

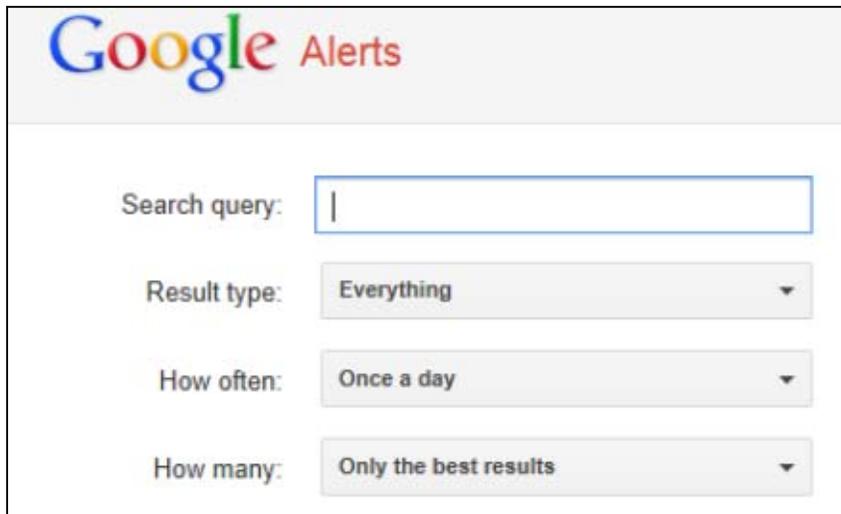
Example for Reporting a Posting as Fraudulent

There are several international scams that involve scraping information about properties for sale and offering them for lease. Inquiries about these properties are answered with an email that uses a name of or similar to the list agent, property owner, or sometimes even a former tenant.

Scammers have historically used Craigslist and rental sites to advertise such properties, but more often we are seeing them use products such as Postlets, which allows you upload the information and have it syndicated to many property sites, including Zillow and Trulia. All of these vendors are aware of such scams, but are unable to tell if a post is legitimate or not unless it is reported to them.

Below is a step-by-step guide for reporting (please only flag listings you have personal knowledge of being fraud):

1. A good tool is to use Google alerts for your property address and MLS# to alert you where your listing is being displayed (requires a gmail account) or simple do an internet search.



The image shows the Google Alerts interface. At the top, the Google logo is followed by the word "Alerts" in red. Below this, there are four rows of controls:

- Search query:** A text input field with a vertical cursor.
- Result type:** A dropdown menu currently set to "Everything".
- How often:** A dropdown menu currently set to "Once a day".
- How many:** A dropdown menu currently set to "Only the best results".

2. Each display on any reputable site should clearly note the source of the information, for example, this listing was sent to Trulia from the MLS syndication partner Point 2, so the listing shows it is provided by the Listing Office via Point 2 and the agent name will be displayed below the company name:

