

*The last page has a checklist for things to keep in mind before you leave for the airport. If you don't have time to read anything else, check that list!*

### **Before you arrive at the airport: Packing your bags**

There are a few things to consider when packing your bags. Most airlines allow one carry-on of a particular size that can fit in the overhead compartment and one personal item (purse, laptop bag, etc) that can fit under the seat in front of you. You will need to check with your airline for the dimensions permitted for a carryon bag.

If you decide to bring a carryon bag, pay attention to the items you are placing in it. As of April 2011:

“All liquids, gels and aerosols must be in 3.4 ounce (100ml) or smaller containers. Larger containers that are half-full or toothpaste tubes rolled up are not allowed. **Each container must be 3.4 ounces (100ml) or smaller.**

All liquids, gels and aerosols must be placed in a single, quart-size, zip-top, clear plastic bag. Gallon size bags or bags that are not zip-top such as fold-over sandwich bags are not allowed. **Each traveler can use only one, quart-size, zip-top, clear plastic bag.” –TSA.gov**

There are exceptions for certain medications and other items, so if you have questions, visit [www.TSA.gov](http://www.TSA.gov) and click on the button “For Travelers” for access to lists of prohibited items and the 3-1-1 Liquids policy. Please also remember that scissors over a certain length, box cutters, lighters, certain tools, and other sharp implements may be prohibited from your carry-on luggage. Visit TSA.gov for a full list.

If you need to check a bag, either because you need to transport items that are not permitted in carryon (large bottles of shampoo, acne medication above the limit, etc) or because your bag is too big, check with your airline for checked bag fees and make sure you have enough cash for your departure *and* your return. **NOTE: Some airlines will offer reduced fees if you pay online if you check-in in advance. Make sure you have enough to cover the higher ‘at-the-airport’ fee for your return.**

Finally, a note about bag selection: Make sure you can either lift your bag by yourself (in the case of a carryon, over your head), or, if you are in need of special assistance due to an accessibility need, that you communicate that to the airline and to the event hosts ahead of time so that accommodations may be made. Luggage will sometimes shift in the overhead compartment and sometimes flights will run out of carryon room and will need to “gate-check” your carryon bag. For these reasons, open totes are not ideal for your primary luggage, though they are not prohibited. **NOTE: It is a good idea to have the cash to check a bag even if you don't plan on it, in case you get to the airport and discover your bag is too big.**

### **Don't Leave Home Without!**

Even if you are not required to show identification (only those 18+ are), if you have a driver's license, permit, state ID card, etc, you should bring it. Make sure it is easily accessible and on your person. *(A passport will also work, but if you have another option, you might want to use that instead, so you don't risk losing your passport).*

*Written 2011. Please check TSA.gov for the most up-to-date regulations.*

Bring your itinerary! It likely has a confirmation number on it that can allow you to self-check-in at the airport. Some airlines will let you check in in advance at home online and print your boarding passes. You may also be able to choose seat assignments during this time. If you do print at home, bring them with you! If you forget them, you can get new ones printed at the airport.

Program the contact information for the travel agent and event hosts into your cell phone. Also make sure that you have those numbers written on an index card or piece of paper in your wallet, purse or carryon, in case something happens to your phone.

Check your phone to see if it has an ICE (In Case of Emergency) listing in your contacts. If it does, program the number someone would call if you were in an emergency (likely your parents/guardians). If it doesn't, you can easily make one by using ICE as a name in a regular contact entry.

A note about snacks: Most airlines will sell snacks onboard, but they do not accept cash, so plan ahead. You can pack snacks in your carryon, but remember: no liquids! Any soda, coffee, water, etc that you have before you get to security must be consumed or thrown away as it is not allowed through. You can buy drinks (or fill up a reusable water bottle) after you get through security.

### ***Getting to the airport and checking in***

Arriving at the airport **90 minutes** before your flight is generally enough time to check in, check your bag, get through security and have some time before your flight to buy snacks, use the restroom and be at your gate. However, if you are nervous about finding your gate, getting through security or just want more time, you can arrive **2 hours** before without a problem.

When you arrive at the airport, you'll want to find the ticket counter with your airline's name on it. Some will have electronic kiosks where you can check in on your own. These kiosks may ask for your confirmation number or for your last name and flight number, so check your itinerary. If you're having trouble, an airline employee should be nearby to help you. Once you've checked in and printed your boarding pass, if you don't have any bags to check, then it's time to go to security. If you do have a bag to check, there may be a line or you may just be able to walk up to an agent at the desk who will check your bag. They may ask for your boarding pass and/or ID.

