

Legal Guide for Foreigners in Korea

Language barriers and cultural differences are the reasons why international students and workers are vulnerable to exposure to crime. We hope this lecture can help you live safely in Korea, free from exposure to crime.



Types of crimes to which foreigners are particularly vulnerable



1 Risks of Voice Phishing

Foreigners are particularly vulnerable to voice phishing scams. It is important to be cautious of suspicious offers.



2 Temptation of drugs

You must be cautious and avoid getting involved in drug-related crimes. Drugs are illegal and subject to severe penalties.

A letter from a Chinese international student in prison

A Chinese international student has shared a letter recounting their experience. The student was sentenced to prison for involvement in a voice phishing scam and is currently incarcerated. The letter aims to share their story in hopes of warning other foreign students to respect the laws of South Korea. The letter describes the process that lead the student to commit the crime and outlines six actions that foreign students must avoid. It emphasizes the seriousness of voice phishing crimes. The letter serves as a wake-up call, raising awareness about the dangerous situations that international students may face.

公开信

致：在韩中国人

这是我写的第二封公开信与第一次不同的是，正在写这些文字的我已经结束了一审，并被判处一年半的刑期，这更在我完全认罪并与受害者达成和解后的结果，对此我并没有任何埋怨，毕竟事情只怪我自己做了错事在先。

2023年3月，我来韩国上学，前两学期一切顺利，但也因为顺风顺水了太久，我轻信了我的一位同学，这位同学一直在学校从事换钱生意，轻信他人加上对韩国法律了解的浅薄，促使我答应帮他从小额取钱，起初我以为那是他在换钱所换来的钱，但案发后我才知道那是诈骗的非法所得，只是为时已晚。

在上一封信中，我已经写了很多注意点，在此，我想再次强调，千万不要非法换钱，千万别帮其他任何人取钱，除了之前说的以外，这次我再补充几点：

- 1. 如果你现在或曾做过我说过的事，停下！更好的建议：举报。
- 2. 如果你被抓，这只是时间问题，务必坦白，务必和解，取得受害者谅解。
- 3. 多看上一封信，预防为主。

经历了一审，我也知道了很多之前不知道的事，一个就是一但你犯了罪，刑期就不是你能决定的了，你能做的只有积极认罪争取和解。第二个是在法院我发现有不少我这样情况的人，所以留学生交友也要留个心眼，再有也是最重要的，别抱侥幸心理，如果我们承担不起。



“Unlike me, I hope you will avoid doing these six things.”

- ① Never exchange money recklessly, ② If you must exchange money, never use illegal private exchange services or individuals,
- ③ Even if you go to an exchange service, never transfer money to others via bank transfer instead of cash transactions,
- ④ Never withdraw cash using someone else’s bank card,
- ⑤ Never accept requests to collect cash or bank cards on behalf of others,
- ⑥ If something seems suspicious, always refuse.

“Always be extra cautious when looking for a part-time job.”

"I found a part-time job where I could set my own hours and make a lot of money. Unfortunately, without knowing the full truth, I ended up being taken advantage of and violated the law."

"I made a big mistake because I couldn't refuse a friend's request."

"Even if a friend, a partner, or relatives ask for help, you must firmly refuse if something seems suspicious."

"Please, never accept errands or part-time jobs that promise easy money, high earnings, or involve suspicious tasks. Always make sure to follow the law."

"I asked several times if the money was illegal, but every time I was told that it wasn't. I didn't plan to work the part-time job for long and trusted what the other person said."



I . Voice Phishing Scams

Types of Voice Phishing Scams

1. Cash collection

Collecting large amounts of cash is dangerous. The instructions typically tell you to receive cash and deliver it to a designated location.

2. Remittance

They may lure you by offering millions of Korean won and promising a commission for exchanging it, but there is a high risk of becoming entangled in criminal activity.

3. Bank card lending

Never lend your bank account or card. Your information could be used for criminal activities.

4. Proxy mobile phone activation

Do not activate a mobile phone on someone else's behalf. The victim may consider you the perpetrator.



1. Cash Collection

Collecting large amounts of cash is dangerous!

1 Instructions to collect cash

The task of going to a designated location to collect large amounts of cash is highly likely to be involved in a crime.

The instructions may even specify the attire and a code, asking you to go to a designated location and collect the cash.

