

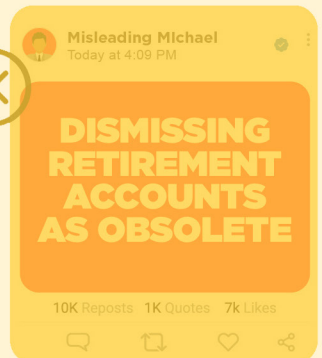
**REAL ESTATE MYTHS  
& OVERHYPED ROI**



**FAKE**



**MISREPRESENTING  
FINANCIAL  
CREDENTIALS OR  
EXPERTISE**



# IDENTIFYING ONLINE FINANCIAL MISINFORMATION

## A CONSUMER GUIDE

**MISLEADING  
DEBT RELIEF  
AND  
FORGIVENESS  
ADS**



**DEBT**

**MARKET-  
TIMING  
CLAIMS TIED  
TO EVENTS  
OR FEAR**



**CRYPTOCURRENCY  
MEME COIN  
"INVESTMENTS"**



**DAY  
TRADING &  
HIGH-  
FREQUENCY  
STRATEGIES**



**"SECRET"  
TAX  
STRATEGIES  
AND  
LOOPHOLES**



10K Reposts 1K Quotes 7k Likes

**"GUARANTEED"  
RETURNS AND  
RISK-FREE  
INVESTMENTS**



**AI-GENERATED  
FINANCIAL  
ADVICE  
AND "BOTS"**



# FINANCIAL MISINFORMATION SPREADS FAST ONLINE AND IT’S OFTEN PERSUASIVE, POLISHED AND DANGEROUSLY WRONG.

This toolkit is designed to support the everyday consumer in recognizing inaccurate or misleading financial content on social media. Scams and fraud have resulted in over \$12.5 billion in losses in 2024 alone, with this number growing each year.








## WHAT’S INSIDE

<b>TOP 10 FORMS OF FINANCIAL MISINFORMATION</b>	3
‘GUARANTEED’ RETURNS AND RISK-FREE INVESTMENTS	3
‘SECRET’ TAX STRATEGIES AND LOOPHOLES	4
REAL ESTATE MYTHS AND OVERHYPED ROI	5
CRYPTOCURRENCY MEME COIN ‘INVESTMENTS’	6
MISLEADING DEBT RELIEF AND FORGIVENESS ADS	7
DISMISSING TRADITIONAL RETIREMENT ACCOUNTS AS INEFFECTIVE OR OBSOLETE	8
AI-GENERATED FINANCIAL ADVICE AND ‘BOTS’	9
MARKET-TIMING CLAIMS TIED TO EVENTS OR FEAR	10
DAY-TRADING AND HIGH-FREQUENCY STRATEGIES FOR BEGINNERS	11
MISREPRESENTING FINANCIAL CREDENTIALS OR EXPERTISE	12
<b>RED FLAGS FOR POTENTIAL MISINFORMATION</b>	13

# TOP 10 FORMS OF FINANCIAL MISINFORMATION








A guide for the everyday consumer to recognize and respond to misleading financial content

