

86 Air travel

A Departures

This is the usual sequence of activities when you get to the airport.

First you go to the **check-in desk** where they weigh **your luggage**. Usually you are permitted 20 kilos, but if your bags weigh more, you may have to pay **excess baggage** (= you pay extra). The airline representative checks your ticket and gives you a **boarding card** for the plane with your seat number on it. Then you go through **passport control** where an official checks [NOT controls] your passport, and into the **departure lounge**. Here, you can also buy things in the **duty-free**, e.g. perfume, alcohol and cigarettes. About half an hour or forty minutes before **take-off**, you are told to go to a gate number, e.g. gate 14, where you wait before you **get on** the plane. When you **board** (= get on) the plane, you find your seat. If you have **hand luggage**, you can put it under your seat or in the **overhead locker** above your seat.



The plane then **taxi** (= moves slowly) towards the **runway**, and when it has permission to **take off**, it accelerates along the runway and takes off.

Note: The verb to taxi is generally only used in this context.

B The flight

You may want or need to understand certain announcements; these come from the **captain** (= the pilot) or from an **air steward** or **stewardess** / **cabin crew** / **flight attendants** (= people who look after the passengers):

Please **fasten your seat belt** and put your seat in the **upright position**.



We are now **cruising** (= flying comfortably) at an **altitude** (= height) of 10,000 metres.

May we **remind** passengers (= ask passengers to remember) that there is no smoking until you are inside the **terminal building** (= where passengers arrive and depart).

The **cabin crew** (= air stewards) are now coming round with **landing cards**. (These are cards you sometimes have to fill in when you enter certain countries.)

C Arrival

When the plane **lands** (= arrives on the ground), you have to wait for it to stop / come to a halt. When the doors are open, you **get off** the plane and walk through the **terminal building** and go to the **baggage reclaim** where you collect your luggage. You then pass **through customs** (green = nothing to declare; red = goods to declare; blue = European Union citizens). If you are lucky, you can then get a bus, taxi or train to the centre of town without waiting too long. You can also **hire** a car (= **rent** a car) at most airports.

Note: In British English you normally **hire** something for a short period, e.g. hire a room for a party, and **rent** something for a long period, e.g. a flat; for a car, you can use both words.

Exercises

86.1 Complete the words or phrases below using words from the box.

off	control	free	card	baggage
in	lounge	luggage	reclaim	locker

- | | |
|------------------|-------------------|
| 1 boarding | 6 duty |
| 2 baggage | 7 overhead |
| 3 excess | 8 take-..... |
| 4 passport | 9 departure |
| 5 hand | 10 check-..... |

86.2 What do you call:

- The place where you go when you arrive at the airport with your luggage?
- The card they give you with the seat number on it?
- The money you have to pay if your luggage is very heavy?
- The place where you sit and have a drink when you are waiting for your flight to be called?
- The bags you carry onto the plane with you?
- The place above your head where you can put your hand luggage?
- The part of the airport where the plane accelerates and takes off?
- The people who look after you on the plane?
- The part of the airport you walk through when you arrive or depart?
- The place where you collect your luggage after you land?

86.3 Complete this part of a letter about an unpleasant flight.

Dear Tom

I've just arrived in Rome but I'm still recovering from a really terrible flight.

We ⁽¹⁾ two hours late because of bad weather, and then over the channel we hit more bad weather. The ⁽²⁾ announced that we had to ⁽³⁾ our seat belts, which was a bit worrying, and for half an hour we ⁽⁴⁾ through a terrible storm. It was still raining and very windy when we ⁽⁵⁾ in Rome and I was really glad to ⁽⁶⁾ the plane and get into the airport building.

Fortunately things have improved since then but I really hope the return ⁽⁷⁾ is a lot better.

86.4 Think about the whole experience of flying (from check-in to the time you leave the airport at your destination) and answer these questions. If possible, discuss your answers with someone else.

- What is the most interesting part, and what is the most boring part?
- Where do you often have delays, and why?
- Is there any part that frightens or worries you?
- What do you usually do during most flights?
- Do you always eat the food they give you?
- Is there one thing which would improve flying and make the experience more interesting?