How to Handle a Delayed or Cancelled Flight and Rebook Calm

Travel · about 18 minutes · 2026-11-12

A practical 32-step guide to a disrupted flight: establish the facts, check what the airline and local rules actually say, rebook through the right channel, handle the practical details on the ground, and follow up once you have landed.

Get the Facts Before You Move

1. **Check the airline app and the board for the same flight**
   Check the airline app and the board for the same flight.
2. **Write down the reason the airline has given**
   Write down the reason the airline has given.
3. **Note the time you first learned about it**
   Note the time you first learned about it.
4. **Keep your passport, wallet, phone and medication with you**
   Keep your passport, wallet, phone and medication with you.
5. **Check whether checked bags are being returned**
   Check whether checked bags are being returned.
6. **Charge the phone and save offline copies of key details**
   Charge the phone and save offline copies of key details.

Know What the Rules Actually Say

7. **Open the airline's disruption or conditions-of-carriage page**
   Open the airline's disruption or conditions-of-carriage page.
8. **Check the fare rules on your own booking**
   Check the fare rules on your own booking.
9. **Check official passenger guidance for the country you are in**
   Check official passenger guidance for the country you are in.
10. **Decide whether you need the earliest seat or a reliable one**
    Decide whether you need the earliest seat or a reliable one.
11. **List the connections and bookings that depend on this flight**
    List the connections and bookings that depend on this flight.
12. **Identify anything time-limited in your hand luggage**
    Identify anything time-limited in your hand luggage.

Rebook Through the Right Channel

13. **Try the app or website before the physical queue**
    Try the app or website before the physical queue.
14. **Join the queue and call the helpline in parallel if offered**
    Join the queue and call the helpline in parallel if offered.

15. **Ask one specific question at the desk**

    Ask one specific question at the desk.

16. **Wait for the new boarding pass or written confirmation**

    Wait for the new boarding pass or written confirmation.

17. **Check the whole itinerary, including the return leg**

    Check the whole itinerary, including the return leg.

18. **Ask explicitly about checked baggage**

    Ask explicitly about checked baggage.

19. **Save a screenshot of the final confirmation**

    Save a screenshot of the final confirmation.

Look After the Practical Details

20. **Ask what the airline is providing before paying**

    Ask what the airline is providing before paying.

21. **Keep every receipt in one envelope**

    Keep every receipt in one envelope.

22. **Write down names, times and what was said**

    Write down names, times and what was said.

23. **Tell anyone waiting at the other end**

    Tell anyone waiting at the other end.

24. **Contact hotels, transfers and onward transport**

    Contact hotels, transfers and onward transport.

25. **Check travel insurance and card assistance terms**

    Check travel insurance and card assistance terms.

26. **Eat, drink and rest before making the next decision**

    Eat, drink and rest before making the next decision.

Follow Up Once You Have Landed

27. **File a claim through the airline's official channel**

    File a claim through the airline's official channel.

28. **Keep the original boarding passes and booking references**

    Keep the original boarding passes and booking references.

29. **Record the outcome of any claim**

    Record the outcome of any claim.

30. **Pack a charger, a pen and a flat folder in your hand luggage**

    Pack a charger, a pen and a flat folder in your hand luggage.

31. **Save offline copies of your important documents**

    Save offline copies of your important documents.

32. **Add the airline's disruption page to your pre-trip checklist**

    Add the airline's disruption page to your pre-trip checklist.

Sources

1. FAA — aviation consumer and safety information
   https://www.faa.gov/
2. European Union — official portal
   https://europa.eu/
3. TSA — travel security and packing rules
   https://www.tsa.gov/
4. U.S. Department of State — travel information
   https://www.state.gov/
5. USA.gov — Travel and Immigration
   https://www.usa.gov/travel-and-immigration
6. GOV.UK — official UK government services
   https://www.gov.uk/
7. Citizens Advice — consumer and work guidance
   https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/
8. USA.gov — official U.S. government services
   https://www.usa.gov/

Written as a checklist from https://www.howcompass.com/how-to/How-to-Handle-a-Delayed-or-Cancelled-Flight-and-Rebook-Calmly. Correction