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National Consumer Protection Week—Avoiding Scams

By Mary Beth Kaufman, ISU Extension Field Specialist/Family Resource Management

Whether you're buying or selling something on the Internet, looking for a scholarship or home loan, investing in a business opportunity or planning that dream vacation, it pays to shop smart. Because when money is at stake, you want to hit a grand slam—not a grand scam.

Iowa State University Extension has joined a group of federal, state, and local agencies and national advocacy organizations to launch the annual National Consumer Protection week. This year's theme is "Consumer Protection: It's the Name of the Game." Consumer information, quizzes and interactive games for all ages are available on-line at www.consumer.gov/ncpw.

Test your consumer IQ with these questions....

Your credit card statement arrives in the mail. When you read it, you find you've been billed for merchandise you never received. What do you do?

- A) Wait for your next month's statement to see if the charge is still there.
- B) Contact the credit card issuer at the address or phone number for "billing inquiries."
- C) Call the credit card issuer and tell them you won't pay any part of your bill until the charge you're disputing is taken off.
- D) Cut up the credit card: something is wrong.

An e-mail or pop-up message asks for your financial information. It says your credit rating could be impacted if you don't respond. You should....

- A) Turn off your computer immediately
- B) Delete the message. Don't e-mail personal or financial information. Email is not a secure way to send this information.
- C) Provide all the information asked.
- D) Hide under your desk.

The correct answer for both questions is "B".

According to a survey by the Federal Trade Commission, nearly 25 million Americans – 11.2 percent of the adult population – experience consumer fraud each year. So take the Grand Slam Challenge, test your own consumer IQ and protect yourself against consumer fraud. Then tell your family, friends, neighbors and co-workers about it.