

# 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 taxis (= 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:

- 1 The place where you go when you arrive at the airport with your luggage?
- 2 The card they give you with the seat number on it?
- 3 The money you have to pay if your luggage is very heavy?
- 4 The place where you sit and have a drink when you are waiting for your flight to be called?
- 5 The bags you carry onto the plane with you?
- 6 The place above your head where you can put your hand luggage?
- 7 The part of the airport where the plane accelerates and takes off?
- 8 The people who look after you on the plane?
- 9 The part of the airport you walk through when you arrive or depart?
- 10 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.

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