## 1 'GUARANTEED' RETURNS AND RISK-FREE INVESTMENTS

<b>Description</b>	 Promises of consistent or outsized returns with little or no risk, often tied to private funds, cryptocurrency or annuity-like structures.
<b>Examples</b>	<div>  <b>Risk-Free Rick</b> Today at 4:36 PM Earn 30% annually with no market exposure.         </div> <div>  <b>"Guaranteed" Gloria</b> Today at 8:13 PM I found a way to hack the real estate market. The result: My real estate syndicate has never lost money.         </div>
<b>What Makes It Harmful</b>	It violates basic investment principles regarding the relationship between risk and return, distorts consumer expectations, and often results in harm to investors through fraud.
<b>What To Look For</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promoted through fabricated social media testimonials or influencers posing as clients.</li> <li>• Often accompanied with high-pressure tactics to "act now" before the opportunity disappears.</li> </ul>
<b>Reliable Source</b>	<a href="#">Look Out for High-Yield Investment Program Scams — Investor Alert   U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission</a>
<b>Examples of Proper Social Media Posts</b>	<div>  <b>Reliable Rodney, CFP®</b>             If an investment promises "guaranteed" high returns with zero risk, it's not a strategy. It's a scam. Real investing involves risk and reward. Learn how to spot the red flags: <a href="https://www.investor.gov/introduction-investing/general-resources/news-alerts/alerts-bulletins/investor-alerts/look-out-high-yield-investment-program-scams-investor-alert">https://www.investor.gov/introduction-investing/general-resources/news-alerts/alerts-bulletins/investor-alerts/look-out-high-yield-investment-program-scams-investor-alert</a> </div> <div>  <b>Mindful Maria, CFP®</b>             "Earn 30% a year with no downside." We've all seen these claims, usually paired with pressure to act quickly. Real investing involves risk. Let's help people understand what a sound strategy really looks like: <a href="https://www.investor.gov/introduction-investing/general-resources/news-alerts/alerts-bulletins/investor-alerts/look-out-high-yield-investment-program-scams-investor-alert">https://www.investor.gov/introduction-investing/general-resources/news-alerts/alerts-bulletins/investor-alerts/look-out-high-yield-investment-program-scams-investor-alert</a> </div>







# TOP 10 FORMS OF FINANCIAL MISINFORMATION

## 2 'SECRET' TAX STRATEGIES AND LOOPHOLES

<b>Description</b>	 Claims that wealthy people use hidden tax strategies that anyone can copy — if they pay for a course or product.
<b>Examples</b>	<div>  <b>Loophole Lily</b> Today at 4:36 PM Use this S corp/LLC trick to write off everything.           </div> <div>  <b>Misinformation Mark</b> Today at 8:13 PM Avoid taxes forever with a charitable trust hack.           </div>
<b>What Makes It Harmful</b>	Promotes strategies that may cross the line from tax avoidance into tax evasion or promotes one-size-fits-all approaches that don't meet IRS standards.
<b>What To Look For</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Marketed as “educational content” with no real due diligence.</li> <li>Often sold by non-credentialed influencers or former IRS employees.</li> </ul>
<b>Reliable Source</b>	<a href="https://www.irs.gov/newsroom/dirty-dozen-taking-tax-advice-on-social-media-can-be-bad-news-for-taxpayers-inaccurate-or-misleading-tax-information-circulating">Dirty Dozen: Taking tax advice on social media can be bad news for taxpayers; inaccurate or misleading tax information circulating   IRS</a>
<b>Examples of Proper Social Media Posts</b>	<div>  <b>Responsible Rayna, CFP®</b>             Seen an ad claiming you can write off everything with an LLC? One-size-fits-all tax tricks are a warning sign. Tax planning should be personal and legal. Get the facts: <a href="https://www.irs.gov/newsroom/dirty-dozen-taking-tax-advice-on-social-media-can-be-bad-news-for-taxpayers-inaccurate-or-misleading-tax-information-circulating">https://www.irs.gov/newsroom/dirty-dozen-taking-tax-advice-on-social-media-can-be-bad-news-for-taxpayers-inaccurate-or-misleading-tax-information-circulating</a> </div> <div>  <b>Dependable Daniel, CFP®</b>             Wealthy people don't rely on hacks. They work with credentialed professionals. If someone says you can erase your tax bill with a “trust trick,” be skeptical. Here's how to separate fact from fiction: <a href="https://www.irs.gov/newsroom/dirty-dozen-taking-tax-advice-on-social-media-can-be-bad-news-for-taxpayers-inaccurate-or-misleading-tax-information-circulating">https://www.irs.gov/newsroom/dirty-dozen-taking-tax-advice-on-social-media-can-be-bad-news-for-taxpayers-inaccurate-or-misleading-tax-information-circulating</a> </div>

