

ULTIMATE GUIDE TO AIRLINE CONTRACTS OF CARRIAGE

EACH AIRLINE'S CONTRACT OF CARRIAGE IS AVAILABLE TO THE PUBLIC AND ACCESSIBLE VIA EACH AIRLINE'S WEBSITE.

	Airline's definition of "schedule change"	Passenger options when there's a schedule change	Airline's definition of "irregular operations"	Passenger options for irregular operations (beyond airline's control) ¹	Passenger options for irregular operations (within airline's control)	Amenities provided by airline for irregular operations (within airline's control)
ALASKA	Departure or arrival is 60 minutes late or causes missed connection; stop is added	Rebook on next flight; may transfer to another airline; full refund	Delay resulting in misconnection; cancellation or omission of stop; substitution of equipment; change that requires rerouting	Refund unused portion of ticket	Rebook on next flight; may transfer to another airline; refund of unused ticket; if outbound at connection point, return to city of origin and receive full ticket refund	Can provide accommodation if cancellation is 100+ miles from home
ALLEGiant	Significant delay or cancellation	Rebook on another flight or receive a refund	Significant delay or cancellation	Rebook on next flight or refund	Rebook on next flight; may transfer to another airline; refund of unused ticket	Not specified
AMERICAN	Departure or arrival is 60 minutes late; stop is added	Rebook on next flight; or another airline's flight; refund	Delay resulting in misconnection; cancellation or omission of stop; substitution of equipment; change that requires rerouting	Refund unused portion of ticket	Rebook on next flight; may transfer to another airline; refund of unused ticket	Lodging if delay exceeds 4 hours, between 10 p.m.–6 a.m.
DELTA	Departure or arrival is 90 minutes late or causes missed connection	Rebook on next flight; may transfer to another airline; refund	Delay or cancellation	Rebook on next flight; may transfer to another airline; refund	Rebook on next flight; may transfer to another airline; refund	Meal and lodging if delay exceeds 4 hours, between 10 p.m.–6 a.m., or \$100 credit
FRONTIER	Departure or arrival is 3 hours late	Rebook on another flight; may transfer to another airline; refund	Unable to provide transportation within 3 hours	Refund unused portion of ticket	Rebook on next flight; may transfer to another airline; refund	Meal and lodging if delay exceeds 4 hours, between 10 p.m.–6 a.m.
HAWAIIAN	Not specified	Not specified	Delay resulting in misconnection; cancellation or omission of stop; substitution of equipment; change that requires rerouting	Not specified	Rebook on next flight; may transfer to another airline; refund	Meal and lodging if delay exceeds 4 hours, between 10 p.m.–6 a.m.
JETBLUE	Not specified	Next flight or full refund	Fails to operate as scheduled	Rebook on next flight or full refund	Rebook on another flight or refund of unused ticket	Credit vouchers based on length of delay; hotel and meal voucher if delay exceeds 6 hours
SOUTHWEST	Not specified	Airline will attempt to notify passenger of schedule change	Failure to operate according to schedule or cancellation	Rebook on next flight or refund of unused ticket	Rebook on next flight or refund of unused ticket	Not specified
SPIRIT	Not specified	Rebook on next flight	Delay resulting in misconnection; cancellation or omission of stop; substitution of equipment; change that requires rerouting	Not specified	Rebook on next flight	May provide limited amenities
SUN COUNTRY	Not specified	Not specified	Fails to operate as scheduled	Next available flight	Rebook on next flight, transfer to another airline; refund of unused portion	May provide limited amenities
UNITED	Any change that is not a unique event	Rebook on next flight; may transfer to other airline; flight credit for up to 1 year later; refund	Delay resulting in misconnection; cancellation or omission of stop; substitution of equipment; change that requires rerouting	Rebook on next flight or refund	Rebook on next flight; may transfer to another airline; refund	Meal and lodging if delay exceeds 4 hours, between 10 p.m.–6 a.m.
US AIRWAYS	Not specified	Airline will attempt to notify passenger of schedule change	Not specified	May reschedule or receive refund as voucher	Transfer to another airline in most cases	Not specified
VIRGIN AMERICA	Not specified	Airline will attempt to notify passenger of schedule change	Delay resulting in misconnection; cancellation or omission of stop; substitution of equipment; change that requires rerouting	Refund	Not specified	Provides amenities as necessary, including meals and lodging