**NOTE: If you are under 18, you can also ask an agent if there is anyone who can assist you to and through security. If you don't want assistance, you can also just ask the agent what gate your flight is leaving from and to point you toward the right security line for your gate.**

### ***Getting Through Security***

Once you find the security line, you'll show your boarding pass and ID to a TSA agent who will check both and hand them back to you. You will then be directed to another line where you'll have to put your bags through a screener. Here are a few things that are standard experience:

You will need to remove shoes, belts and coats (removing bulky sweatshirts are also a good idea) and place them through x-ray screening.

Remove everything from your pockets, including cell phones, wallets, scrap paper and coins. Some of the new scanners will register even a gum wrapper. You will also want to remove large watches, jewelry, etc. Place all these items in your carry on or one of the

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trays provided. Sometimes you will be allowed to keep your boarding pass and ID in your hand, but sometimes you will be asked to put them in your bag.

If you have brought a laptop, it will need to be taken out of your bag and placed alone in a tray to be screened. If it is in a case, it may need to be removed from that, as well.

If you have a ziplock bag full of bottles (see the liquid policy above), you will need to remove it from your bag for separate screening. If you have an empty water bottle, take that out, too. They can see it in the x-ray and may pull your bag for additional screening if they can't tell it's empty.

There are generally two different types of screening being used. The first is a metal detector. It may go off if you left your belt on, or have a lot of heavy jewelry on. The second is an AIT unit (sometimes called a "body scanner" in the media). You will be asked to stand in the machine in a particular position for a few seconds and will then need to wait on the other side for the scan to be read and communicated to the agent near you. This scan will show paper in your pockets and plastic or metal objects on your person (like navel rings, for example). You are permitted to choose a pat-down instead of the AIT scan (see below).

Only one of the above options will be used. If you trigger either, they may do a modified pat-down of that area (or ask you to raise your shirt to show the navel ring, for example), or a more thorough pat-down. If you have medical devices – insulin pumps, pacemakers, metal plates, braces, etc – declare them to the TSA agent before you enter the scan. Having certain medical devices on your person may mean that you will need to have a personal screening. Also visit [TSA.gov](http://TSA.gov) for regulations.

**You are permitted to request a pat-down instead of the AIT scan.** You may want to discuss with your parents/guardians what you feel most comfortable doing.

For more information on what triggers a pat-down, what they entail, and your rights to same-gender agents, privacy and witnesses, visit the TSA website at:

[https://www.tsa.gov/travel/security-screening#quickset-security\\_screening\\_quicktabs\\_3](https://www.tsa.gov/travel/security-screening#quickset-security_screening_quicktabs_3)

Once you're through security, double check that you have all your things, including your boarding pass and ID. You can put your belt, watches, etc. back on, repack your bag, and slip your ID back in your purse or wallet. You will only need your boarding pass from here on out.

### ***To the Gate and on the Plane!***

Once you're through security, it's time to find your gate. You should do this before you do anything else in the terminal. There will be signs overhead to point you in the right direction. If you can't remember what gate your flight is leaving from, there should be TV monitors in the terminal. Look for one that says departures and find your airline and flight number (it's on your boarding pass).

When you get to your gate, there will be a monitor that displays the flight number and departure time. It may also say whether there is a delay, as well as when the boarding time is. Check all of those to make sure you're in the right place. If it doesn't show your flight, check with the agent at the desk. There may be another flight leaving from there before yours.

You may have enough time, now that you know where you will need to be, to buy snacks (remember, they don't take cash on the plane), use the restroom or even eat a meal somewhere

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in the terminal. Just remember to be back to your gate at least 30 minutes before departure so that you can board.

**If you cannot find your gate, find an airline agent. You will likely find them at other gate stands and they can help point you in the right direction.**

Once you're on the plane, flight attendants can answer most questions you might have. Most flights will provide a soft drink and small snack (peanuts, pretzels, etc) during the flight. Safety information will also be in the seat pocket in front of you.

### ***If You Get Harassed or Your Rights are Ignored/Infringed***

Hopefully all the people you interact with from the time you leave your home to the time you arrive in our care will be friendly, kind and helpful. It's unfortunate but we know that sometimes people get treated differently or become targets because of an aspect of their identity. Minors, people with disabilities, women, People of Color, transgender folks and people without US citizenship may be more likely to be exposed to negative experiences in public spaces like airports, regardless and sometimes because of increased security. If this is a concern of yours, do not hesitate to call our office at any time so we can provide extra advice in advance of your travel, support and advocacy for you while you're in transit and pastoral support and investigation after your travel if something happens.