2 High risk of involvement in crime

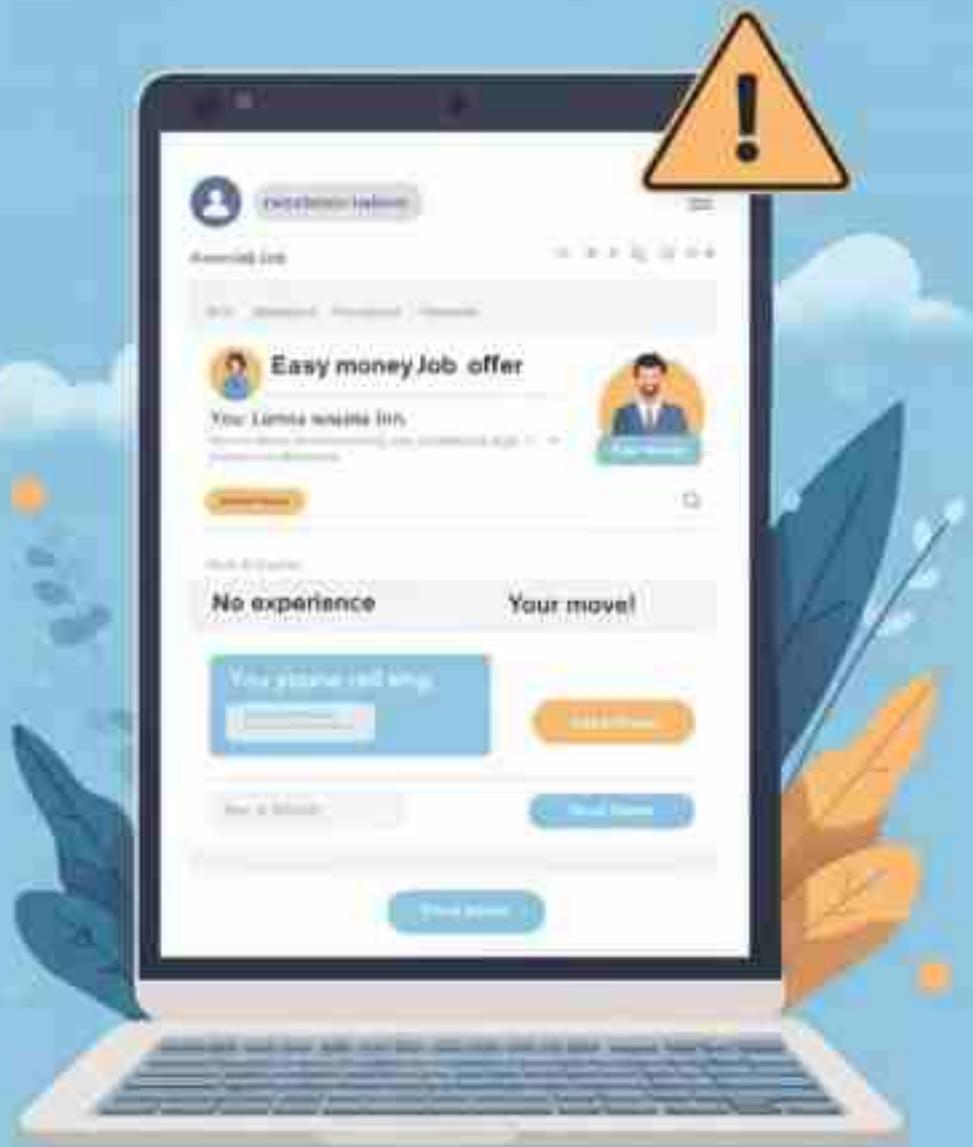
Getting involved in such tasks can put you in dangerous situations.

3 How to prevent it?

Be cautious of high-paying part-time jobs, verify the legitimacy of the company through an official website, and reject job-offers given only via text messages.



Example: Job postings easily found on Facebook



High earnings

If an offer promises an unusually high salary, it should raise suspicion.



No experience required

If they emphasize that no experience is required, there is a high possibility that it could be a scam or may involve criminal activity.



Lack of company details

If there is insufficient or unclear information about the company, you should Exercise caution.

Example: Striving in Korea

1

Lack of information

The company information may not be properly disclosed. Be sure to check contact details, address, and business registration number.