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	Minimum time before departure baggage must be checked	Maximum time before departure baggage can be checked	Minimum time to get boarding pass before departure time	Minimum time to arrive at gate before departure time	Minimum time passenger must be seated onboard before departure time	Standby available on next flight if passenger is ≤ 2 hours late	Standby available for earlier flight on ticketed day of departure	Minimum age to travel independently	Minimum age to travel as unaccompanied minor (nonstop/connections)	Live animals allowed (checked/under-seat) ²
ALASKA	40 minutes; 45 minutes at some airports	4 hours	30 minutes	Not specified	Not specified	Not specified	Not specified	13 years old	5 years old/8 years old	Yes; \$100/Yes; \$100
ALLEGiant	Not specified	4 hours	45 minutes	30 minutes	Not specified	Not specified	Not specified	14 years old	Not specified	Not allowed/Cats and dogs only; \$100
AMERICAN	30 minutes; 45–60 minutes at some airports	Not specified	30 minutes	Not specified	10 minutes	Yes	Not specified	12 years old	5 years old/8 years old	Yes; \$175/Yes; \$125
DELTA	Not specified	4 hours	30 minutes; 45–60 minutes at some airports	15 minutes	Not specified	Yes	Yes, subject to rules	15 years old	5 years old/8 years old	Yes; \$200/Yes; \$125
FRONTIER	30 minutes; 45 minutes at some airports	Not specified	30 minutes; 45 minutes at some airports	10 minutes	Not specified	Not specified	Not specified	15 years old	5 years old/Not accepted	Not allowed/Yes; \$75–125
HAWAIIAN	45 minutes; 30 minutes on interisland flights	Not specified	45 minutes; 30 minutes on interisland flights	30 minutes	Not specified but can close door up to 10 minutes early	Not specified	Not specified	12 years old	5 years old/5 years old	Yes; \$225 (\$60 on interisland flights)/Yes; \$175 (\$35 on interisland flights)
JETBLUE	30 minutes	4 hours	20 minutes	Not specified	15 minutes	Not specified	Yes, for flight immediately preceding original at no fee	14 years old	5 years old/Not accepted	Not allowed/Yes; \$100
SOUTHWEST	30 minutes; 45 minutes at some airports	4 hours	Not specified	10 minutes	Not specified	Not specified	Not specified	12 years old	5 years old/Not accepted	Not allowed/Yes; \$75
SPIRIT	45 minutes	3 hours	30 minutes; 45 minutes at some airports	15 minutes	Not specified	Not specified	Not specified	15 years old	5 years old/Not accepted	Not allowed/Yes; \$100
SUN COUNTRY	30 minutes; 60 minutes at some airport	4 hours	Desk closes 45 minutes before departure	30 minutes	Not specified	Yes	Not specified	13 years old	5 years old/Not accepted	Yes; \$199/Yes; \$125
UNITED	30 minutes; 45 minutes at some airports	Not specified	30 minutes; 45 minutes at some airports	15 minutes	Not specified	Not specified	Not specified	12 years old	5 years old/8 years old	Yes; rates vary/Yes; \$125
US AIRWAYS	30 minutes	Not specified	30 minutes; longer at some airports	15 minutes	10 minutes	Not specified	Not specified	15 years old	5 years old/Not accepted	Not accepted/Yes; \$125
VIRGIN AMERICA	45 minutes for most domestic flights	Not specified	30 minutes	15 minutes	Not specified	Yes, for a fee	Yes, for flight immediately preceding original at no fee	15 years old	5 years old/Not accepted	Not accepted/Cats and dogs only; \$100

