



ePhilanthropyFoundation.Org

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ePhilanthropy Foundation's Tips For Online Giving

The Internet can provide generous Americans with a wide range of opportunities to help others -- quickly and easily. To help ensure that your gift doesn't go to the wrong organization and to help ensure that gift goes directly to the organization you want to support, here are 10 tips for online giving that will help ensure your online giving is safe and secure. These tips are based on its ePhilanthropy Code of Ethical Online Philanthropic Practices:

Online Giving Tip #1: Know Your Charity

Make sure you have the exact name of the organization. Some charities or charity websites have names that sound similar and you need to make sure it's a legitimate nonprofit. Before you give online you should be familiar with the name and reputation of the charity you intend to support. If in doubt check with your local United Way or Community Information Center, they may be familiar with the charity.

Online Giving Tip#2: Give to Legitimate Charities

Only give to charities recognized by the appropriate governmental body in their respective country. Look for the charity to explain their tax-exempt nonprofit (NGO) status in a FAQ or similar area of their website. You should also be aware that some advocacy organizations are not allowed by law to issue tax deductible receipts, you may still wish to support their work, however our advice is to understand before you make the gift what type of tax receipt you can expect.

Online Giving Tip #3: Feel Free To Ask Questions

Any legitimate charity seeking your support via the Internet or off line, will give you ample opportunities to ask questions and to learn about their mission. In the US you can learn a lot about a charity by ask for the document the charity files with IRS each year called the 990 Form. Nonprofit organizations are required by law to provide this information when asked. If you prefer you can find a copy already posted online at <http://www.guidestar.org>.

Online Giving Tip #4: Give Safely

Make sure the charity site uses encryption technology that ensures appropriate security for online donations and data transmission. Before entering any information you consider sensitive (i.e. credit card number, personal identification data, etc), verify that the page requesting your credit card information is secure (encrypted). The letters https:// - rather than http:// - should precede the page's URL and/or there should be an unbroken key or padlock symbol located in the corner of the web browser. If in doubt contact the charity by telephone or by email before you provide the information online.

Online Giving Tip #5: Consider Giving Directly

The Internet provides tremendous opportunities to support the charity of your choice directly. Don't get taken by "charity" or "someone is in need" chain letters. E-mails that claim money will go to a specified charity each time the message is forwarded are not true. If your charity does not provide online giving opportunities at their website, consider giving through <http://www.networkforgood.org> which provides all registered charities in the U.S. the ability to receive online donations.

Online Giving Tip #6: Demand Privacy

Check for a privacy policy concerning the use of your name, e-mail address or other personal information. Don't disclose personal information, such as your address, telephone number, social security number, or e-mail address—unless you know who's collecting the information and how they plan to use it.

Online Giving Tip #7: Keep Records

Print a copy of the final confirmation screen that appears when you have made your gift. In addition, keep a copy of your charitable gift confirmation email for your records. If you do not receive a confirmation of the gift by email (and in most cases by mail as well), do not give to that charity online again, until you are certain they have brought their online solicitation policies inline with these tips. In such cases, contact the charity to make sure they received your gift and request confirmation of the gift.

Online Giving Tip #8: Look For Contact Information

A reputable charity will make certain contact information is readily available in case you need assistance with questions, problems, or service. The charity should provide one or more ways to reach them off line as well as communicate with them directly online. Look for the charity's contact address, telephone, email address, etc.

Online Giving Tip #9: Know How Your Money Will Be Used

The Internet provides charities with an opportunity to share more of their work with you the donor. You should be able to learn how the charity you contribute to plans to use the money you give to help others and fulfill their mission. If you are not certain how the charity will use your charitable gift, ask!

Online Giving Tip #10: Request Regular Information

Your favorite charity should provide you an opportunity to hear about their work regularly. On their website or through email updates the charity should provide information about how they fulfill their stated mission. These updates should be received on a regular basis and should not be tied only to requests for contributions.