



Accessible air travel

Airports and airlines offer a range of free services to make accessible travel possible for everyone. It is important that passengers with reduced mobility (“PRM”) register their need for assistance at the airport or on board in time (at least 48 hours before departure). You should inform yourself in advance, as the services offered may also depend on the aircraft used and the route flown.

A right for assistance services exists in the case of:

- Physical disabilities, especially walking impairments with
 - temporary wheelchair use (Code: WCHR¹, WCHS²)
 - permanent wheelchair use (Code: WCHC)
- Orientation difficulties (Code: DPNA)
- Cognitive impairment (Code: DPNA)
- Mental impairment (Code: DPNA)
- Visual impairment and blindness (Code: BLND)
- Hearing impairment and deafness (Code: DEAF)

These codes are internationally used by aviation and travel companies when assistance services are requested.



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¹ Passenger can walk short distances and use stairs.



² Passenger can walk short distances, but cannot use stairs.



Item 1: Flight booking and request for assistance

Good to know

You will need your booking number to register a special need. So book first, then register your request! The details of assistance requirements can often be provided at the time of booking. This should be done whenever needed. Please inform your airline, travel agent or tour operator about your need at least 48 hours before your flight.

-  **Make sure you receive a written confirmation of your request for assistance.**
-  **Find out if you need a fit to fly health certificate.**






The more detailed you describe your requirements, the better the staff at the airports and on the aircraft will be prepared for your needs.

In order to do this, ask yourself the following questions:

- Can I manage the sometimes long distances at the airport on my own or do I need assistance?
- Do I need assistance when boarding and de-boarding?
- Do I need assistance to board the aircraft using the stairs?
- Do I need extra baggage for medical needs?
- Do I have any irregular cabin baggage?
- How many aids do I need to take with me?
- Will I be accompanied by my assistance dog/guide dog?
- Do I need an on-board wheelchair?

What services are available related to flight booking?



-  **Find out in advance: Many airlines offer free seat reservations for severely disabled persons.**
-  **If needed, a free seat next to your own can be booked for a fee. This must be announced in advance and in time.**
-  **For the subject of accessible travel there are specialized tour operators, as well as information on the websites and hotlines of airlines and airports.**



Item 2: Day of travel: At the airport

Good to know

Have all of your documents ready for check-in. At the airport, there are often meeting points, telephone pillars, pick-up points and check-in desks designated for passengers with reduced mobility. Find out in advance from the relevant airports and airlines exactly where these meeting points are located. Find out in advance where the parking spaces for persons with disabilities are located.

-  **Consider that there may be longer waiting times. Arrive at the airport in time before departure.**
-  **Care services, such as taking medication, washing and dressing are not included.**

At the security control, please consider any devices you may have in or on your body, or in your cabin baggage, that could cause problems (e.g. pacemaker, cochlear implant, prosthesis, Braille display). Bring these to the attention of the aviation security staff as necessary.

For certain medicines, depending on the country of destination, you will need a medical attest or a certificate from the Federal Institute for Drugs (e.g. psychotropic drugs, painkillers). Please check with this agency in advance.

Some of the questions you have already been asked may be repeated (e.g. wheelchair users: “Are you able to walk?”). When possible, wheelchair users need to leave their wheelchairs during the security control. If this is not possible, you will be checked while seated. If the wheelchair has been checked in as hold-baggage in advance, you will be accompanied by the airport assistance service. Please note that the assistance staff at the airport are not allowed to assist you with eating or drinking.



What services are available at the airport?

- Depending on your mobility, you can be picked up at one of the pick-up points and – if necessary – accompanied through security control to the aircraft.
- Wheelchair users receive assistance when boarding the aircraft and moving to the aircraft seat.
- You will receive assistance in handling your baggage.







Item 3: Day of travel: On the aircraft

Good to know

Normally, you will be allowed to board the aircraft first and de-board comfortably as last passenger.

There are also seats with more legroom, which can be booked at an extra charge.

-  If you wish to take an electric wheelchair with you, please check in advance with the airline whether it can and may be taken on the flight.
-  A seating at the emergency exits is not allowed for passengers with reduced mobility due to safety reasons.
-  Flight attendants are not allowed to assist you with eating or drinking, but are happy to help you open packages.
-  Care services, such as taking medication, washing and dressing are not included.




