

Lesson 1 – At the Airport

Hello and welcome to Lesson 1 of the Travel English Speaking Course! Today we're going to go through the airport step by step, learning important vocabulary and useful phrases along the way. Let's imagine you're flying from New York City to Los Angeles.



Situation 1: At the check-in desk

Agent: Good afternoon! Where are you flying to today?

You: Los Angeles.

Agent: May I have your passport, please?

You: Here you go.

Agent: Are you checking any bags?

You: Just this one.

Agent: OK, please place your bag on the scale.

You: I have a stopover in Chicago – do I need to pick up my luggage there?

Agent: No, it'll go straight through to Los Angeles. Here are your boarding passes – your flight leaves from gate 15A and it'll begin boarding at 3:20. Your seat number is 26E.

You: Thanks.

Common phrases and vocabulary words:

- Instead of **“Where are you flying today?”** the agent may ask **“What’s your final destination?”** The answer will be the same!
- You can say **“Here you go”** when you give something to somebody
- To **check your bags** means to put them on the airplane inside the cargo compartment. The small bag you take with you on the airplane is called a **carry-on**. You need to put your carry-on bags through the X-ray machine at security.
- The **scale** is the equipment that tells you the weight of your luggage (45 kilograms, for example)
- A **stopover** or **layover** is when the airplane stops in a different city before continuing to the final destination
- If the agent says that your luggage will **go straight through**, it means it will go directly to the final destination (and you don’t need to pick it up during your stopover)
- **Boarding passes** are the tickets that permit you to enter the airplane
- When a plane begins **boarding**, it means that the passengers start to enter the plane. Usually boarding time is 30-60 minutes before takeoff (when the plane leaves)

Tips and Suggestions:

- If you don’t know where the check-in desk is, you can ask an airport employee, **“Excuse me, where is the Delta check-in desk?”** or, **“Excuse me, where is the American Airlines check-in desk?”**
- If your bag is heavier than the weight limits, or if your bag is larger than the size limits, you may need to pay an **oversized baggage fee** or **overweight baggage fee** (this can be \$75 to \$300). Some

airlines in the United States also charge a fee for ALL checked bags (usually \$15 to \$30).

- If you have fragile or sensitive items in your bag that might break, you can ask the agent, **“Please mark this bag as ‘fragile.’”**
- If you want to ask if the flight will leave at the correct time, you can say, **“Is the flight on schedule?”** The agent will respond either “Yes” if the flight is on time, or “There’s a 20-minute delay” (for example) if the flight will leave later than expected.

Extra questions in the U.S.

On flights going to or inside the U.S., you will probably be asked some extra security questions before or during check-in. Here are some sample questions and the correct responses:

Agent: Did you pack your bags yourself?

You: Yes.

Agent: Are you carrying any firearms or flammable materials?

You: No.

Agent: Has your luggage been in your possession at all times?

You: Yes.

Be careful here – some agents ask if your luggage has been “in your possession at all times” and others ask if your luggage has been “outside your supervision (or possession) at any time.” The answer to the first question is **YES and the answer to the second question would be **NO**.*

Agent: Has anyone given you anything to carry on the flight?

You: No.

Agent: Are you aware of the regulations regarding liquids in your carry-on, which must 3.4 ounces or less and placed inside a single quart-sized transparent plastic bag?

You: Yes.

** If you want to take any liquids on a flight in the United States, they must be 3.4 ounces (100 milliliters) or less and you must put them all in a clear*

(transparent) plastic bag. Each passenger can take only one bag on the plane. If you have bigger bottles of liquid (like shampoo, wine, etc) you need to put them into your checked bag.