Read the National Center for Transgender Equality's page on navigating airport security: <https://transequality.org/know-your-rights/airport-security>

Become familiar with the disability policy of the airline(s) you intend to fly with: <https://www.cheapflights.com/news/traveling-with-disabilities> and these tips from the US Department of Transportation: <https://www.transportation.gov/individuals/aviation-consumer-protection/traveling-disability>.

The American Civil Liberties Union has answers to common questions about encountering law enforcement and security in airports: <https://www.aclu.org/know-your-rights/what-do-when-encountering-law-enforcement-airports-and-other-ports-entry-us>

Possible actions if you are being harassed:

1. Proactively commit to yourself that you will care for yourself in safe ways if something happens. It may not be within your power to prevent it, but it is in your power to not blame yourself and to seek help.
2. If it's possible to do so safely, remove yourself from the situation. Don't worry about being polite or hurting someone's feelings, just leave. For example, it is always within your right to ask a flight attendant to reseat you. Stay in populated areas.
3. Engage with bystanders. Depending on the situation you can start talking to or making eye contact with another passenger, a security agent, gate agent, flight attendant or airport staff. You can, but you don't have to if you don't want to, disclose that you're being harassed. You can ask for help, point out that you are being harassed or treated unfairly, or just draw other people's attention your way.
4. Report it. Depending on the situation you can call or text a trusted adult for support, report it to a gate agent or flight attendant or report it to your airline's customer service.

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Reporting doesn't have to be immediate. If action needs to be taken, it's helpful to report as soon as you can, but we know that's not always possible. Know that you don't have to deal with it all on your own.

5. When you're safe once more, care for yourself. Get some nourishing food or a treat, talk to someone you trust, or do a spiritual practice. Help yourself recover.
6. Please let us know, in as little or as much detail as you want, so that we can be present for you.

### ***I Have a Layover!***

If you have a layover, we've done our best to make sure you do not have to rush from one flight to another. However, delays can make this tricky. Remember before you panic, though: if you are flying across time zones, the boarding time for your next flight is the local time, not the time on your watch.

Your flight attendant will likely not know what gate your next flight is at, but there will likely be an agent right outside the jetway with that information. If there isn't or there are a lot of people waiting, find the nearest TV monitor for that information. Like you did for your first flight, find the signs overhead and follow them to your next gate. In some airports, you may need to take a tram from one area to the next. They are usually very clearly marked. If you have little time or can't find where you are going, your first stop should be an airline agent who can help you. If you can't find someone, or are still confused, call whatever contact you were given for travel confusion/trouble. They can try to help you through.

Once you find your gate, again, check the monitors for delays, etc. If you have time, you can check the terminal for food options or browse in a bookstore. Just don't stray too far from the gate if you don't have much time. Sometimes flights can arrive and board before the "delay time" displayed on the monitor.

### ***Arriving***

When you get off your last plane, follow signs to Baggage Claim. The agent at the gate you arrive at *may* have baggage claim number information, but may not. If you didn't check a bag, you should head that way, anyway, as your pick-up options are likely in the same area. Defer to whatever directions you were given by your event host.

In Baggage Claim, there may be a monitor that tells you what carousel your luggage is on. If not, look for one that has your airline listed near it and check that carousel's monitor for your flight number. If you can't find it, there should be a desk or other area for your airline nearby.

After you have your bag, proceed to your pick-up location. You did it!

When the event is over, you'll just repeat this process to head home.

**AT HOME CHECK LIST**

- I have enough cash to check my bag both ways, even if I don't plan to.
- I have appropriate ID.
- I've checked that my carryon doesn't contain prohibited items.
- I have phone numbers programmed into my cell and written on a piece of paper.
- I have communicated any accessibility needs.
- I know my flight number and airline.

**Tips and Tricks**

If you have a smart phone: see if you can get an app that has airport maps! "Point Inside" for the iPhone finds your location in the airport and has terminal maps so you can find your gate and someplace to eat.

Check out airport websites in advance. You can see what the terminals' layouts are. This is especially helpful if you have a layover, so you'll know ahead of time if everything's in the same building or if you'll need to take a tram.

Flip-flops are hard to walk fast in; if you have a layover, they're not the ideal footwear!

A book or other small thing to do on the plane and in the airport is good. Some airports have free wireless, but at most you have to pay.

Planes can sometimes be warm or cool. Layers are your friends!

If you are checking a bag it can be useful to carry a written description of your bag as well as a list of some of the contents. This way, if you need to be put on a different flight or if your bag is delayed, you'll be able to accurately describe it and its contents to an airline agent.