

Lesson 16 – Airport: Part 1

Are you ready to take a trip? We're going to start a series of lessons on practical English for use while traveling. Today we're going to go through the airport step by step, learning important vocabulary and useful phrases along the way.

Conversation #1 – At the Check-In Desk

Dan is flying from New York to Los Angeles. When he arrives at the airport, he goes to the check-in desk. Listen to the conversation he has with the agent:

Agent: Good afternoon! Where are you flying to today?

Dan: Los Angeles.

Agent: May I have your passport, please?

Dan: Here you go.

Agent: Are you checking any bags?

Dan: Just this one.

Agent: OK, please place your bag on the scale.

Dan: I have a stopover in Chicago – do I need to pick up my luggage there?

Agent: No, it'll go straight through to Los Angeles. Here are your boarding passes – your flight leaves from gate 15A and it'll begin boarding at 3:20. Your seat number is 26E.

Dan: Thanks.



Conversation Vocabulary and Phrases

- Instead of “**Where are you flying today?**” the agent may ask “**What’s your final destination?**” The answer will be the same!
- You can say “**Here you go**” anytime you give something to somebody
- To **check your bags** means to put them on the airplane inside the cargo compartment. The small bag you take with you on the airplane is called a **carry-on**. You need to put your carry-on bags through the X-ray machine at security.
- The **scale** is the equipment that tells you the weight of your luggage (45 kilograms, for example)
- A **stopover** or **layover** is when the airplane stops in a different city before continuing to the final destination
- If the agent says that your luggage will **go straight through**, it means it will go directly to the final destination (and you don’t need to pick it up during your stopover)
- **Boarding passes** are the tickets that permit you to enter the airplane
- When a plane begins **boarding**, it means that the passengers start to enter the plane. Usually boarding time is 30-60 minutes before takeoff (when the plane leaves)

Other Questions & Phrases for the Airport

- “Excuse me, where is the American Airlines check-in desk?”
- “How many bags can I check?”
- “Will my luggage go straight through, or do I need to pick it up in [Chicago]?”
- “How much is the fee?”
*If your bag is heavier than the weight limits, or if your bag is larger than the size limits, you may need to pay extra: an **oversized baggage fee** or **overweight baggage fee** (this can be \$75 to \$300). Some airlines in the United States also charge a fee for ALL checked bags (usually \$15 to \$30).*
- “Please mark this bag as ‘fragile.’”
Say this if you have fragile or sensitive items in your bag that might break
- “Is the flight on time?”
The agent will respond either “Yes” if the flight is on time, or “There’s a 20-minute delay” (for example) if the flight will leave later than expected.

Extra questions in the U.S.

On flights going to or inside the U.S., you might be asked some extra security questions before or during check-in. Here are some sample questions:

Answer **YES** to these questions:

- Did you pack your bags yourself?
- Has your luggage been in your possession at all times?
- Are you aware of the regulations regarding liquids in your carry-on?
(Liquids must be 100 mL or less, and stored in a single quart-sized clear plastic bag. [More information: TSA.gov](http://www.tsa.gov))

Answer **NO** to these questions:

- Are you carrying any firearms or flammable materials?
- Have you left your luggage unattended at any time?
- Has anyone given you anything to carry on the flight?

Conversation #2 – Going through Security

There are two pieces of equipment in security: you put your bags through the **X-ray machine**, and you walk through the **metal detector**. Some airports also use a **body scanner** for a more careful check.

The **X-ray machine** has a **conveyor belt** that moves your bags automatically through the machine. You can put small items like keys or money into plastic **bins**.

*In the picture below, the woman is walking through the **metal detector**.
Her suitcase is on the **conveyor belt** after going through the **X-ray machine**.*



Agent: Please lay your bags flat on the conveyor belt, and use the bins for small objects.

Dan: Do I need to take my laptop out of the bag?

Agent: Yes, you do. Take off your hat and your shoes, too.

(he walks through the metal detector)

[BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP]

Agent: Please step back. Do you have anything in your pockets – keys, cell phone, loose change?

Dan: I don't think so. Let me try taking off my belt.

Agent: Okay, come on through.

(he goes through the metal detector again)

Agent: You're all set! Have a nice flight.

The phrase "you're all set" is a common expression that means "you're finished and everything is OK."

