

Real Talk #037 – How to check in for a flight

Episode description

Whether you're on vacation or travelling for business, chances are, you're going to have to get on a plane in the coming years. In this episode of Real Talk, Andrew and Jeremy go over the phrases and terms used at the airport before you can get on a flight.

Fun fact

Chicago's O'Hare airport is the busiest airport in the world. Since 2014, it accepts the most travellers every year, as well as boasting the most takeoffs and landings. Before 2014, Atlanta's Hartsfield-Jackson airport was the busiest.

Expressions included in the study guide

- Travel light
- To check in
- Check a bag
- Layover
- Baggage claim



Transcript

Note: The words and expressions that appear in **bold text** within the transcript are discussed in more detail in the Detailed Explanations section that follows the transcript.

Andrew: You're listening to the Culips English Podcast. To download the study guide for this episode, which includes the transcript, detailed vocabulary explanations, real-world examples, and a quiz, visit our website, Culips.com, C-U-L-I-P-S.com.

Hello, everybody. My name is Andrew.

Jeremy: And I'm Jeremy.

Andrew: And you're listening to Culips.

Hey, everyone. You are listening to Real Talk by Culips. This is the series where we teach you the English expressions that you need to know for real-world situations. And, today, I am joined by Jeremy.

Jeremy, how are you?

Jeremy: I'm doing well. I'm a little bit tired, though, because I just got back from a trip late last night.

Andrew: Trip late last night. Did you fly home?

Jeremy: Yes, I flew back from Mexico.

Andrew: Flew back from Mexico. Well, this is very fitting, Jeremy, because in today's episode we are going to teach all of our listeners about flying and the English that you need to know when you are **checking in** for a flight at the airport.

Jeremy: Airport English, pretty much.

Andrew: Exactly. So this is what we'll do today.

But before we get started, I just wanna let everyone know that the best way to study with this episode is with our study guide. And inside the guide is a transcript and detailed vocabulary explanations of all the key language that you'll hear us use. There's also some real-life examples, a comprehensive quiz, and more. It is a really great way to study along with us. So if you would like to download the study guide, just visit our website, Culips.com, and you can find out how to do that.

Jeremy: Today, we're going to learn what phrases one might likely come across when **checking in** for a flight at the airport.

Andrew: Yeah. So, Jeremy, when you travel, do you like to **travel light**, or do you travel with a lot of luggage?

Jeremy: Well, I have a toddler; I have a young child travelling with me. So I cannot really **travel lightly**. But my wife and I try to **travel light**. We usually only have one bag each and a carry-on bag, so, a backpack or a diaper bag with lots of toys and snacks for the baby. Yeah.

Andrew: I see. Yeah, this is kind of something that I pride myself on is **packing light**. So I hate carrying around bags when I travel, so if I can get away with just one carry-on, I love it. This is my goal, always.

Jeremy: Are you that guy at the airport, that guy who wears a suit and has one tiny bag behind him, like he's going on a day trip?

Andrew: No, I don't usually wear a suit. But, yeah, if I can have a small carry-on suitcase or a backpack, then this is my goal is to **travel light**. And I think it was last year I was in Finland for a couple of days, and I was walking around Finland. And it was the winter, so there's lots of snow and it was cold, and I saw a bunch of tourists carrying huge rolling suitcases through the snow because they had overpacked. And I had my light backpack with me, that was it, and I felt so happy that I made the decision to **pack light**. I think it was at that moment I decided I'm gonna do this forever. **Packing light** is the best. But, Jeremy, I went off on a tangent there. Let's get back on topic.

Jeremy: It's on topic. I think that was on topic.

Andrew: OK. But let's get back into talking about when you're at the airport. So you arrive at the airport, you need **to check in** for your flight and you need to **check your bags**. And so what we're going to do right now is examine how you can do this in English, and we're going to listen to example conversations in this exact situation. And after we listen to each one, we'll break it down and talk about what we heard, OK? Does that sound good to you?

Jeremy: Sounds good. I'm ready.

Andrew: All right. Let's listen to the first example conversation.



Airline staff: Hello, where are you flying today?

Traveller: I'm going to Toronto.

Airline staff: May I see your passport, please?

Traveller: Yes, here you go.

Airline staff: And are you **checking any bags** today?

Traveller: Yeah, these two.

Airline staff: All right, please place your bags on the scale one at a time.

Andrew: We just heard a conversation where a traveller was **checking in** at the airport. And **checking** is when you go to the counter and you talk to the staff member of the airline that you're flying with and you let them know that you are here and you're ready to board your flight. And they help you with your baggage and all of these kind of things.