# TOP 10 FORMS OF FINANCIAL MISINFORMATION







## 3 REAL ESTATE MYTHS AND OVERHYPED ROI

<b>Description</b>	 Narratives that claim real estate is always safer and more profitable than diversified investing.	
<b>Examples</b>	<div>  <b>ROI Roger</b> Today at 4:36 PM Real estate always appreciates — rent covers the mortgage.           </div> <div>  <b>No Money Down Marie</b> Today at 8:13 PM Use leverage to 10x your wealth risk-free.           </div>	
<b>What Makes It Harmful</b>	Encourages risky leverage, underestimates costs, and ignores liquidity and vacancy risks.	
<b>What To Look For</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Often tied to “no money down” or Buy, Rehab, Rent, Refinance, Repeat (BRRRR) methods.</li> <li>• Influencers omit the high transaction costs of real estate sales, liquidity risks, and high operational costs to maintain and rehabilitate the property.</li> </ul>	
<b>Reliable Source</b>	<a href="#">How to Use Real Estate in Your Portfolio</a>   <a href="#">MorningStarInvesting in REITs vs. Direct Real Estate</a>   <a href="#">MorningStar</a>	
<b>Examples of Proper Social Media Posts</b>	<div>  <b>Honest Harriet, CFP</b>             Real estate isn't always a gold mine. “No money down” and “rent covers the mortgage” claims ignore real risks. Diversification matters. Learn what viral posts leave out: <a href="https://www.morningstar.com/portfolios/how-use-real-estate-your-portfolio">https://www.morningstar.com/portfolios/how-use-real-estate-your-portfolio</a> </div> <div>  <b>Trustworthy Terry, CFP</b>             “Real estate always wins.” It's a myth that can lead people to take on risky debt without fully understanding maintenance costs, liquidity challenges or tenant risk. Real estate can play a role in a portfolio, but so does balance and long-term planning. More perspective: <a href="https://www.morningstar.com/portfolios/how-use-real-estate-your-portfolio">https://www.morningstar.com/portfolios/how-use-real-estate-your-portfolio</a> </div>	

# TOP 10 FORMS OF FINANCIAL MISINFORMATION

4








## CRYPTOCURRENCY MEME COIN 'INVESTMENTS'

<b>Description</b>	 Crypto tokens, lacking intrinsic value or a clear use case, often associated with a recent meme or viral trend.	
<b>Examples</b>	<div>  <b>Crypto Christopher</b> Today at 4:36 PM New altcoin will gain 100x value this year.             </div> <div>  <b>Meme Coin Meghan</b> Today at 8:13 PM Tired of missing out on the next big meme coin? Click here to follow my proven strategy and become a millionaire.             </div>	
<b>What Makes It Harmful</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Volatility and loss risk are extreme.</li> <li>• Because tokens are easy to create, they are vulnerable to “pump and dump” or “rug pull” schemes. Promoters use social media and market manipulation to artificially inflate a coin’s value, encouraging purchases. Once the price peaks, they sell their holdings, causing the value to crash.</li> </ul>	
<b>What To Look For</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promoted by influencers with undisclosed pay or ownership.</li> <li>• Often uses FOMO (fear of missing out) tactics or vague blockchain jargon.</li> </ul>	
<b>Reliable Source</b>	<a href="#">Rapidly Proliferating, Sentiment-Based Virtual Currencies   New York State Department of Financial Services</a>	
<b>Examples of Proper Social Media Posts</b>	<div>  <b>Sincere Stacy, CFP®</b>  If a crypto coin is trending on TikTok, be careful. Meme coins often collapse after a short hype cycle. Know the warning signs: <a href="https://www.dfs.ny.gov/consumers/alerts/rapidly-prolif-sentiment-based-vc">https://www.dfs.ny.gov/consumers/alerts/rapidly-prolif-sentiment-based-vc</a> </div> <div>  <b>Proven Peter, CFP®</b>  A new meme coin may be viral, but that doesn’t make it viable. Many tokens exist only to lure buyers, inflate briefly and crash. Help clients focus on fundamentals, not fear of missing out. Start here: <a href="https://www.dfs.ny.gov/consumers/alerts/rapidly-prolif-sentiment-based-vc">https://www.dfs.ny.gov/consumers/alerts/rapidly-prolif-sentiment-based-vc</a> </div>	