2

Exaggerated advertising

They may lure you with exaggerated promises such as a high salary and easy tasks. However, the actual working conditions may differ.

3

Illegal activity

There is a high risk of getting involved in criminal activities. Do not be tempted by the desire to make quick and easy money.



Example: A company that hires without an interview



Lack of company information

Companies that skip the interview process often hire you for criminal purposes. They make it difficult to verify company information and contact details, and they fail to provide specific details about the job responsibilities.



**NO INTERVIEW
REQUIRED**

A standard interview

- Being transparent with company information
- Appropriate questions during the interview
- Clear explanation of working conditions and salary terms.

A suspicious interview

- Company information is unclear or insufficient
- A simple interview process or inappropriate questions.
- Salary terms that are unusually high.

Example: Companies That Only Communicate via Messaging Apps



Telegram

Strong personal information protection features are often exploited by criminals to maintain anonymity.



Whatsapp

Widely used overseas, this messaging app is increasingly being misused for criminal activities in South Korea.



WeChat

This messenger, widely used in China, has a high potential for misuse in targeting crimes against Chinese nationals in South Korea.



Solution

Be cautious of high-paying part-time jobs.

Be cautious of jobs may be too good to be true

A salary that is too high could indicate a risky job, so be cautious and do not be swayed by it. In particular, offers of easy high earnings without an interview are likely to involve criminal activity, and should raise suspicion.

Verify the company information thoroughly

You should search for company information online and check reviews from others. If you have any doubts, consider reporting the situation to the police.

Consult with people around you

When you receive a high-paying part-time job offer, it's important to seek advice from those around you. Specifically, ask your school or workplace in South Korea if such part-time jobs are legitimate or possible.



Research about the company before proceeding



Official Company Website

Check the company's official website for details on business activities, history, and employment information.



Social Media

Look up the company's page on Facebook, Instagram, and other social media platforms. Also check reviews from employees.



Job Hiring websites

Check job portals like JobKorea and Saramin to see if the company's information and job listings match those on the official website.

Solution

Be cautious If a company or employer only contacts you via messenger

Safe communication

It is safer to contact through the company's official website, phone number, and email address. This allows you to verify the company's information and increase trustworthiness.

Risky Communication

Companies that only use mobile messengers like Telegram, WhatsApp, or WeChat are more likely to be involved in criminal activities. They may intend to exchange information discreetly and hide their identities.





2. Currency exchange and remittance

"Be cautious of requests for currency exchange or remittance between individuals!"

Request for currency exchange

If someone offers to pay you a commission for exchanging Korean won into yuan or Vietnamese dong, be cautious

Request for money transfer

If someone asks you to transfer money on their behalf, claiming that their account has been suspended, this is a major red flag

Risks

Without even realizing it, you could become involved in criminal activities such as voice phishing, drug trafficking, or money laundering for criminals.



Case 1: A Friend's Offer to Pay University Tuition on Your Behalf

1

Friend's offer

If a friend offers to help pay your tuition by exchanging Chinese yuan or Vietnamese dong sent from your hometown into Korean won, be cautious.

2

Offer of a commission

A friend may tempt you by offering to exchange yuan or Vietnamese dong for Korean won, pay your tuition, and even provide a commission. However, this could lead to your involvement in criminal activities.

3

Risks of involvement in crime

However, the money your friend offers to exchange might come from a victim of a voice phishing scam involving a Korean citizen. Therefore, any request for currency exchange outside of an official exchange bureau should be firmly declined.



Case 2: Duty-free Purchase Agency



1

Offer

Many times, offers are made that if you work as a duty-free shop purchasing agent, you can receive a high commission.

2

Instructions for currency exchange or money transfer

They may instruct you to exchange currency in order to purchase items, asking you to send Korean Won or transfer money to someone else they direct.

3

Risks

However, in reality, there is a high possibility that you could unknowingly become involved in a crime by transferring voice phishing funds or criminal proceeds to others.

Case 3: A Proposal to Purchase Jewellery from a Jewellery Store and Deliver It



Offer

The person asks you to go to a jewelry store and purchase a gold necklace by bank transfer. After that, you are asked to receive the gold necklace, resell it at another jewelry store, and then deliver the payment to a person they specify.