Jeremy: And I know that these phrasal verbs in English, as we call them, are very difficult for English learners, because we have so many of them and they are only used in very specific situations. So, this one, **check in**, the reason we say in is because after you check, you can go into the airport. We also say **check in** at the hospital or at any event or building where you need to talk to the person at the front desk, put your name on a list and go inside. So, we say **check in** with this one.

Andrew: Yeah, that's a great tip and easy to remember that you are allowed to enter, you're allowed to go inside the airplane, after you check with the staff, right? After they confirm your identity.

So, Jeremy, we heard two key expressions in that first conversation example. And the first key expression was when the agent, the staff member at the airline, asked the traveller, where are you flying today?

Airline staff: Hello, where are you flying today?
Hello, where are you flying today?

Andrew: So, this is a question that you are 100% going to hear, right? Where are you flying to today?

Jeremy: Yes.

Andrew: There might be some variations: where you going today?

Jeremy: Where are you off to?

Andrew: Where are you off to, yup, but it's essentially the same thing: where are you going? OK? And so this traveller is going to Toronto. The agent asked to see his passport, and this is also very standard. And the next question he asks, are you **checking any bags** today? Are you **checking any bags**?

Airline staff: And are you **checking any bags** today?
And are you **checking any bags** today?

Andrew: So, Jeremy, what does it mean when you **check a bag**?

Jeremy: When you **check a bag**, it means that you register it in their system so that they can put it on the airplane and make sure it is connected to your name, so that you can receive it on the other side or claim it if it happens to get lost.

Andrew: So when you **check a bag**, you are giving your baggage to the airline to carry it for you, right? They will store it for you somewhere in the airplane and give it to you at your destination. You don't have to carry it with you. And a similar expression is coat check. If you go to a theatre or a nightclub or a concert hall, anyplace where you don't want to carry your coat with you because it's inconvenient, then there will be a coat check. And you can usually pay a couple of dollars and get somebody to watch your coat for you.

Jeremy: Please watch my coat for me, sir, very, very closely.

Andrew: I don't know about in California, because you guys are lucky and you have hot weather all the time but, in Canada, coat check is very important because people drop a lot of money on coats. And some people, I think, have evil intentions and they maybe purposely take the wrong coat, especially at a night club this can happen, when people have a drink or two.

Jeremy: Oh, that one looks expensive.

Andrew: Yeah, that's my coat. Yes, it is. So guarding the coats is a very important job.

Jeremy: Yup, I am ignorant to that. I am from the West Coast where we get no snow unless I go find it on purpose.

Andrew: I'm jealous, I'm jealous.

Jeremy: Sorry, man, I don't know any different.

Andrew: OK, let's listen to a little bit more of this conversation with the agent and the traveller. Here is part two of their interaction.

Airline staff: OK, it looks like your bag is within the weight limit.

Traveller: Oh great, OK. Um, I have a **layover** in Vancouver. Do I need to pick up my bag there?

Airline staff: No, it will go straight through to Toronto. Here are your boarding passes, one for each flight. Your flight leaves from Gate 15A and will begin boarding at 10:20. Have a nice flight, sir.

Traveller: Thank you.

Andrew: So, in this part in the conversation, the traveller mentions that he has a **layover** in Vancouver.

Traveller: I have a **layover** in Vancouver. Do I need to pick up my bag there?
I have a **layover** in Vancouver. Do I need to pick up my bag there?

Andrew: So, Jeremy, could you explain what a **layover** is?

Jeremy: **Layover**, that is an interesting word. It means you have to land in one airport and then fly from there to your final destination.

Andrew: Exactly. You have a connecting flight. You need to connect somewhere. As opposed to a direct flight where you just go from point A to point B, when you have a **layover**, you have to go from A to B and then to your final destination, which is C.

Jeremy: Now sometimes in some airports if you have a **layover**, they require you to go get your bag from **baggage claim**. **Baggage claim** is the place where you get your bags, where you can claim your bag.

Andrew: Pick up your bag.

Jeremy: They make you go get your bag and **check** it again, so that it gets onto the next plane.

Andrew: Yes.

Jeremy: But most airports that I have been to, recently at least, will do this for you. They will move the bag for you to the next plane.

Andrew: Yeah, I haven't had to do this for a really long time. I think this usually happens when you have a **layover** and you're transferring between different airlines. But if you're on the same airline, or even the same network, because it seems like all of the airlines are somehow connected—they have networks, right—so usually you don't have to do this. But I have had to do in the past. I think actually when travelling to the USA, because USA has kind of strict security concerns and they want to **check your bag**. Yes, I had to this in Toronto, I was flying from Toronto to the USA, started in Montreal and my destination was somewhere in the USA, I think New York, and I had a **layover** in Toronto. And even though I was on the same airline, I had to get my bag and **check it** again in Toronto with American security. They wanted to **check my bag** again. So sometimes you have to do this.