# TOP 10 FORMS OF FINANCIAL MISINFORMATION

5

## MISLEADING DEBT RELIEF AND FORGIVENESS ADS

<b>Description</b>	 Promises to “cancel” or “erase” debt through government programs or legal loopholes.
<b>Examples</b>	<div>  <b>Misleading Michael</b> Today at 4:36 PM Loan forgiveness is now live — sign up now!           </div> <div>  <b>Debt Relief Debbie</b> Today at 8:13 PM Eliminate credit card debt using this one legal trick.           </div>
<b>What Makes It Harmful</b>	Leads to identity theft, fees for nonexistent services or ruined credit.
<b>What To Look For</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fake government logos, urgent language or robocalls.</li> <li>• Often uses .org or fake government-like URLs.</li> <li>• Urgent language and upfront fees.</li> </ul>
<b>Reliable Source</b>	<a href="#">How To Avoid Student Loan Forgiveness Scams</a>   <a href="#">Federal Student Aid How To Get Out of Debt</a>   Federal Trade Consumer Advice
<b>Examples of Proper Social Media Posts</b>	<div>  <b>Good Greg, CFP®</b>             You can't erase credit card debt with a “legal trick.” Real help comes from nonprofit credit counselors, not spam ads. Start here: <a href="https://consumer.ftc.gov/articles/how-get-out-debt#Credit%20Counseling">https://consumer.ftc.gov/articles/how-get-out-debt#Credit%20Counseling</a> </div> <div>  <b>Authentic Abigail, CFP®</b>             Ads that promise to “erase debt” with one legal trick often come with serious risks. They can damage your credit, expose your identity and threaten your financial future. These aren't solutions. They are scams. Help clients spot the red flags: <a href="https://consumer.ftc.gov/articles/how-get-out-debt#Credit%20Counseling">https://consumer.ftc.gov/articles/how-get-out-debt#Credit%20Counseling</a> </div>

# TOP 10 FORMS OF FINANCIAL MISINFORMATION

6

## DISMISSING TRADITIONAL RETIREMENT ACCOUNTS AS INEFFECTIVE OR OBSOLETE

### Description



Claims that traditional retirement accounts such as 401(k)s, IRAs and pensions are outdated or irrelevant, often pushing alternative investments or strategies.

### Examples



**Alternative Retirement Ana**  
Today at 4:36 PM

Are you still trapping your money in your employer's 401(k) account?



**Dismissive David**  
Today at 8:13 PM

Actual rich people don't use a 401(k).

### What Makes It Harmful

The promoter is often trying to lure investing dollars toward a product they are selling to make money.

### What To Look For

- Out of context or cherry-picked research about retirement plans.
- Accusations of employers "trapping" employees with a match.

### Reliable Source

[Free Money! | Investor.gov](https://www.investor.gov/free-money)

### Examples of Proper Social Media Posts



**Caring Catrina, CFP®**



If someone tells you to avoid your 401(k), they may be trying to sell you something. Traditional retirement accounts still work when used wisely. Get the facts: <https://www.investor.gov/additional-resources/spotlight/directors-take/free-money>



**Steadfast Scott, CFP®**



"Rich people don't use 401(k)s" is another common myth. This is a common myth that can lead clients to overlook a valuable retirement savings tool. Workplace retirement plans like 401(k)s offer real tax advantages and often come with employer contributions. As the SEC puts it, that's "free money."






Let's help clients cut through the noise and build sound, long-term strategies: <https://www.investor.gov/additional-resources/spotlight/directors-take/free-money>



