# Southwest Airlines Family Travel Hub: Your Guide to Flying with Kids and Infants



Whether this is your 50th flight or your first, traveling with little ones adds a new dimension to your flying experience. We're here to answer all your questions and give you our best tips for traveling with kids so your flight with your family is as positive and safe as possible.

We'll cover general information like the boarding procedure for families and how to check your stroller. We'll also cover more niche questions like how to bring formula on the plane and how to book an unaccompanied minor.

If you need more information or want inspiration from fellow traveling families, leave a comment on this page, and the Southwest Airlines Community will help you find an answer.

# Southwest Airlines Family Boarding: Rules, Tips, and Age Guidelines

## What Are the Family Boarding Policies at Southwest Airlines, Including Age Requirements?

- Southwest offers Family Boarding right after the "A" group and right before the "B" group has boarded. Up to two accompanying adults can board with a child six years or younger during family boarding.
- Families with kids younger and older than six can all board together during family boarding.
- Once you're on the plane, you'll have the opportunity to find seats with at least one accompanying adult to sit with the child under six.
- If your child is between the ages of seven and 13, you'll board with the boarding group on your ticket, and our Gate and Flight Attendants will do their best to get you seated with your child.

We usually recommend getting to the gate at least 30 minutes before your scheduled departure time, but with kids in tow, it's better to err on the side of caution and get there 40 minutes early to accommodate for the short strides and bathroom breaks that always seem to come at inopportune times.

Read More: Southwest Airlines' Official Boarding Policy

### What Tips and Best Practices Should Families Follow When Boarding Southwest Airlines Flights?

There can be a lot more "stuff" when boarding with young children, from strollers to car seats to carry-ons. You can check your car seat or stroller at the gate with the help of the gate attendant.

If you bought a ticket so you could use your car seat on the flight, check to see that your car seat is airline-approved.

Before you board, take your kids to use the restroom, feed them a snack or a meal, and stay close to the gate, but walk around with little ones to stretch their legs before the flight.

As boarding time approaches, gather your items, get your boarding passes out, and wait for the Family Boarding announcement (which will be right after Group A and right before Group B). A flight attendant will help you find seats for you and your family.

## Southwest Airlines ID Requirements: Information for Minors and Adults

## What Are the ID Requirements for Minors Flying with Southwest Airlines?

- Anyone 18 or older must show valid identification at the airport security checkpoint. This can be a driver's license, U.S. passport, U.S. passport card, or other acceptable forms of identification as listed by TSA.
- Per TSA guidelines, kids under the age of 18 do not need a form of ID to travel within the United States.
- For international travel, a passport book for each minor must be verified by a Customer Service Agent and the ticket counter on the day of travel before a boarding pass is issued.



## Do Families Traveling with Children Need to Provide Proof of Identity or Age on Southwest Flights?

- If you choose to purchase a seat for your child or infant, you do not need proof of age at the airport.

- If you opt to travel with a child on your lap, they need a form of identification proving their age. This can be the original or photocopy of a government-issued identification (passport, birth certificate, or government-issued photo identification card are the only accepted forms of ID for lap-sitting children).
- Electronic screenshots, phone images, or immunization records are not accepted forms of ID for lap infants.
- On the day of travel, you'll need to print a Boarding Verification Document (BVD) at the airport, either at the self-service kiosk or the customer service desk. Your BVD and approved government-issued ID are the only items you'll need for your lap infant or child to get on the flight. You will not need a standard boarding pass for the lap infant.

## Unaccompanied Minor Travel On Southwest: Fees, Policies, and Tips

### What Are Southwest Airlines Policies for Unaccompanied Minors, and What Age Does This Apply To?

- An Unaccompanied Minor is anyone traveling alone between the ages of five and 11.
- When you book your ticket and add the birth date of your unaccompanied minor (UM), the website will ask if they will be unaccompanied; choose "yes."
- There is an additional charge for unaccompanied minor tickets.
- When you get to the airport, you'll need to check any luggage, get the child's UM lanyard (this helps Southwest employees know they're unaccompanied), and then escort them through security by providing identification at the ticket counter to get a gate pass.
- You'll be asked to list the name of the person who will be picking up the unaccompanied minor at their final destination. Please ensure that the party meeting your child at the gate has a valid form of ID and a copy of the travel itinerary for the child.
- They will need to get a gate pass from the ticket counter and get through security to the gate to pick up the unaccompanied minor at the gate.