Characteristics

Such offers often come through messaging apps like Telegram, where individuals will approach you with promises of easy money. They may offer a commission or reward for your involvement, making the proposition seem attractive.



Caution

It may seem like a simple task of buying and selling jewelry, but you could unknowingly become involved in crimes such as money laundering or facilitating the transfer of fraudulently obtained funds.



3. The act of handing over a bank account or credit card is a crime

“If I send you a debit or credit card, withdraw cash and then transfer back the money.”

If you agree to a proposal where someone asks you to send a debit or credit card via courier, withdraw cash from an ATM, and transfer the money to the account they provide in exchange for a 3% fee, you could face up to 5 years in prison or a fine of up to 30 million KRW.

Give me your account number and I will transfer you money. Then transfer that money to an account I tell you.

Sending money on behalf of someone else can lead to involvement in fraudulent activities. It is crucial to always verify who you are sending money to, why the money is being sent, and the purpose behind the transaction.

“I will give you money if you open a bank account and give me the card number and PIN”

If someone offers to handle business registration or bank account opening on your behalf and promises to pay you 300,000 to 400,000 KRW each time you send them related documents, and requests that you send them your card or PIN, this can lead to a penalty of up to 5 years in prison or a fine of up to 30 million KRW.



Solution

Don't lend your bank account or credit card to anyone, and don't accept someone's bank account or credit card



Do not transfer or accept credit cards or bank account information

Exchanging bank information or credit cards is a violation of the Electronic Financial Transactions Act and can lead to legal penalties.

It is prohibited to withdraw or transfer money using someone else's card

Receiving someone else's credit card, bankbook, or PIN through courier or quick service and using it to withdraw money or transfer funds to another person can be considered aiding and abetting a scam.

Severe punishment

When you lend your bank account or credit card to someone else, it is often used for fraudulent activities. The authorities may charge you with involvement in a crime, and you could be subject to fines or imprisonment.

4. Mobile phone (USIM proxy activation, delivery)

"If you activate a mobile phone for me, I will pay you 40,000 won per USIM card."

Activating a mobile phone for someone else or providing a USIM card is a violation of the Telecommunications Business Act, and can result in up to one year of imprisonment or a fine of up to 50 million won.

"Please deliver the mobile phone," or "Just turn on the repeater and move it"

Be cautious of job offers that ask you to deliver multiple mobile phones or simply keep the power on for a repeater, as these requests may be used for fraudulent activities.



Solution

Do not activate a mobile USIM on behalf of anyone



Proxy activation of mobile phones Transfer of mobile phones or USIM cards Possibility of punishment

Activating someone else's mobile phone on their behalf is illegal and carries the risk of personal information leakage.

Receiving someone else's mobile phone or USIM and passing it on to another person can also be considered a crime.

If the mobile phone you activated for someone else is used in a crime, the police and prosecution may investigate and charge you.

Solution

Assisting others in using a VPN or VoIP relay device is also a crime.



VPN Pairing method ※ 사진 출처 : AI TIMES (2024. 10. 29일자)



VoIP relaying method ※ 사진 출처 : SBS NEWS (2021. 11. 4일자)

These devices are used to make text messages or phone calls from abroad appear as if they are coming from a South Korean phone number. Since they are intended for criminal purposes, any offer for part-time job that involves turning on multiple phones or relay devices and moving them should be rejected, as it could lead to involvement in a voice phishing crime.



Solutions:

DO NO SHARE YOUR PERSONAL INFORMATION

Never provide

You must never use your name to sign up for a mobile phone, register a corporation, or open a bank account on behalf of others.

Disclosure of personal information Damage Prevention

You should not provide your passport or alien registration number to anyone except government authorities or verified parties.

Data breaches can lead to serious consequences, so it is important to take preventive measures in advance.

1. Were you hired by a company without an interview or signing an employment contract?	✓
2. Did you see the job posting only on social media, and not the company's official website?	✓
3. Were you contacted via Telegram, WhatsApp, or WeChat only?	✓
4. Were you asked to go to a specific location and bring cash?	✓
5. Were you offered a proposal that your tuition or various fees will be paid in Korean won if you provide foreign currency?	✓
6. Have you ever been asked to exchange currency or make a money transfer to your account under the guise of a legitimate dutv-free shopping job?	✓
7. Have you been asked to purchase jewellery and then sell it to another jewellery store and the money to be sent to someone else?	✓
8. Have you been offered to receive a commission for creating a bank account, card, or mobile phone SIM card in your name?	✓
9. Have you been asked to withdraw cash from a bank account or card given to you and then transfer it elsewhere?	✓
10. Have you been asked to switch on and deliver multiple phones or repeaters?	✓



If any of these apply to you, it could be related to a crime, so you must refuse!