# TOP 10 FORMS OF FINANCIAL MISINFORMATION

7








## AI-GENERATED FINANCIAL ADVICE AND ‘BOTS’

<b>Description</b>	 Advice generated by AI tools or influencers using AI, often without proper compliance or customization.
<b>Examples</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TikTok videos showing AI-generated plans for FIRE (Financial Independence, Retire Early).</li> <li>• Chatbots creating “personalized” investment strategies.</li> </ul>
<b>What Makes It Harmful</b>	AI may hallucinate (i.e., make up) data and lacks context for real consumer circumstances.
<b>What To Look For</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advice may sound professional, especially if it’s based on scraped expert content.</li> <li>• It is difficult to distinguish between real advisors and AI-powered “coaches.”</li> </ul>
<b>Reliable Source</b>	<a href="#">AI Investment Scams are Here, and You’re the Target!   California Department of Financial Protection &amp; Innovation</a>
<b>Examples of Proper Social Media Posts</b>	<div>  <b>Valid Victor, CFP®</b>  <p>Chatbots that offer personalized plans often miss the mark. They lack context, oversight and customization. Here’s what real planning requires: <a href="https://dfpi.ca.gov/news/insights/ai-investment-scams-are-here-and-youre-the-target/">https://dfpi.ca.gov/news/insights/ai-investment-scams-are-here-and-youre-the-target/</a></p> </div> <div>  <b>Constant Camilla, CFP®</b>  <p>AI tools can support planning, but they don’t replace professional judgment. Without human review, recommendations can be misleading. Let clients know why experience matters. <a href="https://dfpi.ca.gov/news/insights/ai-investment-scams-are-here-and-youre-the-target/">https://dfpi.ca.gov/news/insights/ai-investment-scams-are-here-and-youre-the-target/</a></p> </div>

# TOP 10 FORMS OF FINANCIAL MISINFORMATION

8








## MARKET-TIMING CLAIMS TIED TO EVENTS OR FEAR

<b>Description</b>	 Encouraging investors to enter/exit markets based on short-term predictions, current events or news cycles.
<b>Examples</b>	<div>  <b>Prediction Paula</b> Today at 4:36 PM Get out now — interest rates are going up.           </div> <div>  <b>Fearmonger Frank</b> Today at 8:13 PM Markets always crash before elections.           </div>
<b>What Makes It Harmful</b>	It may cause consumers to abandon long-term strategies and miss rebounds in the market.
<b>What To Look For</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Analysis” that relies on selective data or outdated charts.</li> <li>• Often framed as being “smart money” versus “average investor.”</li> </ul>
<b>Reliable Source</b>	<a href="#">Staying Invested Beats Timing the Market—Here’s the Proof</a>   MorningStar
<b>Examples of Proper Social Media Posts</b>	<div>  <b>Loyal Layla, CFP</b>  <p>“This time it’s different” is a common theme when there is a market crash. Timing investments based on fear usually backfires. Think long term: <a href="https://www.morningstar.com/portfolios/staying-invested-beats-timing-marketheres-proof">https://www.morningstar.com/portfolios/staying-invested-beats-timing-marketheres-proof</a></p> </div> <div>  <b>Faithful Ford, CFP</b>  <p>Headlines that push market timing sound smart in the moment. But data shows that staying invested often leads to better outcomes. Help clients stay grounded: <a href="https://www.morningstar.com/portfolios/staying-invested-beats-timing-marketheres-proof">https://www.morningstar.com/portfolios/staying-invested-beats-timing-marketheres-proof</a></p> </div>

# TOP 10 FORMS OF FINANCIAL MISINFORMATION







9

## DAY-TRADING AND HIGH-FREQUENCY STRATEGIES FOR BEGINNERS

<b>Description</b>	 Promoting options, foreign exchange market (forex) or day-trading strategies as something anyone can master.	
<b>Examples</b>	<div>  <b>Day-Trading Dylan</b> Today at 4:36 PM This options strategy earns me \$500/day — no experience needed!           </div> <div>  <b>Hype Strategy Helen</b> Today at 8:13 PM Use leverage to grow faster than with traditional investing.           </div>	
<b>What Makes It Harmful</b>	Highly risky and often leads to losses, especially when used without hedging or understanding.	
<b>What To Look For</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Traders flaunt screenshots of rare wins and hide long-term results.</li> <li>• Paid courses or private social chat groups with no transparency.</li> </ul>	
<b>Reliable Source</b>	<a href="#">Thinking of Day Trading? Know the Risks.   U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission</a>	
<b>Examples of Proper Social Media Posts</b>	<div>  <b>Calculable Carol, CFP</b>             “Earn \$500 a day with zero experience” is not a plan — it’s a trap. Most day traders lose money. Check the data: <a href="https://www.investor.gov/additional-resources/spotlight/directors-take/thinking-day-trading-know-risks">https://www.investor.gov/additional-resources/spotlight/directors-take/thinking-day-trading-know-risks</a> </div> <div>  <b>Solid Steve, CFP</b>             The hype is everywhere, but most people lose money day trading. Let’s use real numbers to show what these strategies actually lead to: <a href="https://www.investor.gov/additional-resources/spotlight/directors-take/thinking-day-trading-know-risks">https://www.investor.gov/additional-resources/spotlight/directors-take/thinking-day-trading-know-risks</a> </div>	