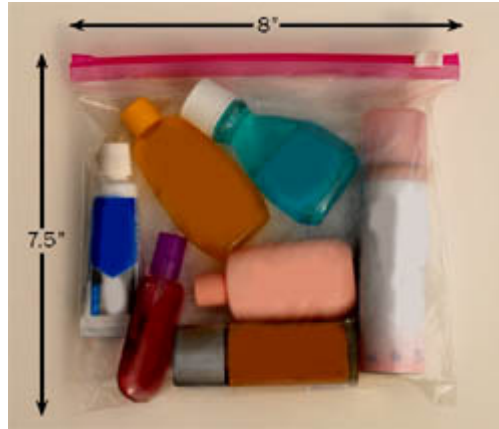
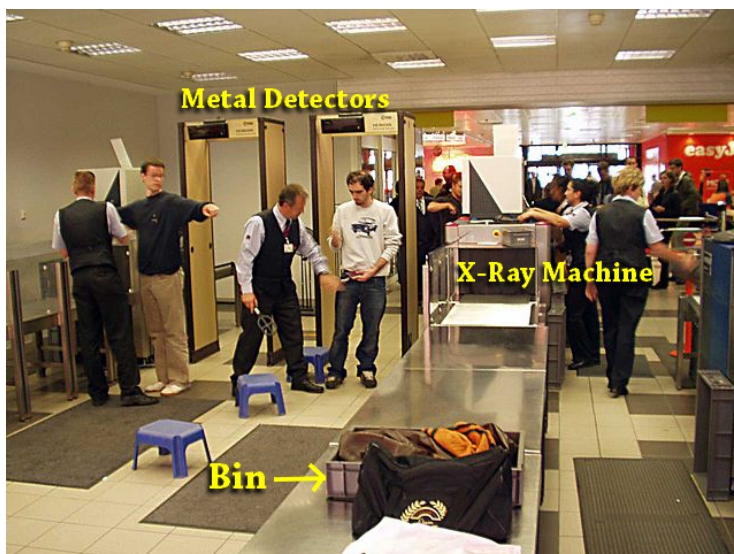


Image source (and more information): TSA.gov

Situation 2: Going through security

There are two pieces of equipment in security: you put your bags through the **X-ray machine**, and you walk through the **metal detector**. The **X-ray machine** has a **conveyor belt** that moves your bags automatically through the machine. You can put small items like keys or money into plastic **bins**.



*Photo taken and uploaded by [de:Benutzer:Ralf Roletschek](#)
Modified by Shayna Oliveira*

Agent: Please lay your bags flat on the conveyor belt, and use the bins for small objects.

You: “Do I need to take my laptop out of the bag?”

Agent: Yes, you do. Take off your hat and your shoes, too.

(you walk through the metal detector)

[BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP]

Agent: Please go back. Do you have anything in your pockets – keys, cell phone, loose change?

You: I don’t think so. Let me try taking off my belt.

Agent: Okay, come on through.

(you go through the metal detector again)

Agent: You’re all set! Have a nice flight.

The phrase “you’re all set” is a common expression that means “you’re finished and everything is OK.”

Phrasal Verb focus: SET OFF and GO OFF

When the alarm sounds, we say “the alarm went off.” To describe what *caused* the alarm to sound, we say “set off” – for example, “My keys set off the alarm” or “My keys set off the metal detector.”

Situation 3: At the gate



Airports are divided into **terminals** (the major sections of the airport) and each terminal has many **gates**. The **gate** is the door you go through to enter the airplane. Here are a few announcements you might hear while you are at the gate, waiting for the plane to board.

“Attention passengers of United Airlines flight 880. There has been a gate change. United Airlines flight 880 will now be leaving from gate 12.”

(Travel Tip: Know your flight number in English, so that you can pay attention to the announcement and know if you need to go to a different gate.)

“United Airlines flight 880 to Miami is now boarding.”

(this means it’s time for passengers to enter the plane)

“We would like to invite our first- and business-class passengers, Star Club Premium members, and passengers requiring special assistance to board at gate 12.”

(this means that passengers who are “special” (first class, business class, or in the Star Club) or passengers who are elderly (old), disabled, pregnant, or with small children can go into the airplane first.)