Jeremy: That happened with me when I flew from Korea to Canada and had a **layover** in Canada and then went to the States. I had to do that.

Andrew: Yes, so I think it's understandable why America has some extra security, they wanna do an extra check. So maybe keep this in mind if you are flying to America, that you may have to do this.

Jeremy, we heard that the bags will go straight through to Toronto.

Airline staff: No, it will go straight through to Toronto.
No, it will go straight through to Toronto.

Andrew: So, the traveller will not have to collect this and **check the bags** again, and that the plane will begin boarding at 10:20.

Airline staff: Your flight leaves from Gate 15A and will begin boarding at 10:20.
Your flight leaves from Gate 15A and will begin boarding at 10:20.

Andrew: So, begin boarding, this means the time that you can enter the plane.

Jeremy: Yeah, usually people will start lining up at this time. And sometimes, some airlines require you to be there, to be in the airport and **checked in** by that time, otherwise you can lose your seat and they may give your seat to someone else who is waiting on standby.

Andrew: Right, so I think the key word here is this verb board, right? To board, this means to enter the airplane, to get on the airplane, and that is why it's called your boarding pass.

All right, everyone, well, that about wraps it up for us. I hope that you learned a lot here today and that you found this episode useful.

Andrew: Our website is Culips.com and, once again, if you want to get the transcript, practice exercises, and study guide for this episode, just visit our website, which is, yeah, Culips.com.

We're also all over the place on social media, we're on Facebook and Instagram, YouTube, everywhere. So just search for the Culips English Podcast and you'll be sure to find us and yeah, that's it.

So, we'll be back soon with another brand-new episode and we'll talk to you then. Bye, everybody.

Jeremy: Bye, everyone.

Detailed Explanations

Travel light

Phrasal verb

Travel light is a phrasal verb that means to bring very few things with you when you go somewhere. You can also say **pack light**.

The best way to **travel light** on a flight is to pack a single bag that you will bring onto the plane instead of giving it to the airport staff to put in the plane's luggage compartment. Always make sure that your bag meets your airplane's specifications for carry-on luggage.

Here are a couple more examples with **travel light**:

Musab: I hate waiting for my luggage to come off the plane. It always takes forever.

Harper: Same here. I always try to **pack light**, but there's always something I absolutely need to have with me.

Musab: My sister can **travel light**. Just one backpack and she's set for a week. I can't. I need my suits!

Harper: Ha! For me, it's my electronics. Oh, hey! There are our bags.

Musab: Finally!

Jimena: Ready for our trip to Cabo?

Etienne: Am I ever! I was so excited last night I couldn't sleep.

Jimena: Whoa, is that bag all you're bringing with you?

Etienne: Yup! I **travel light**. Got everything I need right here. What about you? Where's your stuff?

Jimena: I checked it all in.

Etienne: Cool. Let's go find our gate.

To check in

Phrasal verb

When you arrive at an airport for a flight, the first thing you do is **check in**. This is when you show your ticket, get a boarding pass, and give your bags to the airline staff. They then give you directions about where to get on your plane. You could also say to sign in or to register.

There may be a sign above the area where you go **to check in** that says Check In; it could also say Admissions or Boarding. Most airlines have their own service counters within the airport, so it is important to know which airline you are taking. Nowadays, it is also possible **to check in** online.

You can also **check in** to hotels, events, and any place where you have to confirm your arrival.

Here are a couple more examples with **to check in**:

Tahira: All right, we've got our passports, our tickets, our bags. I think we're ready **to check in**.

Mahdi: Good, good. Where do we do that?

Tahira: Uh, I think over there, where it says Check In?

Mahdi: That is a very long line.

Tahira: Good thing our flight doesn't leave for another 2 hours.

Arielle: Jin! Over here!

Jin: Hi! How did you **check in** so quickly?

Arielle: I registered online. Plus, I packed light, so I didn't have to check any bags.

Jin: Smart. I just spent the last hour standing in line.

Arielle: Then let's find a place to sit, right away!

Check a bag

Phrasal verb

When you **check a bag**, you're giving it to the airline staff to put on the plane. You will then pick up your bag after the flight. This is also called **checking in luggage**. Once your bag is **checked** in, it's called a checked bag or checked luggage.

When you check in, airline staff will ask if you have any bags or luggage to check. It is important that you read all the rules for checked luggage before you get to the airport so that your bags meet the requirements to go on the plane.

Here's one more example with **check a bag**:

Airline staff: Do you want to **check a bag** today?

Polina: Just this one.

Airline staff: Put it on the scale, please. Do you have any electronic cigarettes, vaping devices, or portable chargers in your checked bag?

Polina: Oh, yes, a portable charger.

Airline staff: Portable chargers must be in your carry-on.

