



# AIR TRAVEL TIPS FOR PEOPLE WITH MOBILITY IMPAIRMENTS

## THE DAY BEFORE

- Write up instructions for how to safely configure your wheelchair, scooter, or other mobility devices for stowage. Many airlines also have forms available on their websites that you can complete to provide information about your wheelchair or scooter for airline personnel.
- Make sure to pack all medicines and essential medical equipment in your carry-on bags as checked bags can get lost.
- If you are flying within the U.S., you will likely be on an airplane that provides no lavatory access if you typically use a wheelchair for mobility. Ensure you manage bowel and bladder needs before take-off and the night before.

## AT THE AIRPORT

- Arrive at the airport two to three hours ahead of your flight.
- When checking in, make sure you request to be pre-boarded and attach gate check tags to your wheelchair. Doing this ensures the airline returns your wheelchair plane side rather than at baggage claim.
- Request a seat as close to the boarding door as possible to shorten the distance requiring the use of an aisle chair to limit the possibility of mishaps or injury. The airline is only required to accommodate you in your class of service (if you purchase a coach ticket, they don't have to give you a seat in first class); however, they may have the ability to upgrade you.
- You may also request plane side check-in of larger medical equipment to limit the items being lost or damaged.
- Be sure to store baggage receipts in a safe and accessible place to prove loss and track your items if necessary.



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## GOING THROUGH SECURITY

- If you cannot stand or walk, be prepared for a full pat-down in your wheelchair at the TSA checkpoint.
- Before the pat-down, tell the TSA agent about sensitive areas and any medical equipment you have on your body. You can also hand the officer the TSA Notification Card, which identifies your disability and medical condition.
- During heavy travel periods, allow up to two hours to go through the screening process.
- The TSA [website](#) contains helpful information if you are concerned about this process.
- If you are a PreCheck member, proceed to the PreCheck screening aisle for assistance. You will not have to have a pat-down unless TSA needs to perform a secondary screening.

## BEFORE BOARDING THE PLANE

- Remove any easily-removed parts, including seat cushions, side guards, and removable wheels and carry them on the plane as leaving them on the wheelchair increases the chances of them being lost or damaged.
- If you are a manual wheelchair user, you can request to stow your chair in the onboard closet to avoid damage.
- Take advantage of pre-boarding to give yourself plenty of time to get into your seat safely on the airplane.



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## EXITING THE PLANE

- If possible, wait until your chair is at the boarding door before transferring to the aisle chair for deplaning.
- When your equipment or chair is returned to you, inspect it thoroughly before leaving the airport. If damage is present, report it immediately to the airlines to start your claim and the maintenance process.
- If you encountered any disability-related problems as part of your travel experience, you might file a complaint with the airline. You may also file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Transportation as an ACAA violation. [File a Consumer Complaint | US Department of Transportation](#)
- Finally, if you have any problems or concerns during your travels, please report your story to [air-access.org](http://air-access.org) so we can help make the process better for all travelers with disabilities.

Visit [PVA.org/AirTravel](http://PVA.org/AirTravel) for more air travel information and helpful resources.