What services are available on board?

- In addition to medical devices, up to two mobility aids may be carried, including electric wheelchairs.
- Essential information about the flight will be provided to you in a form accessible for you.
- The airline will try to accommodate your request when assigning seats, if the particular seat is available and the safety requirements are met. If you are travelling with a companion, you will be seated next to each other as far as possible.
- The flight attendants will be happy to help you find your way to the on-board toilet.
- Approved assistance dogs/guide dogs may be taken into the passenger cabin if they have been registered in time.



Item 4: Day of travel: De-boarding and transfer

Good to know

-  If you are booking a connecting flight with a stopover, please consider sufficient time to transfer from one aircraft to the other. The transfer distances at airports can be long and the PRM service may also take some time.

Please check whether the relevant services are also available at airports outside Europe.

If you have orientation problems, don't hesitate to ask the airport staff as early as possible.



What services are available at the destination airport?

- You will leave the aircraft comfortably as the last passenger. Then you will either be assisted or a transfer will take place using an airport wheelchair.
- The airport staff will accompany you to the baggage claim. They will help you manage your baggage and accompany you to the arrival hall or, upon your request, to the taxi, bus or railway station of the airport. Please also register your assistance needs with the railway. In Germany, the mobility centre of "Deutsche Bahn" (DB) is available to you for this purpose.
- Depending on the airport, special lounge areas may be available.
- Please note that when transferring at an airport, your own wheelchair may not be released. In such cases, an airport wheelchair is always available.



Item 5: Claims

Delays or flight cancellations

In case of cancellation or delay of your flight, first contact the airline. Then you will be required to provide details of the flight for which you are making a claim and briefly explain your reasons for this. The airline will then review your claim and provide you with a response. An airline has up to two months to do this.

Request for conciliation (applies in Germany only)

If you do not receive an answer or if you do not find the response satisfactory, you can submit a request for conciliation to the Public Transport Conciliation Board (in Germany: Schlichtungsstelle für den öffentlichen Personenverkehr – söp), which is organised under private law [www.soep-online.de].

If the airline does not participate in the söp, the official conciliation board at the Federal Office of Justice is responsible [www.bundesjustizamt.de].

If passengers' rights are infringed

In the case of services for passengers with reduced mobility, take the process of action described above: If you think your rights have been infringed, contact the airport or the airline first.

If affected passengers are not satisfied with the feedback they receive from the companies, they can lodge a complaint with one of the designated complaint and enforcement bodies. In Germany, this is the Federal Aviation Office (Luftfahrt-Bundesamt, LBA). In the event of proven violations, the LBA may impose penalties on the company concerned. Passengers with reduced mobility also have the possibility to contact one of the designated air transport conciliation bodies, e.g. in relation to claims for damage to or loss of mobility devices. Further information as well as the corresponding advertisement forms can be found on the website of the LBA [www.lba.de].



Item 6: Further information

For **flights from airports within the European Union (EU)** or when flying with EU airlines to an EU airport, general passenger rights apply:

- Regulation (EC) No 261/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 February 2004 establishing common rules on compensation and assistance to passengers in the event of denied boarding and cancellation or long delay of flights [\[Link to Regulation\]](#)

The **special mobility services for PRM** departing from or arriving at an airport within the European Union (EU) or flying with an EU airline are defined in various regulations:

- Regulation (EC) No 1107/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006 concerning the rights of disabled persons and persons with reduced mobility when travelling by air [\[Link to Regulation\]](#)
- Commission Staff Working Document SWD (2012) 171 final of 11 June 2012 - Interpretative guidance on the application of Regulation (EC) No 1107/2006 [\[Link to the Interpretative Guidelines\]](#)

For the **organization of services at the airport and on the aircraft** the companies also take into account Document 30 Part 1 Section 5 of the European Civil Aviation Conference:

- ECAC Policy Statement in the field of Civil Aviation Facilitation [\[Link to the Statement\]](#)

Passengers with reduced mobility flying to the United States of America can expect the regulations defined by the Department of Transportation (DoT) on May 13, 2008:

- 14 CFR Part 382 – Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Disability in Air Travel [\[Link to Regulations\]](#)



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³ The organisation was dissolved in June 2019.