AIRFARE TIPS AND TRICKS

PURCHASING A TICKET

• Plan and purchase your tickets at least 2-5 months in advance or as soon as you know your travel plans.
  o The best way to guarantee you will get the best airfare is by purchasing your tickets at least 90 days or more in advance (especially for international flights). Airlines typically offer lower fares when you purchase early and often the airfare increases regularly as your travel date approaches.
  o The lowest fares (especially those attractive sale fares that are sometimes offered) sell out fast as very few seats on the plane are available at those prices. Buying 2-3 months in advance will help ensure that a discounted seat is available. All airlines use a system called "inventory management" to regularly update how many seats will be sold at a given price based on previous flight history, capacity, and demand.
  o Some airlines allow you to "reprice" your ticket if the fare goes down after purchase; the residual amount will not be refunded to you but you will be given a “travel credit” for the difference which can be used to purchase a future ticket. However, a change fee may be assessed.

• Purchase the most direct routing possible to the airport closest to your destination. Preferably have all flight segments included in one ticket.
  o The more connections involved in your routing, the greater the chance of delays or misrouted luggage.
  o Many flights today are operated as “code-share” flights, which means that one airline sells and markets the flight but the flight itself is operated by another airline. Be sure that you know the operating carrier for each flight in your itinerary.
  o DO NOT purchase separate tickets for each segment of your journey. Some airlines will not check baggage on multiple itineraries or carriers and there is a high likelihood of confusion or delay if you do not understand what you are doing and how the airline system works.

• Review and understand the rules and restrictions of the fare you are purchasing.
  o Most airline tickets carry significant rules and restrictions, are nonrefundable in all circumstances, and have penalties/fees for changes to dates/times.
  o DO NOT purchase a ticket until you have reviewed and understand the rules and restrictions.

• Purchase a round-trip ticket.
  o One-way tickets are, generally, significantly more expensive than purchasing a round-trip ticket to the same destination.
  o If your return date needs to change, it may be cheaper to pay the airlines’ “change fee” than to purchase two one-way tickets. However, if the class of service you originally purchased is no longer available you may have to pay an incremental fare difference as well as the change fee.
  o According to their immigration regulations, many countries require that you have a roundtrip ticket in your possession both upon departure from your country of origin and upon arrival in these countries. Failure to adhere to immigration regulations can lead to considerable fines, detention, and/or immediate deportation.

• You MUST arrive at the center on the program's/seminar's designated “Arrival Date” and MUST depart no earlier than the program’s “Last Day of Residence.”
  o Pay close attention to the arrival date of your flight. In many cases, international flights are overnight or will cross the International Date Line resulting in an arrival the next day.
  o Make sure that you check your program’s arrival and departure dates carefully and book your flights accordingly. You will not be permitted to arrive late or depart early.

• There are a large number of coach/economy fares on each flight; the person next to you may have paid hundreds (even thousands) of dollars more or less than you did.
  o As an example, the prices for a coach class ticket from San Francisco to Santiago on all airlines serving the market range from approximately $880-6178 roundtrip. This is another reason to purchase early!
• Book directly with an airline. DO NOT USE a third-party service such as Travelocity, Expedia, Hotwire, or Priceline.
  o Tickets booked through Travelocity, Expedia, Hotwire, Priceline, or other services generally carry even more restrictions than those issued directly and are often not changeable under any circumstances. Students have reported questionable and difficult customer service with these sites in cases of schedule changes and other issues. If you do purchase a ticket via one of these sources, you do so at your own risk.
  o Booking directly with the airlines via their websites or by phone means that you can always call the airline directly to make ticket adjustments (if they are allowed) and, in the case of irregular operations, the airline is responsible for assisting you with new travel arrangements.

• Free tickets booked with frequent flyer mileage have the lowest priority in case of irregular operations.
  o Keep in mind that in case of adverse weather, flight cancellations, missed connections, etc. that paid passengers have first priority in being reaccommodated by the airlines. Passengers on free tickets will be accommodated last. In addition, free mileage award seats are not available on all flights and or days of travel. You will not be allowed to arrive late or depart early in order to redeem a free award ticket. Plan accordingly!

BAGGAGE ALLOWANCES
• You will not be allowed to check an unlimited amount of baggage on your flight; make sure you know the baggage allowance and fees for your fare and airline.
  o Some airlines use a “piece” method to determine your baggage allowance. For instance, two pieces of checked luggage whose total external dimensions do not exceed 106 inches (L + W + D) of both pieces added together with the larger piece not exceeding 62 inches. The weight of each piece must usually not exceed 50 pounds.
  o Most airlines now charge considerable fees for all luggage checked on the aircraft. Pack light!
  o Other airlines, however, and especially international carriers, use a “weight” method to determine your baggage allowance. For instance, you might be allowed 20 kg of luggage total. Pack accordingly!

• NEVER, NEVER, NEVER pack valuables, medications, your passport and other travel documents, or any other essential items in your checked luggage.
  o Luggage can get lost or misrouted for a period of time. In such cases, the airlines have NO LIABILITY for replacing your valuable goods if they are lost or stolen.
  o Medications, your passport and other travel documents, and all other valuables should ALWAYS be placed in your carry-on baggage and kept with you in the aircraft cabin or on your person at ALL times while en route.

• Mark all luggage, inside and out, with your name and address.
  o Make sure that your luggage is identified with your name and address inside and out.
  o It is always a good idea to put a full copy of your complete itinerary inside each bag (on top of your belongings) in case the luggage tag is ripped off through regular handling.
  o LOCK all baggage with TSA-approved locks.