

Travelers' rule book: Behavior 101

Barbara Correa

Mon Dec 11, 7:42 PM ET

There are no formal requirements to buying an airplane ticket and boarding a plane, other than coming up with some cash and passing security. But maybe flying should be more of a privilege, with its own rule book.

Virginia Flores, a human resources and technical consultant to the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority, among other clients, flies every week for business and has come up with a comprehensive set of basic do's and don'ts for air passengers that I think is worth sharing. Its section titles suggest the almost kindergarten-like inability of some travelers to play well with others.

Everyone knows air travel is a lot less comfortable than it once was. The trick is how to learn to live with it. Here are Flores' suggestions:

Learn how to share armrest space. The airlines should have thought this through a little bit. Two armrests for three seats going across are simply not enough. Let's face it; even though people have the best of intentions, the natural inclination is to put your arm smack dab on the armrest. The whole armrest. I have gotten into elbow wars with people who think that because they got stuck in a middle seat, their consolation price should be the entire armrest. That almost earned one gentleman I traveled with my laptop as a headdress.

Rearranging overhead space. Number one, the only person who should be touching other people's stuff in the overhead is the airline attendant. If I had wanted a stranger to go through my stuff, I would have invited TSA to do it during airport screening. Number two, since I put my stuff in the overhead bin, it's probably a really good assumption that I want it to stay there, and not four rows back and to the left when I am sitting to the right. I had a woman once who boarded in zone 6 and started to empty the overhead bin so she would fit one of her three bags. As she started to empty the bin she asked, "Does anyone mind if I move their stuff?" I said, "I do. Don't touch it and no one will get hurt." She just stood there horrified as I calmly put everything back and closed the bin. Early morning flights tend to make me cranky anyway.

Go the bathroom before getting on the plane. Remember when you were a kid, and your Mom always asked if you had gone to the bathroom before the family vacation that entailed driving for an hour or two? The airlines need to hire a mother figure to ask the same question as people board. There is nothing more irritating than a person who pops up every half an hour to go to the bathroom.

Intruding on airline seat space. Amazingly enough, the person in the seat next to you does not double as an armrest, leg rest or pillow. If you didn't pay for two seats, don't feel the need to try and take up two seats. I had a gentleman on a flight back from LGA, who insisted on not only leaning on my seat, but wedging his head in between the two seats so his head wouldn't roll forward. And I was in first class. The fact that the gentleman was stuck in the 80's (down to the gold chains and the shirt unbuttoned to show all the fluffy chest hair) didn't help the situation any. I ended up sitting with the flight attendants in one of the jump seats.

Loud cell phone conversations. Incredibly, I don't particularly care that the bill you pitched on the floor of the House passed the margin. Really, I don't. Just as I don't care that you need to try and pick up milk and bread on your way home from the airport.

If you can't lift it into the overhead bins, check it. It continuously amazes me that women (and unfortunately, most of the time it is women) come on a plane with the expectation that someone else is going to lift their bag into the overhead for them. One, if it's that heavy, it shouldn't go into the overhead bin anyway. Two, it's a really worn way to try and start a conversation with a man. And it really irritates the rest of us professional women as well. Sometimes I will jump up and put the bag in because I just can't stand the batting eyelashes and pouty mouth.

Don't drink and fly. Trust me, you're not nearly as funny as you think. Just because you think you can handle those five Jack and cokes now, what makes you think you can actually drive a car once the plane has landed? I was traveling with a colleague who tried to get into the rental car to drive us to the hotel, but couldn't figure out where the ignition key went. Enough said.

Space underneath the seat. The space you can utilize underneath the seat is in front of you, not behind you. And no, you cannot utilize both. Even if you ask nicely. If you have that much stuff, check it. Unless you piss an airline attendant off, your stuff should come out on the luggage track at your final destination, especially if you are all ready

on the plane and airline personnel are carrying everything down to cargo as you watch.

Kids and flights. Don't get me wrong, I love kids. I especially love well-behaved kids whose parents provide them with interesting diversions during a flight, so they don't pound on my laptop and cause me to lose data that I have been working on for the past hour. It doesn't even really bother me when the little ones cry during take off and landing, the pressure hurts their ears and sometimes the noises scare them. I don't even have kids and I know that, so I don't understand why parents seem so clueless. A little research before taking the kiddies on a flight can go a long way towards not antagonizing an entire plane.

Now, all of this being said, I have run into some incredible people on flights. People who have turned my light off and covered me with a blanket when I fell asleep, to a gentleman who got me a cup of water when the beverage cart came by, thinking I would be thirsty when I woke up. I think if people thought of flying as an exercise in mutual cooperation, the whole experience would probably be on the whole much more positive.

Do you have some more to add? Write to Barbara Correa at bboydstoncorrea@yahoo.com

Copyright © 2007 Yahoo! Inc. All rights reserved.

[Questions or Comments](#)

[Privacy Policy](#) - [Terms of Service](#) - [Copyright/IP Policy](#) - [Ad Feedback](#)