II . Drug-related crimes

Drug-related crimes

Possession and use of drugs is strictly prohibited.

In South Korea, you can be punished simply for possessing illegal drugs.

Sales of drugs is strictly prohibited

Drug trafficking is subject to severe legal penalties.

Importation or distribution of drugs is strictly prohibited

Any act of providing a shipping address to bring drugs into South Korea or attempting to smuggle them is a punishable offence.



Cases of drug crimes involving Foreigners in Daejeon

1

International student from Vietnam

The defendant, who was contacted via Facebook by a Vietnamese person, received an offer to "receive drugs to be sold in Korea and be compensated." The defendant then provided the address of a friend's residence in Korea, where the drugs, including ecstasy were imported.

2

Evidence Collection

The defendant, an international student at a university in the Daejeon area, claimed not to have known it was a drug-related crime. However, the authorities confiscated evidence such as Facebook conversation logs and the drugs that were imported by mail.

3

Trial

The court recognized the defendant, who was indicted and detained, guilty of drug importation and sentenced them to 8 years in prison, along with a penalty of 27 million Korean won.

4

Deportation

After serving the prison sentence, the defendant is scheduled to be forcibly deported from South Korea.



If you get penalized in South Korea...

Type of Crime

Crimes that violate South Korean laws, such as voice phishing, drug offenses, and gambling.

Penalty

Imprisonment (with suspended sentence), fines, and forfeiture.

Deportation

After serving the sentence imposed by the South Korean court, you will be deported from South Korea.

Ban from re-entry

In case of deportation, re-entry into South Korea is not permitted.



Summary



Checklist



Seek Legal Counselling



Always Stay Vigilant

Immigration Contact Center (1345)

About the scheme

The Immigration Contact Center is a multilingual information platform that offers, pursuant to the Framework Act on Treatment of Foreigners Residing in the Republic of Korea, counseling on civil affairs and necessary administrative information in various languages to help foreigners residing in Korea adjust to society.

What assistance is provided?

- Immigration-related consultation and guidance on living conveniences for foreigners residing in Korea.
- Tri-party interpretation services for central government agencies, local governments, public institutions, and non-profit organizations handling foreigner-related tasks.
- Tri-party interpretation services for the village attorney system for foreigners.

How can it be accessed?

• Consultation hours

- Weekdays: 09:00~22:00
- After 18:00, only Korean, English, and Chinese services are available.

• Contact number

- Within Korea: Dial **1345** (no area code) from any landline or mobile phone.
- From overseas: Dial **+82-2-1345**.

• Automated Response Service (ARS) Menu

- Press 1: Information on immigration offices, their locations, jurisdiction, and working hours.
- Press 2: Visa issuance application result inquiries.
- Press 3: Foreigner retirement reports and fax submissions for employment reports of overseas Koreans.
- Press 4: Inquiries regarding the village attorney system.
- Press 0: Connect to a customer service representative.

• Multilingual consultation

- Dial **1345**, follow the ARS instructions to select the desired language number, and then press the * button to proceed with the consultation in the chosen language.



Crime Reporting and Consultation

112

Police

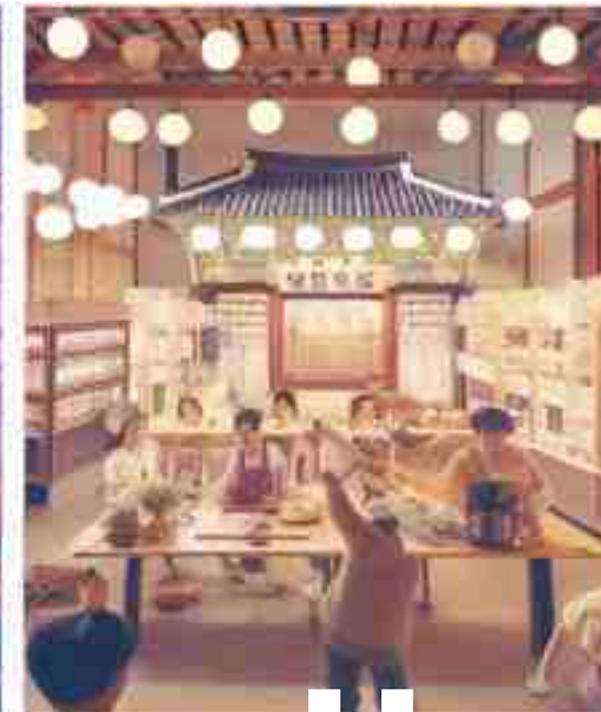
Crime reporting and
general safety inquiries

