLLOWING WEBSITES REGULARLY FOR WARNINGS ABOUT COPYCAT SITES:
www.tradingstandardsecrime.org.uk
www.actionfraud.police.uk
www.getsafeonline.org.uk

ABOVE ALL

Always start your search on the **GOV.UK** website. Take the precautions above and most of the time you'll be fine.

Share this infographic with friends and family to make sure they don't get conned by the copycats too.

