

'Dear, did you say pastry?': meet the 'AI granny' driving scammers up the wall

Level 1: Elementary

1 Warmer

a. How can you stay safe online? Discuss in a group and choose three tips to share with your class.

1. Tip 1: _____

2. Tip 2: _____

3. Tip 3: _____

2 Key words

a. Write the correct words from the wordpool to complete the definitions below. Then find and highlight them in the article to read them in context.

upgrade
fraud

download
call centre

awareness
AI bot

waste
pastry

trained
scammer

- Someone who tries to trick others to get their money or personal information is a(n) _____.
- A(n) _____ is a computer program that can talk like a person.
- _____ is the crime of lying to people to get their money or personal benefits illegally.
- To _____ is to use something in a way that is not useful, effective or valuable.
- To get data from another computer, usually using the internet, is to _____ it.
- A(n) _____ is a type of sweet food made from special flour dough and usually containing something such as fruit or nuts.
- To _____ something is to make it better by adding or replacing parts of it.

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8. When someone or something is _____, they are taught to do something through practice.
9. A(n) _____ is a place where large numbers of people work to handle incoming or outgoing telephone calls.
10. _____ is knowing that something exists.

b. Complete the sentences with words from the previous activity. You may have to change the form of the word.

1. Turn off the lights, so we don't _____ electricity.
2. The _____ called her and tried to get her banking information.
3. The website has a(n) _____ that helps answer simple questions.
4. The advert is raising _____ about how dangerous it is to text and drive.
5. I want to _____ my phone to a newer one.
6. The company opened a new _____ to provide more customer support.

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- 1 "Daisy" receives lots of calls from scammers. But because she asks if they like tea, the criminals are angry, not successful.
- 2 Daisy is not a real grandmother but an AI bot made to fight fraud. Her task is to waste the scammers' time.
- 3 O2 rolled out "AI granny" Daisy to show what artificial intelligence can do to fight scammers.
- 4 In one call, a scammer tries to take control of her computer. He waits while she looks for her glasses and tries to turn it on and find the Internet Explorer icon.
- 5 "You know, back in my day we didn't have all this technology. Everything was much simpler. What about you, dear?" she says.
- 6 In another call, Daisy wastes more time. "I see a lot of options, dear. It says things like back, forward, reload and, oh, what's this? Save as. How do I find the homepage?" she asks.
- 7 A third scammer asks her to download the Google Play Store, and she replies: "Dear, did you say pastry? I'm not really on the right page." She then complains that her screen has "gone black like the night sky".
- 8 "If you are wasting our time, ma'am, you are going to lose your money because someone is trying to take your money, and we are trying to upgrade your security," says the scammer.
- 9 She says: "I see a triangle icon, but I'm not sure if it's the right one. It could be a slice of pie. You know, my eyesight isn't what it used to be."
- 10 Behind this is an AI system which has been trained on real scam calls, said Virgin Media O2's marketing director, Simon Valcarcel.
- 11 The company worked with Jim Browning, who posts videos of himself wasting criminals' time. They put phone numbers on websites with fake prizes for scammers to find them.
- 12 After a few days, the scam calls started. The results were then recorded on a laptop.
- 13 Over a few weeks, Daisy wasted each scammer's time for up to 40 minutes when they could have been scamming real people.
- 14 Many scammers work in call centres. If one has no luck, their details will go to another.
- 15 In one case, Daisy was passed between four different callers.
- 16 Valcarcel said the project was to raise awareness. Some scammers guessed they were talking to an AI bot, but in the future, they could use many different voices and personalities.

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3 Comprehension check

a. Answer the questions using information from the article.

1. Who is Daisy?
2. What does Daisy do?
3. What kind of "person" is Daisy?
4. What are two ways Daisy wastes scammers' time during phone calls?
5. How long can Daisy keep scammers on the phone?
6. What company created Daisy?
7. What happens when one scammer can't get information from Daisy?
8. What was the purpose of the Daisy project, according to Valcarcel?
9. How many different callers contacted Daisy in one instance?
10. Who is Jim Browning, and how did he help the project?

4 Key language

a. Underline the subordinating clause in the sentences below. Circle the conjunction.

1. Because she asks if they like tea, the criminals are angry, not successful.
2. You are going to lose your money because someone is trying to take your money.
3. He waits while she looks for her glasses.
4. Daisy wasted each scammer's time for up to 40 minutes when they could have been scamming real people.

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b. Write four sentences about yourself and your life using the conjunctions above.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

5 Discussion

a. Discuss these statements.

- People usually know when it is a scam call.
- To protect yourself from scams and frauds, check your accounts often.
- Using the same password on many websites is dangerous but so much easier to remember.

6 In your own words

a. Do some research about how to protect yourself and your loved ones against frauds and scams. Answer these questions.

- What are some ways that scammers try to hurt people?
- How can people protect themselves and their loved ones?
- How can AI help fight this problem?
- What are some things to do if you, or someone you love, have been scammed?

b. Report your findings to the class and share the information you learned, as well as your opinions. Include facts and statistics that support your research. Give reasons to support your answers.