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	Refund of difference if fare decreases	Ticket cancellations due to erroneous fares	Prohibited ticket uses ³	Maximum stopover time	Passenger options for involuntary denied boarding	Passenger unable to fasten seat belt
ALASKA	Yes, in the form of credit	Yes	Back-to-back, throw-away, point-beyond	4 hours; passenger must depart on first available flight or flight that will provide earliest arrival at next point	Next flight, transfer to another airline, or refund; compensation when due to overbooking	Airline can refuse transport
ALLEGiant	No	Not specified	None	4 hours	Next flight, transfer to another airline, or refund; compensation when due to overbooking	Airline can refuse transport
AMERICAN	Yes	Only fares priced at \$0	Back-to-back, throw-away, point-beyond	4 hours; passenger must depart on first available flight or flight that will provide earliest arrival at next point	Next flight, transfer to another airline, or refund; compensation when due to overbooking	Airline can refuse transport
DELTA	No	Yes	Back-to-back, throw-away, point-beyond	4 hours; passenger must depart on first available flight or flight that will provide earliest arrival at next point	If greater than 90 minutes, next flight, may transfer to another airline at Delta's discretion, or refund; compensation when due to overbooking	Airline can refuse transport
FRONTIER	No	Not specified	Back-to-back, throw-away, point-beyond	4 hours	Next flight, transfer to another airline, or refund; compensation when due to overbooking	Airline can refuse transport; oversized passengers must buy two tickets (passenger will be transferred to another flight if full; one ticket will be refunded if flight is not full)
HAWAIIAN	Yes, in the form of credit	Yes	Back-to-back	4 hours; passenger must depart on first available flight or flight that will provide earliest arrival at next point	Next flight, transfer to another airline, or refund; compensation when due to overbooking	Airline can refuse transport
JETBLUE	No	Not specified	None	4 hours	Next flight, transfer to another airline, or refund; compensation when due to overbooking	Airline can refuse transport
SOUTHWEST	Not specified	Not specified	None	4 hours	Next flight or refund; compensation when due to overbooking	Airline can refuse transport; oversized passengers must buy two tickets
SPIRIT	No	Not specified	None	Passenger must depart on first available flight or flight that will provide earliest arrival at next point	Next flight or refund; transfer to another airline and compensation when due to overbooking	Airline can refuse transport; oversized passengers must buy two coach tickets or one premium-cabin ticket
SUN COUNTRY	No	Not specified	Back-to-back	4 hours; passenger must depart on first available flight or flight that will provide earliest arrival at next point	Next flight, transfer to another airline, or refund; compensation when due to overbooking	Airline can refuse transport
UNITED	No	Not specified	Back-to-back, throw-away, point-beyond	4 hours; passenger must depart on first available flight or flight that will provide earliest arrival at next point	Next flight, transfer to another airline, or refund; compensation when due to overbooking	Airline can refuse transport; oversized passengers must buy two tickets
US AIRWAYS	No	Not specified	Back-to-back, throw-away, point-beyond	4 hours; passenger must depart on first available flight or flight that will provide earliest arrival at next point	Next flight, transfer to another airline if US Airways is unable to provide transportation, or refund; compensation when due to overbooking	Airline can refuse transport
VIRGIN AMERICA	No	Not specified	None	4 hours	Next flight or refund (alternative transportation not defined); compensation when due to overbooking	Airline can refuse transport; oversized passengers must buy two tickets (one ticket will be refunded if flight departs with two empty seats)

EXCESS VALUATION

Airlines assert a limit on their liability for delayed, lost, or damaged checked baggage. On domestic trips, the government mandated liability ceiling, adjusted every two years, is currently \$3,300 per passenger. When your luggage and its contents are worth more than the liability limit, you may want to purchase "excess valuation." This is not insurance, but it will increase the carrier's potential liability. The excess valuation fees vary from airline to airline and are outlined in the contracts of carriage.

¹ This is also known as irregular operations due to "Force Majeure" events, defined by airlines as meteorological conditions, strikes, government regulations, and the like.

² The animals allowed vary from airline to airline. Fees listed are subject to changes and restrictions; passengers should contact airline for more specific information.

³ *Back-to-back ticketing*: the practice of booking two flights to get around ticketing restrictions, such as Saturday-night stay requirements.
Throwaway ticketing: the practice of purchasing a ticket with the intent to use only a portion of the included travel.
Point-beyond ticketing: the practice of disembarking an indirect flight at the connection point.