Polina: Oh, sorry. I'll remove it.

Airline staff: Thank you. Here is your boarding pass and checked luggage tracking number.

Polina: What is the tracking number for? Don't I just get my luggage at **baggage claim**?

Airline staff: Yes. However, if you cannot find your checked luggage at your destination, or if it gets lost, this tracking number helps us, well, keep track of it so that we can find it for you.

Polina: Oh, cool. Great, thanks.

Airline staff: Have a nice flight.

Layover

Noun

A **layover** is a short stay in an airport that is not your destination. This stay can last anywhere from 30 minutes to 24 hours. **Layovers** usually require travellers to switch planes—also called making a connecting flight—so they can continue onto their final destination.

Some people use the term stopover or connection. However, in the airline world, these three words mean slightly different things. A connection is a short stop in an airport to switch planes. A stopover is a longer stop of 24 hours or more. **Layover** is the most common term and can be used for all three situations. Many travellers plan stopovers during their trip so that they can visit more places: they leave the airport to explore and then come back later for their next flight.

Here's one more example with **layover**:

Nizar: I booked my flight for San Francisco today!

Theresa: Oh, that's so fun!

Nizar: Yeah. Really excited. Couldn't get a direct flight, though. I have a 2-hour **layover** in Frankfurt.

Theresa: Huh, well, that's not too long.

Nizar: No, I suppose it could be worse. Hopefully, I can leave the airport to see a bit of Frankfurt!

Theresa: That would be really cool! When André and I went to Cuba, we had an 18-hour stopover in Zurich, and we went out and ate dinner. It was a fun night and much better than having to rush to make a connection.

Nizar: That sounds awesome. Maybe I should change my flights so I can do that, too.

Baggage claim

Noun

Baggage claim is the area of an airport where you collect your checked luggage at the end of your trip. Another term for this area is **baggage reclaim**. The **baggage claim** area is usually found in a restricted area of the airport, after immigration control and before you go through customs.

If you're not sure where to go to get your bags, ask an airport staff member, "Where is **baggage claim**?" or "Where do I pick up my bags?" Usually you can follow your fellow passengers since, when a flight lands, there is always a crowd of people heading to pick up their bags.

Here are a couple more examples with **baggage claim**:

Vanja: Excuse me. Where do I go to get my bags?

Airport staff: Your checked bags? Which flight were you on?

Vanja: Yeah. I'm coming from Sweden.

Airport staff: OK, so you have to go to **baggage reclaim** on the north end of the airport. Follow those signs.

Vanja: Oh, OK, thanks!

Itsuki: There are so many bags here. And all of them are black!

Lei: What did you expect? It's **baggage claim**. Of course there will be a lot of bags.

Itsuki: Does luggage only come in one colour, though? How are we supposed to know whose bags are whose?

Lei: What colour is your bag?

Itsuki: Black, of course.

Lei: Dude. At least put a ribbon on it or something.

Quiz

1. Why is it difficult for Jeremy and his wife to travel light?

- a) his wife likes to pack a lot of clothes
- b) they have a young child and need to bring a diaper bag with lots of toys and snacks
- c) he has too many electronic devices
- d) their belongings are too heavy

2. What is the phrasal verb that means to sign in at the airport?

- a) to check back
- b) to check off
- c) to check out
- d) to check in

3. What is checked luggage?

- a) bags that have been given to the airline staff to load on the plane
- b) luggage that has been opened and searched
- c) bags with a checkered pattern
- d) bags carried onto the plane by the passenger

4. A layover is a _____ in an airport.

- a) bed
- b) pastry
- c) short stay
- d) job

5. When you arrive at your destination, where do you pick up your checked luggage?

- a) at the hotel
- b) near the rear of the plane
- c) in the bathrooms
- d) at baggage claim

Writing and Discussion Questions

1. What are some of the benefits of travelling light?
2. Other than an airport, where are a few places that you need to check into when you arrive?
3. Have you ever lost your bags on a trip even after you checked them in? What happened?
4. When you travel, do you prefer a short layover to make your connecting flight or a longer layover? Why?
5. What are some ways you can make your luggage or bags stand out so that they're easier to find at the baggage claim?

Quiz Answers

1.b 2.d 3.a 4.c 5.d

Episode credits

Hosts: Andrew Bates and Jeremy Brinkerhoff

Music: *Something Elated* by Broke For Free, *Step On* by Jahzzar

Episode preparation/research: Kassy White

Audio editor: Andrew Bates

Transcriptionist: Heather Bates

Study guide writer: Lisa Hoekstra

English editor: Stephanie MacLean

Business manager: Tsuyoshi Kaneshima

Project manager: Jessica Cox

Image: Chuttersnap (Unsplash.com)