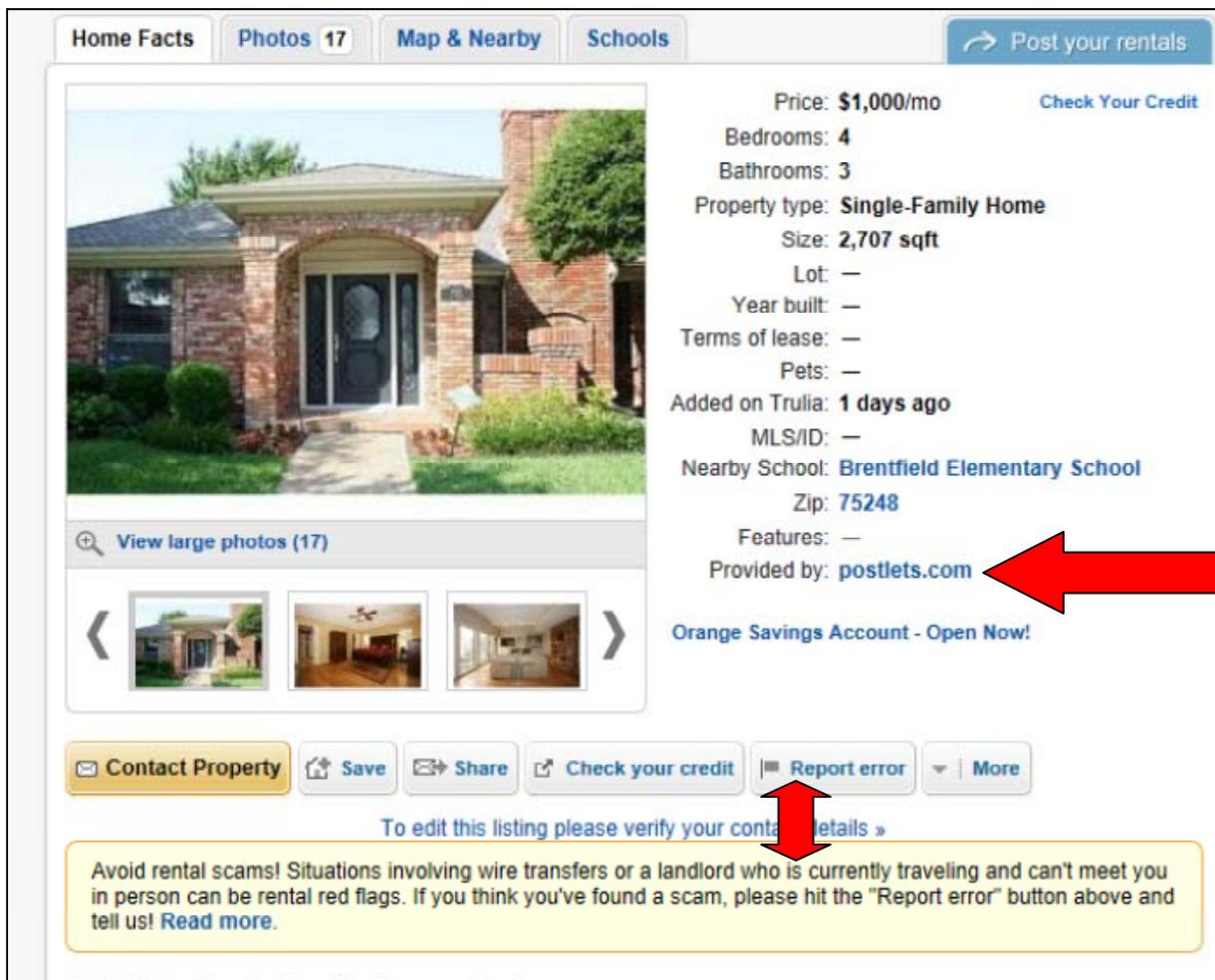


The image shows a snippet of listing information:

- Price/sqft: Ask agent
- Year built: Ask agent
- MLS/ID: 11677550
- Zip: 75115
- Provided by: David Griffin & Company via Point2

A red arrow points to the text "David Griffin & Company via Point2".

3. Some Brokers and agents will upload directly to such sites and they will show as the source of the info. If the agent uses a product that distributes or syndicates, it may replace legitimate syndication postings. In the case of this fraudulent listing below (home was for sale but NOT available for rent), the scammer used the product, Postlets:



Home Facts Photos 17 Map & Nearby Schools [Post your rentals](#)

Price: \$1,000/mo [Check Your Credit](#)

Bedrooms: 4
Bathrooms: 3
Property type: **Single-Family Home**
Size: 2,707 sqft
Lot: —
Year built: —
Terms of lease: —
Pets: —
Added on Trulia: 1 days ago
MLS/ID: —
Nearby School: **Brentfield Elementary School**
Zip: 75248
Features: —
Provided by: [postlets.com](#)

[View large photos \(17\)](#)

[Contact Property](#) [Save](#) [Share](#) [Check your credit](#) [Report error](#) [More](#)

[To edit this listing please verify your contact details »](#)

Avoid rental scams! Situations involving wire transfers or a landlord who is currently traveling and can't meet you in person can be rental red flags. If you think you've found a scam, please hit the "Report error" button above and tell us! [Read more.](#)

Note that this site, Trulia, has a bold warning to consumers about such rental scams and how to report using the "Report error" button.

The contact info for the listing used an "agent name" that does not exist and in this case was similar to the homeowner's name and the "listing website" goes to the Postlet's source site.