Other guidance that might be helpful for unaccompanied minors: remind them that all Southwest Airlines employees are there to help, so ask for assistance when they need it. Prepare them for the possibility of turbulence, including tools and strategies that will help keep them calm and distracted. Remind them who is picking them up after they land. Sometimes, it's helpful to ask the person

picking up the unaccompanied minor to wear a specific color (“Look for Aunt Joan, she’ll be wearing a red hat”) to help young fliers find their party.



Read More: [Southwest Airlines’ Official Unaccompanied Minors Policy]

### How Much Does Southwest Airlines Charge for Unaccompanied Minor Service, and What Does It Include?

It's $100 one-way per unaccompanied minor. This service includes periodic checking on the minor throughout the flight, escort from gate to their seat, escort from the plane to meet whoever is picking them up, and a lanyard that indicates they are an unaccompanied minor so they can get help and support from Southwest Airline Employees.

### What Are the Requirements and Tips for Minors Flying Alone on Southwest Airlines?

The requirements for unaccompanied minors include willingness to follow instructions of Southwest Airlines Employees, wearing the unaccompanied minor lanyard, and being able to manage themselves throughout the length of the flight.

Although they will have more frequent check-ins with flight attendants, they will still need to be able to keep themselves entertained throughout the flight. It's a good idea to send them with books, fully charged electronics, headphones, small toys or games that don't have a lot of pieces or make tons of noise, snacks (or a meal if it's a longer flight, even with in-flight food service, little ones can get hungry!), an extra layer, their flight itinerary, and the contact information of the pickup person.

Make sure to dress them in clothes appropriate for their destination and label clothing, luggage, toys, and electronics with your name and number. Before the day of the flight, go over some basics about the airport, the process of getting onto a plane, what take-off and landing might feel like, what to do in the case of turbulence, etc. Remind them they can always talk to a Southwest Airlines Employee if they need help, feel nervous, or have questions.

## Southwest Airlines Infant Travel

### What is Southwest Airlines' Policy for Traveling with Infants?

- Infants between the ages of two weeks and two years can ride as a lap passenger with another passenger 12 or older.
- Lap infants will not need a boarding pass, but they do need a BVD (Boarding Verification Document.).
- Infants need proof of age documentation (An original or a copy of their birth certificate or passport; electronic versions of these items, like screenshots or phone images, are not accepted.)
- You will need their boarding pass if you purchase a seat for your infant or toddler.
- You are allowed to bring formula onto the plane. If you aren't sure if your liquid formula will get through security look at the TSA's guidelines for formula.
- You can bring a bag on board for a breast pump and/or breast milk (in addition to your personal item and carry-on.)

Read More: Southwest Airlines' Official Infant Travel Policy

### Are There Any Special Rules or Considerations for Infants on Southwest Airlines Flights?

- Infants traveling in their own seat must have a child restraint system (CRS).
- If you would rather use your car seat from home and install it into the chair on the plane, you can use that instead of a CRS.
- Flight attendants will be available to help you secure the CRS or car seat.
- Infants not in their own seats are lap infants and will need to be held on the caregiver's lap for the duration of the flight.

Come prepared with blankets, snacks, bottles, and any other items you'll need to care for your infant or toddler during the flight. You'll need to bring anything your infant will need during your flight; what clothing, food, toys, blankets, medicine, coats, etc would you need? Consider the time your flight will be in the air. If it's during bedtime, bring pajamas for your infant; if it's during nap time, bring their blanket and pacifier.

## Traveling with Lap Infants on Southwest Airlines

## What Are the Guidelines for Traveling with a Lap Infant on Southwest Airlines?

- When you get to the airport, go to the ticket counter and provide proof of age documents for your lap infant. (This can be the original or a copy of the birth certificate or passport of the child; no electronic versions of the document, including screenshots or phone images, are acceptable.)
- You'll receive a Boarding Verification Document (BVD) for the infant, which you'll show at the gate to board the infant.
- You will get to board with the family boarding group (after group A and before group B).
- If you need to bring formula or breast milk on board, you can bring a separate bag for those items (in addition to your personal item and carry-on.)
- You can also bring a breast pump; however, there are no outlets on board for personal use.
- You may be asked for proof of age for your lap infant throughout your travel, so have your documentation readily available. You must keep the lap infant on your lap throughout the flight.

