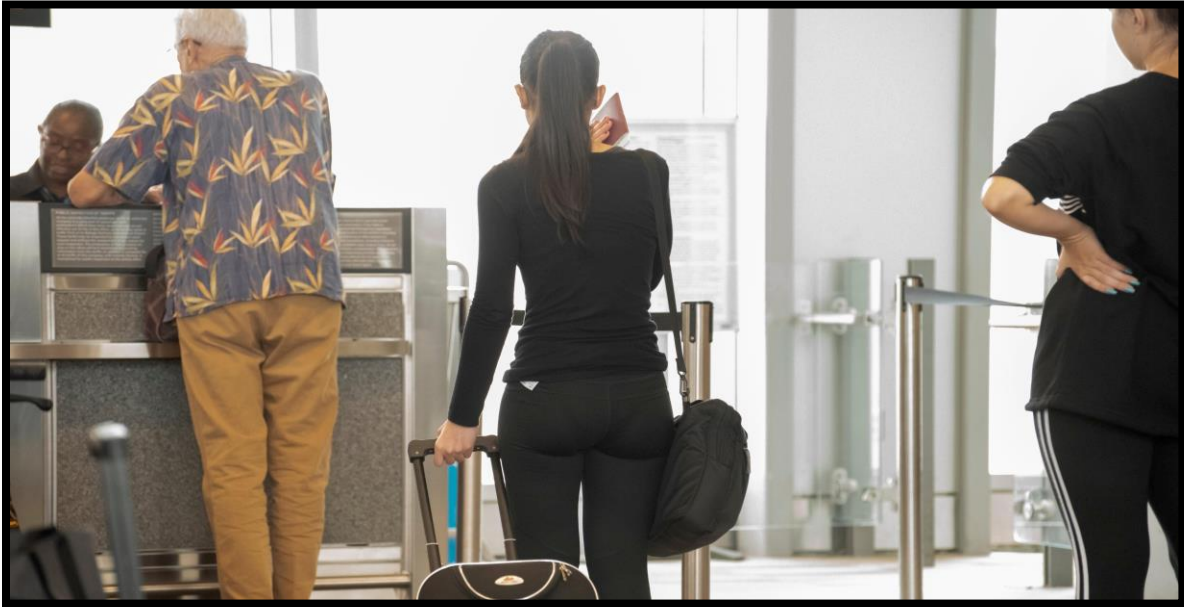


The Airline Passenger Rights Everyone Should Know

You should know what you're entitled to the next time you're bumped, delayed, or trapped on the tarmac.



While airline travel is often frustrating, you don't have to resign yourself to a completely miserable experience. As a passenger, you have [certain rights](#) set out by the U.S. Department of Transportation in the event of delays, cancellations and other unexpected situations. Here's what you're entitled to when you fly.

You're entitled to compensation for being bumped

Airlines commonly oversell their flights so they don't lose money on no-shows, but this means that there aren't actually enough spots to go around if everyone who books a ticket and gets a confirmed seat decides to travel.

Airlines are required to ask for volunteers to give up their seats before they start kicking people off. They are not required to compensate volunteers, though you have some bargaining power—airlines don't want to piss people off by bumping them involuntarily. You may be able to negotiate a free ticket or other travel vouchers, but make sure you ask about any restrictions, like blackout and expiration dates, before agreeing to the terms.

If you get bumped involuntarily, you are entitled to compensation. Lawyer Erika Kullberg has a [handful of videos](#) outlining this process and other airline reimbursement tricks. The amount depends on how delayed your arrival at your destination (compared to your original itinerary) will be:

- **1 hour or less:** no compensation
- **1 to 2 hours (1 to 4 hours on international travel):** a minimum of 200% of your original one-way fare or \$775, whichever is lower

- **2 hours or more (4 hours or more internationally):** a minimum of 400% of your original one-way fare or \$1,550, whichever is lower
- If you paid using frequent flier miles, the compensation is based on the lowest amount paid for a similar ticket on your flight. The airline must also refund charges for seat selection, checked bags, and other add-ons if you do not receive those services on your trip. While some airlines may offer tickets or vouchers for those involuntarily bumped, you have the right to request a check for cash instead.
- Of course there's fine print: If you check in late, or don't have a confirmed reservation, you likely forfeit your right to compensation. Airlines also don't have to compensate you if they have to downsize to a smaller plane. Finally, you have the ability to negotiate for more than what you're offered at the airport, but only within 30 days and if you don't cash the compensation check.
- **You may get compensation for delayed, damaged, or lost luggage**
- The rules around baggage are a little more nebulous than those for involuntary bumping. However, most airlines will negotiate a settlement for external damage to your bags or belongings—though they can always claim that your packing job was insufficient to protect your stuff. They [may also reimburse you](#) for “reasonable” expenses or emergency purchases while your luggage is delayed.
- If the airline loses your baggage completely, you are entitled to a refund for any fees, and you can submit a claim. You'll need documentation asserting the value of your belongings, and you'll probably have to negotiate. This process can take one to three months and may end unsatisfactorily, as airlines sometimes offer free tickets instead or deny claims entirely. They also will not pay more than the current liability limit of \$3,800.
- **You have the right to food and water during long tarmac delays**
- If your plane sits on the tarmac awaiting takeoff or a gate assignment for two hours or more, the airline is required to provide food and water to passengers as well as access to bathrooms and medical attention. Planes generally are not allowed to stay on the tarmac for longer than three hours barring issues related to safety, security, or airport disruptions.
- **You aren't guaranteed compensation for delays**
- As most of us have probably experienced, flight delays are an inevitable part of travel, and there's little to nothing we can do except wait them out. Airlines don't offer scheduling guarantees, and they are not required by any federal regulation to do anything for you if your plane is delayed on a domestic trip. You may be able to get a food voucher, which isn't much consolation for extra time spent in a busy airport. Check your airline's specific policies to know what your leverage is.
- On international itineraries, you can file a claim with the airline for expenses, though reimbursement is not guaranteed.
- DOT regulations do require airlines to refund you in the event of “significant schedule changes” or “significant delays” if you decide not to travel as a result, but these situations are not specifically defined. Airlines are [required to refund you](#) if they cancel your flight and you choose not to travel.
- **You have 24 hours to cancel a ticket after booking**
- If you book your flight directly with an airline at least seven days in advance, you can cancel and receive a refund without penalties or fees for 24 hours (or “hold” a ticket at the quoted price for the same period). This does not necessarily apply to bookings with a third-party site or travel agent, so read the fine print first.

- Airlines are required to clearly post all fares, taxes, and fees under the DOT's [“full fare” rule](#) to minimize confusion and surprises, though that protection may not last forever.
- **You have the right to accommodations for disabilities**
- Airlines and airports must comply with certain rules under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Air Carrier Access Act (ACAA). There are certain accommodations that require advance notice (24–48 hours before traveling). The DOT has a [complete consumer guide to these rights](#).
- **You have the right to complain**
- Complaining may not always get you what you want, but it's certainly cathartic. Airlines are required to provide information about filing complaints on their website, with your ticket and when asked at the airport. They are required to acknowledge your written complaint within 30 days and respond within 60 days.
- You can also complain to the DOT about airline service [online](#) or by phone at 202-366-2220.

“Traveling is learning”

-African Proverb

P.O. Box 44140, Fort Washington, MD. 20749
301. 686-0970/Office cchamp154@comcast.net all4champion.com