Contact Info for 6426 La Manga Dr

Agent: David G

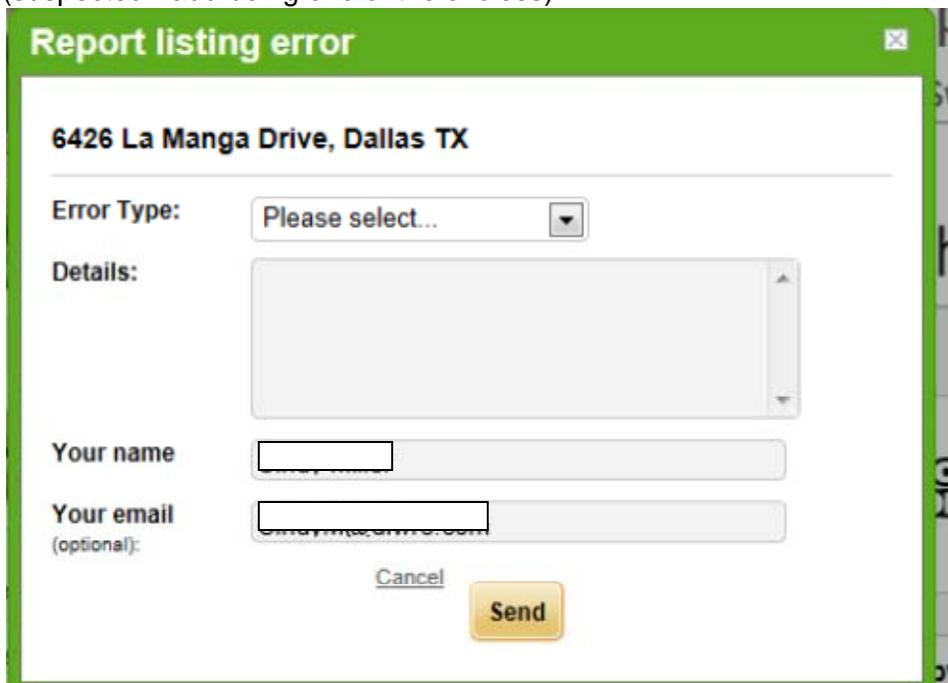
[Listing website](#)

Inquire about this property

Name:

Message:

4. Use the reporting mechanism provided by the site to flag the listing choosing the appropriate selection (suspected fraud being one of the choices):



Report listing error

6426 La Manga Drive, Dallas TX

Error Type:

Details:

Your name:

Your email (optional):

In the case of the larger national sites, you should receive a response immediately assigning a case number:

From: Trulia Help Center [helpcenter@trulia.com]
To:
Cc:
Subject: Trulia Help Center: Case #375967

Thank you for contacting us!

Your message has been routed to Trulia's Customer Service team, and you should expect a person

Please also keep in mind that you can call us for immediate assistance at 888-466-3501 Monday

Please refer to Case #375967 if you do decide to give us a call, or if you have any additional

Thank you again for taking the time to get in touch!

Best Wishes,

The Trulia Team

www.trulia.com

In this case, they investigated blocked this user and responded within 24 hrs:

Sent: Wed 6/20/2012 10:49 AM
To: [redacted]

Hi,

Thank you for notifying Trulia regarding the property listed at <http://www.trulia.com/rental/3087706660>. The listing has been removed and the user account has been blocked. We are actively working to filter out fraudulent listings from our site and appreciate your patience as we continually refine our process. If you continue to find similar properties or have additional questions, please contact <http://www.trulia.com/help/ask/>.

If you would like to pursue this matter further, we encourage you to report this issue to the FBI using their online form (link below):
<http://www.ic3.gov/complaint/default.aspx>

If you have additional questions, please contact us at <http://www.trulia.com/help/ask/> or call Customer Service at 1-888-466-3501.