“We would now like to invite all passengers seated in Zone 2 – that’s rows 16-35 – to begin boarding United Airlines flight 880 at gate 12.”

(look at your boarding pass to know your “zone number” and what “row” your seat number is)

“We would now like to invite all passengers to board United Airlines flight 880 to Miami at gate 12.”

(this means everyone can enter the plane)

“This is the last call for United Airlines flight 880 to Miami, now boarding at gate number 12.”

(this means it is the FINAL OPPORTUNITY to enter the plane before they close the doors)

“Passenger John Smith. Passenger John Smith, please proceed to the United Airlines desk at gate 12.”

(sometimes the announcement will call a specific passenger by name. The word “proceed” in this context is a formal way to say “go.”)

Situation 4: On the plane

The people who work inside the airplane serving food and drinks are called **flight attendants**. Both men and women who have this job are called flight attendants.

Attribution: [Kristoferb](#) at [en.wikipedia](#)

Flight attendant: Chicken or pasta?

You: Sorry?

Flight attendant: Would you like chicken or pasta?



You: I'll have the chicken.

Flight attendant: Anything to drink?

You: What kind of soda do you have?

Flight attendant: Coke, Diet Coke, Sprite, Orange, and Dr. Pepper.

You: A Diet Coke, no ice, please.

Flight attendant: Here you go.

You: Thanks.

Conversation Tips:

- If you didn't understand what the flight attendant said, you can say **Sorry?** or **Pardon?** to ask him or her to repeat it.
- If you want to ask for something, you can use the phrase "**Can I have...**" For example:
-

Can I have a blanket?



Can I have a pair of headphones?

(or: Can I have a headset?)



Attribution: [Shabranigdo](#) at [en.wikipedia](#)

Can I have some water?



Can I have some extra napkins?



Can I have a decaf coffee?*



Image source: [Julius Schorzman](#)

* There are two types of coffee – **regular coffee**, which has caffeine. This is the type of coffee that helps keep you awake. There is also **Decaf coffee** – this is short for “decaffeinated coffee” – and this type has no caffeine. It’s good to drink decaf coffee if you like the taste of coffee, but you want to go to sleep soon.

Finally, if you need to stand up, but there is a person sitting between you and the aisle, you can say **Excuse me** and make a motion to start standing up. The person sitting next to you will understand and stand up to let you get out of your seat.

You've just finished lesson 1 of the Travel English Speaking Course. Now you can take the quiz to test how well you remember the phrases. In tomorrow's lesson, you'll learn English phrases for arriving at the destination airport, and dealing with common travel problems. See you tomorrow!

Quiz: Lesson 1 - At the Airport

1. _____ I have a coffee with milk, please?

A Can

B Will

C Do

2. Excuse me, where is the Delta check-in _____?

A desk

B station

C table

3. I lost my _____ pass - can I get another one?

A traveling

B seating

C boarding

4. I have a _____ in Paris on the way to Israel.

A stayover

B stopover

C layoff

5. _____ have the pasta, please.

A I'll

B I'm

C I'd

6. You need to _____ up your bag in Charlotte.

A take

B pick

C get

7. A _____ coffee, please.

A regular

B standard

C normal

8. The metal in my belt _____ the alarm.

A set off

B took off

C went off

9. Do I _____ to take off my shoes?

A want

- B** need
- C** should

10. Is the flight on _____?

- A** hour
- B** schedule
- C** departure

11. There's a half-hour _____.

- A** depart
- B** delay
- C** late

12. What _____ of juices do you have?

- A** can
- B** kind
- C** mark

13. How much is the oversized luggage _____?

- A** fee
- B** tax
- C** bill

14. What's my _____ number?

A chair

B seat

C sit

15. Will my luggage go straight _____ to New York?

A away

B through

C out

Answers on next page...

Answers

1. A

2. A

3. C

4. B

5. A

6. B

7. A

8. A

9. B

10. B

11. B

12. B

13. A

14. B

15. B