

The **UPDATE**



CROUDFUNDING OR CROWDFRAUDING?

BECAUSE CROWDFUNDING is built on trust, it's ripe for fraud. We're talking about the misuse of online forums such as GoFundMe, Indiegogo, and Kickstarter, which people use to solicit funds for their inventions, documentaries, and other projects. In exchange for your money, they may offer a sample of their product or a digital download, for example. But those making the requests are only as reliable as their promises—and those promises aren't always sincere.

The Federal Trade Commission recently settled its first crowdfunding case against a man it claimed had scammed contributors out of more than \$122,000. Erik Chevalier, using the business name The Forking Path Co., asked for funding for a board game called "The Doom That Came to Atlantic City." Almost 1,250 backers pledged \$50 or more, hoping to get a game or one of its figurines. Instead, according to the FTC's complaint, Chevalier kept the money, using it

Beware of these signs to avoid becoming a potential victim of online theft.

for rent, moving expenses, and equipment for another project. The settlement prohibits him from misrepresentations in future projects. He was also fined almost \$112,000, although that was suspended because he was unable to pay.

Similar scam crowdfunding have been outed by dismayed funders on such websites as AndriodPolice and Kick-scammed, and on the GoFundMe page on Facebook.

Crowdfunding has brought promising ideas to life, but

watch out for signs that you should do some more checking before you fork over any money:

There's no track record. Ideally, you want to support people who have done other successful projects. Solicitations appear on multiple crowdfunding sites. That may indicate a money grab.

If you think you've been the victim of a scam, file a complaint with the website, then at ftc.gov or with your state's attorney general.

BRACE YOURSELF FOR A SUGAR SHOCK

IF CUTTING DOWN ON SUGAR is one of your New Year's Resolutions, don't think that swilling reduced-calorie sodas such as Coca-Cola Life or Pepsi True will do much for your strategy. Sure, they might be lower in sugar than regular soda, which packs about 10 teaspoons into a 12-ounce can—but they still contain about 6 teaspoons. That's the daily limit for women, according to the American Heart Association; for men, it's 9 teaspoons.

So what's different? Coke Life and Pepsi True are sweetened with a mixture of sugar and stevia, a no-calorie sweetener from plant leaves. Though the green cans may lead you to think these drinks are better for you, don't lose sight of the fact that no soda is a healthy

choice. Some studies show that just one can of regular soda per day is enough to raise your risk of heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and obesity. As for stevia, "it's probably safe but we'd like to see more research," says Michael F. Jacobson, Ph.D., executive director of the Center for Science in the Public Interest. And most colas have artificial caramel coloring. Some types contain 4-Mel, a potential carcinogen, but you can't tell that from the label. So we recommend limiting food and drinks with caramel color. We didn't test Coke Life or Pepsi True for 4-Mel.

We did taste-test them, and our trained testers and untrained staffers said they preferred regular Coke and Pepsi over the low-calorie sodas.

Sweet News
Companies don't have to call out added sugar on food labels, but the FDA wants to change that.



A LIFE WITH NO WRINKLES

Luxury Laundry
Conventional steam irons like the T-Fal FV4495 Ultraglide has high steaming rate and is very good at ironing fabric for a price of only \$45.



IRONING TO GET THAT CRISP, FRESH LOOK may seem quaint in an era when casual Friday has morphed into casual every day. Closets with less cotton and more blends mean you don't need to iron much, and studies have shown that about a quarter of all consumers iron only when absolutely necessary. So just how wrinkled does a garment have to be when for you to get out the iron? Standards vary—all the way up to that slept-in look. But for those occasions when the wrinkles just can't be overlooked, an iron that produces plenty of steam will remove stubborn wrinkles faster. (You'll find the best ones above.) Plus we tested several products claimed to smooth out wrinkles with an iron.

And yet there's no escaping dirty laundry. The average family does around 300 loads per year. Manufacturers get that your life is hectic and offer ways to take the pain out of the laundry routine, for a price. A large-capacity washer and dryer let you do more laundry at once. The biggest we've tested hold about 28 pounds of laundry, or about 20 full-sized bath towels, and the smallest hold only about 12 pounds, or nine towels. Options that trim wash time by 15 to 20 minutes without sacrificing cleaning ability also prevent pileups. And a dryer with a moisture sensor rather than a thermostat will recognize more quickly when laundry is dry, allowing you to get back to your life outside the laundry room.