Sincerely,
Natalie Foote
Trulia Customer Service

5. I then went to the source site (in this case, Postlets was the site that sent to Trulia) – note they also have a scam warning and easy reporting mechanism:

Description Features Photos Map Walk Score Schools Share/Email

4BR/3BA Single Family House \$1,000/month

Bedrooms	4
Bathrooms	3 full, 0 partial
Sq Footage	2,707
Parking	2 dedicated
Pet Policy	Cats, Dogs
Deposit	\$1,000



[see more photos >](#)

Fab Update.Shows like Model.Great Drive Up!Walk to Brentfield.Sparkling wood floors. Light and bright thruout.Incredible kit with granite counters, stainless steel appliances include wine chiller, gas cooktop, all open to outdoors, brkfst and fam rooms. Fresh paint thruout Bathrooms remodeled in latest style. Outdoor kit with wine chiller, Pergola style patio. Split bedroom. Inviting solarium. Ideal floorplan for fam,single or couple.Hurry!

David [redacted]
(502) 638 [redacted]

[Request More Info](#)

Posted: Jun 18, 2012 More info for 6426 La Manga Dr, Dallas, TX | Dallas Apartments
Flag Listing | Terms of Use | Privacy | Equal Opportunity Housing 

 **Beware of scams and fraud.** Avoid transactions without first speaking or meeting in person. **Flag listing.**

Postlets is owned by Zillow, so the response is from Zillow (their investigation took a little longer since they were the source and closed the user's account):

From: Zillow Customer Service [csteam@zillow.com]
To: [REDACTED]
Cc:
Subject: Postlets [ref:_00D301Uz6_50040Kdjv:ref]

Hello,

Thank you for notifying us. We have removed the listing and closed the associated account. Please let us know if you encounter similar cases of abuse in the future.

Please let me know if you have any additional questions.

Thanks for using Zillow & Postlets (Operated by Zillow)

Nicole Johnson
CS Specialist

Mobile? Try Zillow: www.zillow.com/mobile 

6. You may also choose to report the case to the FBI Internet Crime Complaint Center (as they have an ongoing investigation into such scams: www.ic3.gov



Intelligence Note
Prepared by the
Internet Crime Complaint Center (IC3)
March 10, 2010

RENTAL AND REAL ESTATE SCAMS

Individuals need to be cautious when posting rental properties and real estate on-line. The IC3 continues to receive numerous complaints from individuals who have fallen victim to scams involving rentals of apartments and houses, as well as postings of real estate on-line.

Rental scams occur when the victim has rental property advertised and is contacted by an interested party. Once the rental price is agreed-upon, the scammer forwards a check for the deposit on the rental property to the victim. The check is to cover housing expenses and is, either written in excess of the amount required, with the scammer asking for the remainder to be remitted back, or the check is written for the correct amount, but the scammer backs out of the rental agreement and asks for a refund. Since the banks do not usually place a hold on the funds, the victim has immediate access to them and believes the check has cleared. In the end, the check is found to be counterfeit and the victim is held responsible by the bank for all losses.

Another type of scam involves real estate that is posted via classified advertisement websites. The scammer duplicates postings from legitimate real estate websites and reposts these ads, after altering them. Often, the scammers use the broker's real name to create a fake email, which gives the fraud more legitimacy. When the victim sends an email through the classified advertisement website inquiring about the home, they receive a response from someone claiming to be the owner. The "owner" claims he and his wife are currently on missionary work in a foreign country. Therefore, he needs someone to rent their home while they are away. If the victim is interested in renting the home, they are asked to send money to the owner in the foreign country.

If you have been a victim of Internet crime, please file a complaint at <http://www.IC3.gov/>.

HOW TO REPORT A LEASE SCAM ON ONE OF YOUR LISTINGS

COMPANY	CONTACT
Zillow	listingsupport@zillow.com and/or flag the listing or zachc@zillow.com
Trulia	azheng@trulia.com
Craigs List	Users may flag postings they believe to be in violation of craigslist guidelines, by clicking on one of the flagging links at the upper right corner of each posting: miscategorized - wrong category/site, discusses another ad, otherwise misplaced prohibited - violates craigslist Terms of Use or other posted guidelines
HotPads	The fastest and easiest way to notify us about a suspicious listing is to click the "Report Listing" icon, which is located in the top right corner of every property listed on HotPads. If the listing has not been removed within 24 hours and you are still concerned, please email us directly with the full address of the property: clientservices@hotpads.com
Homes.com	888-510-8795 – phone 858-535-9341 - Fax