



FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION

Consumer Information

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Keep tech support strangers out of your computer

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If you need tech help with your computer, where do you go? Most of us probably search online. But your online search can lead you straight to scammers who scare you into thinking your computer is in dire need of repair...and then sell you costly security software that you don't need.

That's just what happened in the FTC's lawsuit against Elite IT Partners, Inc., announced today as part of a [massive law enforcement sweep](https://www.consumer.ftc.gov/blog/2019/03/ftcs-tech-support-takedown-2019) ([consumer.ftc.gov/blog/2019/03/ftcs-tech-support-takedown-2019](https://www.consumer.ftc.gov/blog/2019/03/ftcs-tech-support-takedown-2019)). According to the complaint, Elite bought key words on Google that let them target people searching for how to recover lost passwords. You'd fill out an online form and give your contact information. Then, says the FTC, Elite's telemarketers would call and ask to get online access to your computer – supposedly to check for problems. Once they were in, the caller would show you fake “evidence” of viruses or other threats that, they said, had to be removed right away.

Then came the sales pitches. Elite allegedly got people – many of them older adults – to pay hundreds of dollars for unnecessary repairs and maintenance programs. If you find yourself in a similar situation, here are some steps you can take:

- If you're looking for tech support, go to a company you know and trust, or get help from a knowledgeable friend or family member. If you search online for help, search on the company name plus “scam,” “review,” or “complaint.”
- If you get a phone call you didn't expect from someone who says there's a problem with your computer, hang up.
- Never call a number in a pop-up that warns you of computer problems. Real security warnings will never ask you to call a phone number.
- If you think there's a problem with your computer, update its security software and run a scan.

If you spot a tech support scam, tell the FTC: [ftc.gov/complaint](https://www.ftc.gov/complaint) . And learn more at [ftc.gov/techsupportscams](https://www.ftc.gov/techsupportscams)



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