Phrasal Verbs: SET OFF and GO OFF

When the alarm sounds, we say "the alarm went off." To describe what *caused* the alarm to sound, we say "set off" – for example, "My keys set off the alarm" or "My keys set off the metal detector."

Announcements at the Gate

Airports are divided into **terminals** (the major sections of the airport) and each terminal has many **gates**. The **gate** is the door you go through to enter the airplane. Here are a few announcements you might hear while you are at the gate, waiting for the plane to board.



- **"There has been a gate change."**
(this means the flight will leave from a different gate)
- **"United Airlines flight 880 to Miami is now boarding."**
(this means it's time for passengers to enter the plane)
- **"Please have your boarding pass and identification ready for boarding."**
- **"We would like to invite our first- and business-class passengers to board."**

- “We are now inviting passengers with small children and any passengers requiring special assistance to begin boarding.”
- “We would now like to invite all passengers to board.”
(this means everyone can enter the plane)
- “This is the final boarding call for United Airlines flight 880 to Miami.”
(this means it is the FINAL OPPORTUNITY to enter the plane before they close the doors)
- “Passenger John Smith, please proceed to the United Airlines desk at gate 12.”

Conversation #3: On the plane

The people who work inside the airplane serving food and drinks are called **flight attendants**. Both men and women who have this job are called flight attendants. Listen to this conversation that Dan has with the flight attendant when dinner is served on the flight.



Flight attendant: Chicken or pasta?

Dan: Sorry?

Flight attendant: Would you like chicken or pasta?

Dan: I'll have the chicken.

Flight attendant: Anything to drink?

Dan: What kind of soda do you have?

Flight attendant: Coke, Diet Coke, Sprite, Orange, and Dr. Pepper.

Dan: A Diet Coke, no ice, please.

Flight attendant: Here you go.

Dan: Thanks.

Conversation Tips:

If you didn't understand what the flight attendant said, you can say **Sorry?** or **Pardon?** to ask him or her to repeat it.

If you want to ask for something, you can use the phrase **"Can I have...?"** or **"Could I have...?"** Practice your pronunciation with these common requests:

- **"Can I have a pillow?"**
- **"Can I have a blanket?"**
- **"Can I have a pair of headphones/earbuds?"**
- **"Could I have some water/coffee/tea?"**
- **"Could I have some extra napkins?"**



Finally, if you need to stand up, but there is a person sitting between you and the aisle, you can say **Excuse me** and make a motion to start standing up. The person sitting next to you will understand and stand up to let you get out of your seat.

You've finished Lesson 16! Now take the quiz to test how well you remember the phrases. In tomorrow's lesson, you'll learn English phrases for arriving at the destination airport, going through immigration, and dealing with common travel problems.

Quiz – Lesson 16

- 1) _____ I have a coffee with milk, please?
- A. Can
 - B. Will
 - C. Do
- 2) Excuse me, where is the Delta check-in _____?
- A. desk
 - B. station
 - C. table
- 3) I lost my _____ pass - can I get another one?
- A. traveling
 - B. seating
 - C. boarding
- 4) I have a _____ in Paris on the way to Israel.
- A. stayover
 - B. stopover
 - C. layoff
- 5) _____ have the pasta, please.
- A. I'll
 - B. I'm
 - C. I'd

6) You need to _____ up your bag in Charlotte.

- A. take
- B. pick
- C. get

7) A _____ coffee, please.

- A. regular
- B. standard
- C. normal

8) The metal in my belt _____ the alarm.

- A. set off
- B. took off
- C. went off

9) Do I _____ to take off my shoes?

- A. want
- B. need
- C. should

10) Is the flight on _____?

- A. hour
- B. schedule
- C. departure

11) There's a half-hour _____.

- A. depart
- B. delay
- C. late

12) What _____ of juices do you have?

- A. can
- B. kind
- C. mark

13) How much is the oversized luggage _____?

- A. fee
- B. tax
- C. bill

14) What's my _____ number?

- A. chair
- B. seat
- C. sit

15) Will my luggage go straight _____ to New York?

- A. away
- B. through
- C. out

Lesson 16 Quiz - Answers

1. A 2. A 3. C 4. B 5. A 6. B 7. A 8. A 9. B 10. B 11. B 12. B 13. A 14. B 15. B

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