# TOP 10 FORMS OF FINANCIAL MISINFORMATION

## 10 MISREPRESENTING FINANCIAL CREDENTIALS OR EXPERTISE

<b>Description</b>	 <p>Individuals presenting themselves as experts without licenses or certification, or fabricating credentials.</p>
<b>Examples</b>	<div>  <p><b>Misrepresenting Mario</b> Today at 4:36 PM</p> <p>I built a million-dollar portfolio in my 20s — here's how you can, too.</p> </div>
<b>What Makes It Harmful</b>	Confuses the public and may violate ethical or legal boundaries.
<b>What To Look For</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of transparency about qualifications.</li> <li>• Framing licensed professionals as biased.</li> </ul>
<b>Reliable Source</b>	<a href="#">Why Choose a CFP® Professional   Let's Make A Plan</a>
<b>Examples of Proper Social Media Posts</b>	<div>  <p><b>Trustworthy Tiana, CFP®</b> </p> <p>Who is giving this advice? Too many self-described experts have no credentials. Always check for the CFP® mark and confirm qualifications. <a href="https://www.cfp.net/verify-a-cfp-professional">https://www.cfp.net/verify-a-cfp-professional</a></p> </div> <div>  <p><b>Dutiful Dennis, CFP®</b> </p> <p>"I built a million-dollar portfolio in my 20s" sounds impressive, but without proof of strategy or credentials, it's just marketing. Share this to help clients verify who they can trust. <a href="https://www.cfp.net/verify-a-cfp-professional">https://www.cfp.net/verify-a-cfp-professional</a></p> </div>

# RED FLAGS FOR POTENTIAL MISINFORMATION

## **Statements without a reasonable basis**

- Unfounded promises about future investment returns.
- Recommendations (e.g., “Everyone should invest in this strategy.”)



## **Omitting or hiding important disclosures**

- Hidden disclosures of paid testimonials, referral relationships, or any financial benefit received. Disclosures must be easy to find, not buried in comments secondary links or fine print.
- Affiliate links that are not labeled appropriately.



## **Reveal confidential consumer information**

- Promising information that may include or imply a consumer’s identity, personal financial situation or any confidential details. These are not to be shared without explicit permission.



## **Posts with specific financial advice**

- **What Is Financial Advice?**  
CFP Board defines Financial Advice as a communication that, based on its content, context and presentation, would reasonably be viewed as a recommendation that the Client take or refrain from taking a particular course of action.
- **Tailoring Matters**  
The more personalized a communication is to an individual person’s situation, the more likely it is considered Financial Advice.



### **How to report misinformation?**

If you see misinformation, [report it here](#).

## REAL ESTATE MYTHS & OVERHYPED ROI



**FAKE**



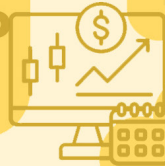
**MISREPRESENTING  
FINANCIAL  
CREDENTIALS OR  
EXPERTISE**



**MISLEADING  
DEBT RELIEF  
AND  
FORGIVENESS  
ADS**



**MARKET-  
TIMING  
CLAIMS TIED  
TO EVENTS  
OR FEAR**



**Misleading Michael**  
Today at 4:09 PM

**DISMISSING  
RETIREMENT  
ACCOUNTS  
AS OBSOLETE**

10K Reposts 1K Quotes 7k Likes



**CRYPTOCURRENCY  
MEME COIN  
"INVESTMENTS"**



**"SECRET"  
TAX  
STRATEGIES  
AND  
LOOPHOLES**

10K Reposts 1K Quotes 7k Likes

**"GUARANTEED"  
RETURNS AND  
RISK-FREE  
INVESTMENTS**

**DAY  
TRADING &  
HIGH-  
FREQUENCY  
STRATEGIES**



**AI-GENERATED  
FINANCIAL  
ADVICE  
AND "BOTS"**



**CFP BOARD**