1301

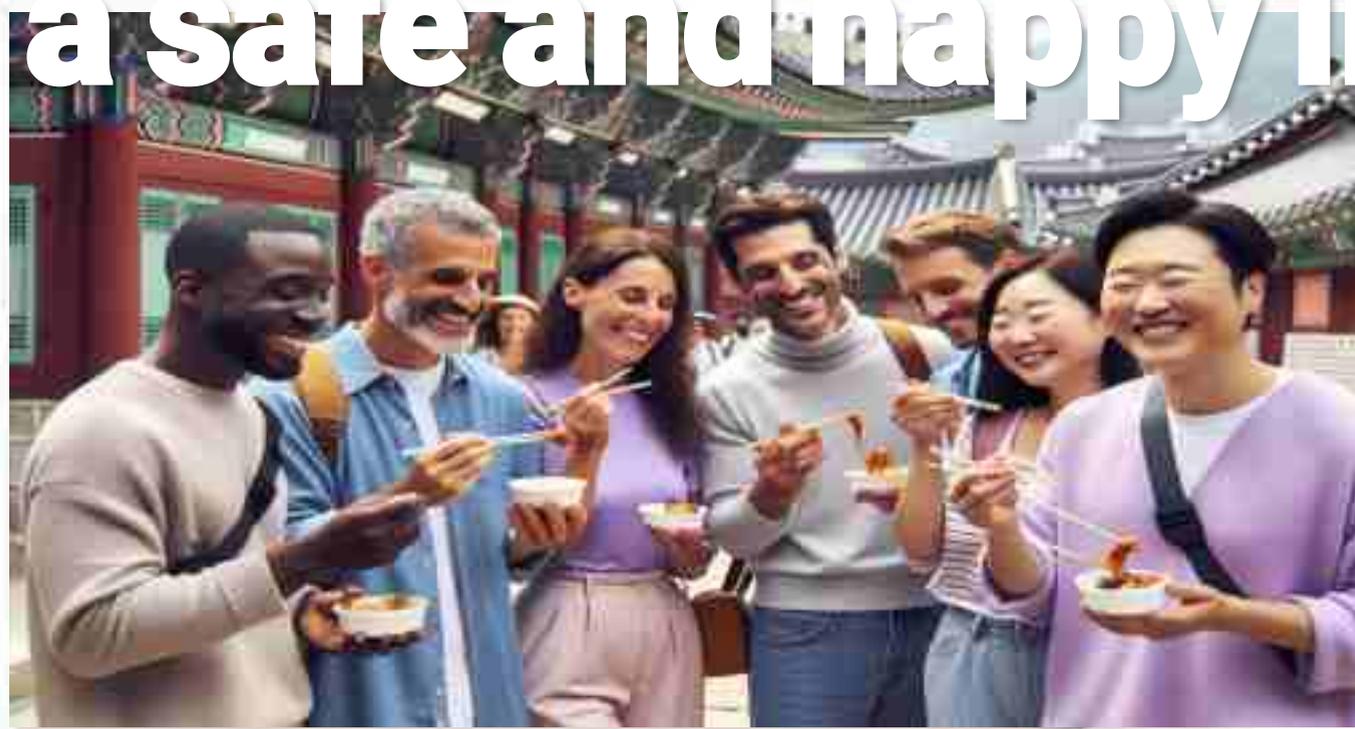
Prosecutors' Office

Civil consultations related to criminal cases





Wishing you a safe and happy life!



Thank you

This material was produced by the Criminal Trial Department of the Daejeon District Prosecutors' Office and translated by the Daejeon Support Center for Foreign Residents.

