

## How to Find Treasure on Facebook Marketplace Without Being Kidnapped or Murdered

I'm talking to you.

And there is a REAL danger meeting up with strangers.

You're risking your life and that of anyone you bring with you if you're not being careful.

This is how to be careful. And not end up on the side of a milk carton.

Step Number One (and I don't care how long you've had that FB account for):

If you're a BUYER and you're going to pick something up: be a GUY. I mean it. You're a dude. If you're a wife: use your husband's account. No one is going to mug you or try to kidnap you if your name is Bubba. The first step in not being a target for human trafficking is not telling them your real identity. If your name is Christina, you're just Chris now. (Now, why Bubba is picking up French antiques, I don't know. But let them ponder that).

I can't tell you how many surprised sellers have said, "you don't look like a Walter."

Now, that doesn't erase all danger by itself. But it does somewhat mitigate premeditated evil intent. The bad kind where you're never heard from again.

Peruse the buyer's profile for "red flags". Is it a brand-new account that's just been opened? No posts? Pass. It's not worth it.

Keep all communication on the app. Do not give them your phone number or address.

Wear sweatpants. Dude, you don't need to look cute when you're picking up Facebook finds.

Don't be attractive. Wear a ball cap and no makeup. Look like a hot mess. Pick your nose.

Don't be a target.

Keep your iPhone on you and have your trigger finger ready to call the authorities. (Did you know that if you rapidly hit the side button it dials 911?)

Carry your preferred self-defense weapon and know how to use it.

Arrange to meet in a public place with people and cameras if able. Don't meet at their cabin in the woods on a dead-end road. Use common sense here. If it feels isolated, it's dangerous. Pay attention to your spidey senses.

Do NOT go into the house. Do NOT go into the house. DO NOT GO INTO THE HOUSE. It creates vulnerability and a set up for an ambush or robbery.

Pick up during DAYLIGHT HOURS when there is traffic/activity around in the neighborhood.

Park in the street instead of the driveway so your vehicle can't be blocked in.

Have the seller step outside to verify their identity when you arrive.

If you're by yourself put someone on speaker.

**\*\*\*Be aware of EXCESSIVE EMOJIS IN THE ADS, DESCRIPTIONS, CONTACT INFORMATION, OR PROFILE: THAT IS COMMON IN ADS INVOLVED IN HUMAN TRAFFICKING.**

Make note of a picture vs. screenshots from a computer. Pictures that are not authentic are a flag. Pick up on YOUR schedule. If the seller is trying to force you to pick up on their time-line that can be a red flag. Especially if they are pushing the idea that someone else might come pick it up first.

Call your sister, mom, or BFF on your way and as you're getting out of the car. Text them the address and what you're picking up. Tell them you'll call them as soon as it is loaded. And if not, you've been nabbed.

Even better, take a friend with you. Have them wait in the car with the emergency dialer. Even in this instance, check in with a friend that's not with you... "we are about to pick up. We'll call you on the way out. Here's the address." Even pairs of people can get nabbed.

I'm going to say something crazy... but we've all done it so I'm not judging. If you can avoid it, don't bring your kids. It just creates a whole additional level of panic and danger. If they're very young, please don't. An older child can be left in charge of the panic-911 button. Talk to them beforehand and have signals set up. Safe words and warning words.

Look for signs of life at the house: I.e. children's toys, manicured lawns, etc.

Venmo instead of cash: if you can, this is safer.

Large cash withdrawals invite muggings. Think about Marketplace: if you'd like this thing it's \$500. Show up, bring cash. What could go wrong?

Zillow is your friend. Plug that address in and check out the neighborhood. I'm not saying that rich people won't kidnap you. I'm just saying you're less likely to mug you for \$500. That antique French wine rack they have ACTUALLY gotten sick of and would like to pass it on to someone who truly appreciates it (and that person is me).

Buy items on your terms only. Make sure they do not compromise any of your safety protocols you have set for yourself.

If you feel anything is "off" at any time, discontinue the transaction. Walk away.

Now go forth and find amazing finds.