

Your passport to a smooth journey



Top tips for disabled
and less mobile
air passengers

www.equalityhumanrights.com/airtravel



Your rights

If you are disabled or have difficulty moving around, you can receive free assistance when you fly to and from the UK and Europe, including on domestic flights.

Under European law, this assistance is available to anyone with mobility requirements – for example because of their disability, age or a temporary injury.

Sometimes, however, the assistance you get may not meet your expectations or communication can break down. In some limited cases, your requirements may not be covered by the law.

This leaflet explains your rights and what to do to make sure you have the best chance of a smooth journey.

You can find out more from our free step-by-step guide 'Your Rights to Fly', available from www.equalityhumanrights.com.





Before you book

i Your airline or tour operator will have safety restrictions that might affect you getting the assistance you need.

Find out from your travel agent or operator if there are any safety restrictions that apply on your journey that might affect your requirements – such as restrictions on carrying oxygen cylinders. If so, ask what they can suggest to overcome any issues.

i Unless there are legitimate safety reasons, you cannot be refused a service because you have mobility requirements. Travel agents and operators have to consider your requirements and communicate them to the airline.

Think about what you will need when arriving at the airport, getting around the airport or on the plane – such as extra legroom, a seat next to your carer or room for your mobility equipment. Explain your requirements to your travel agent or operator.

i Assistance dogs are allowed to travel in the aircraft cabin with their owner on approved routes and with registered carriers.

You should be able to travel with your assistance dog as long as you notify the airline or tour operator in advance.

Make sure you find out about any restrictions at your destination well before you travel. For example, your dog may require vaccinations or even a quarantine period in some countries.





Booking your flight

i Airlines, travel agents or tour operators must make all reasonable efforts to provide assistance, even if requested at the last minute.

Tell your airline, travel agent or operator what assistance you need when you book, or **at least 48 hours** before you are due to travel. Ask for written confirmation of any assistance arrangements made.

i All staff who deal with customers are legally required to have disability awareness training and to know how to meet your needs.

To make your journey as smooth as possible make it clear that you require assistance because of your disability or mobility requirements and be clear about what you need. If the person dealing with you does not seem to be able to help, ask to see the airline's policies. Be persistent but polite and, if necessary, ask to speak to a manager.



Travel insurance

i If equipment is damaged or lost during the flight, airlines only have to pay limited compensation.

If you need to take expensive mobility equipment with you on the plane, make sure your travel insurance policy covers it. Take photographs before you travel so that you can provide evidence to support any claim if you spot any damage.





Preparing to travel

i All airports are required to meet minimum levels of accessibility and make ‘reasonable adjustments’.

Find out in advance about the layout and facilities at the airport by checking on their website or calling their customer information service.

Clearly label individual parts of mobility equipment with your contact details, flight number and any requirements for safe transport.

Remember to bring your written confirmation of agreed assistance arrangements.

Before arriving at the airport, make sure you know where to go, how to let them know you have arrived and what arrangements have been made to assist you, for example any parking facilities or transfer arrangements.



In the airport

i Airports must provide free assistance to enable disabled and less mobile passengers to check in, get to and from the toilet where required and get to their flight.

To make your journey as smooth as possible find out what will happen before you board the plane. Get a name and contact details of who can help if there are any problems along the way. This will be particularly important in the event of delay.





At the check-in desk

i Once you have confirmation that your requirements will be met, it is up to your airline to meet their promise to you.

However, don't assume it will happen automatically.

Show the check-in staff the written confirmation of your pre-booked assistance arrangements and make sure you confirm these when you check in. If you need a seat with extra legroom or to sit next to your carer, ask the check-in staff to confirm that your allocated seats meet your requirements. It is important that you make sure that this is sorted out at this stage, otherwise it may not be possible to sort it out later.





Boarding the flight

i The airport must provide assistance to enable you to board your flight, get to your seat and store your luggage.

Disabled and less mobile passengers will usually be called for boarding first.

Explain your requirements for any assistance or equipment you have with you to the staff at the boarding gate. Ask for this information to be relayed to the flight staff. Confirm it with the flight staff as soon as you board the plane.





Assistance on board

i Airlines must make all reasonable efforts to arrange suitable seating for you and your carer. They must also assist you to get to and from the toilet, if necessary.

Explain any problems with your seating arrangements or with your access to facilities to the on-board staff. If you can, suggest possible solutions.

i You can take up to two items of mobility equipment onto the aircraft, as long as these do not breach the airline's safety requirements.

If there is any dispute about your mobility equipment at boarding stage, show your paperwork confirming the items requested, and discuss with the flight staff how you need the equipment to be handled, stored and accessed by you.



i The airline must give you essential information about the flight in an accessible format.

Be clear with the flight staff what format you will require to access information. It is their job to assist you.



Leaving the plane

i The airline's responsibility to you does not end until the plane lands safely.

Unless you're in a hurry, you will usually be the last to leave the aircraft as it is easier to move around in an empty cabin.

To make your journey as smooth as possible if you have mobility equipment with you on the flight, tell the cabin staff before the plane lands how you would like it to be transferred with you, so that they can arrange this in advance if needed.



If something goes wrong

i The amount of compensation you can receive for anything that happens on board an aircraft is limited to compensation for death or injury and for lost baggage. The courts are currently unable to award compensation for injury to feelings because of restrictions in the Montreal Convention that governs liability of airlines for losses and personal injury on international and domestic passenger flights.

If you don't receive the assistance you're entitled to, complain straight away to the airport or airline. You can also make a complaint to the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA).





Making a complaint

The Equality and Human Rights Commission does not deal with complaints about access to air travel. The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) is the complaints handler in England, Scotland and Wales for complaints from disabled air passengers and persons with reduced mobility.

How to contact the CAA:

Website: <http://www.caa.co.uk>

Consumer Advice Line: 020 7453 6888 (Monday to Friday, 9.00am to 5.00pm). If you are Deaf or hearing impaired, please contact us via typetalk.

Fax: 020 7453 6754

Email: passengercomplaints@caa.co.uk

Post: Passenger Advice and Complaints Team, Civil Aviation Authority, 4th Floor, CAA House, 45-59 Kingsway, London WC2B 6TE

CAA may make changes to the way complaints are dealt with from September 2015. Please check the CAA website for more information.

This publication and related equality and human rights resources are available from the Commission's website: www.equalityhumanrights.com. For information on accessing a Commission publication in an alternative format, please contact: correspondence@equalityhumanrights.com.

For advice, information or guidance on equality, discrimination or human rights issues, please contact the Equality Advisory and Support Service, a free and independent service.

Website	www.equalityadvisoryservice.com
Telephone	0808 800 0082
Textphone	0808 800 0084
Hours	09:00 to 20:00 (Monday to Friday) 10:00 to 14:00 (Saturday)
Post	FREEPOST Equality Advisory Support Service FPN4431

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