Read More: Southwest Airline's Official Lap Child Policy

## How Can You Add a Lap Infant to Your Southwest Flight, and What Are the Associated Costs?

- You will be prompted to add adult and minor passengers when booking your flight.
- Proceed through the "Select Flight" and "Trip Price and Details" pages.
- On the "Who's Flying" step, add the lap infant's name and information, then use the drop-down to select "lap infant."
- If you've already booked your flight and you want to add a lap infant, please see a Customer Service Agent at the airport to make any changes to the reservation.
- You can also add a lap infant at a Southwest Airlines airport kiosk on your day of travel; just make sure to get to the airport early enough to give you plenty of time.

No matter how you add a lap infant to your travel itinerary, you will need proof of age for the lap infant. Bring the original or a copy of their birth certificate or passport (digital copies like

screenshots or phone images aren't acceptable forms of identification). A lap infant rides free of ticket charges domestically, but for international travel, applicable government-imposed taxes and fees must be paid.

## What Are Some Essential Tips for Flying Comfortably with a Lap Infant on Southwest Airlines?

Here's a quick rundown of everything you need to board the plane with a lap infant:

- Proof of age (birth certificate or passport, either originals or hard copies, digital copies like phone images or screenshots aren't acceptable forms of ID.)
- A Boarding Verification Document (BVD), which you get at the ticket counter or kiosk on the day of your flight.

Other than those two documents, the rest is up to you and your knowledge of your child and their needs. Think through what your child would be doing during a normal day—if you have an infant, they might sleep most of the time, but they'll need a change of clothes, diapers, medicine, formula, breastmilk, etc.

If your child is a year old, you'll need toys, books, and other forms of entertainment to keep them occupied during your flight, as well as diapers, snacks, a change of clothes, etc.

It's also important to consider what time of day your flight is happening; if it's a night flight, consider bringing pajamas, special blankets, stuffed animals, swaddling blankets, etc.

You'll want to pack your personal item so that the most important items are readily available, like a pacifier or baby wipes. A backpack might be the easiest option for your personal item, as you'll be managing an infant, their car seat and/or stroller, and your carry-on. Remember, lap infants do not get a carry-on item. You can bring your breast pump in a bag on the plane in addition to your carry-on and personal item.

# Snacking on Southwest Airlines: What to Bring and What We Offer

## What Are the Best Snacks to Bring on a Plane for Both Adults and Kids?

We love to chat about snacks, and while your snack preferences are as unique as you are, we have some inspiration and guidance. You can bring most types of food and some types of liquids (if they are less than 3.4 oz.) For regulations from TSA regarding what types of food, drinks, powders, and gels you can bring on the plane, check out their website.

Generally speaking, we recommend snacks that aren't too messy, don't have a strong smell, and are easy to eat without disturbing others. Protein bars, nuts, fruits, and vegetables are all good options, especially if you want to keep your energy levels steady and hunger at bay.

Making sure your child has had a balanced meal will help them feel better during the flight, and some families find that bringing a new snack or treat that will excite their little one is a great way to keep them entertained and interested.

## What Types of Snacks Does Southwest Airlines Provide During Flights?

Southwest Airlines provides Snack Mix, soda, coffee, and tea, and on longer flights, we'll add cookies or crackers to the menu. Alcohol can be consumed on the plane, but only when purchased on the flight.

Read More: Southwest Airlines' Official Food and Beverage Information

# Carry On Food and Drinks On Southwest Airlines

## What Are the Guidelines for Bringing Food and Drinks on Southwest Airlines Flights?

You can bring most food and some drinks on the plane, and for a complete list of what you can and cannot bring, check out the TSA website.

- Generally speaking, liquids less than 3.4 oz are okay on board or if you purchased them after security at the airport.
- If your drink is alcoholic, you cannot drink it onboard (the only alcoholic drinks that can be consumed on board are drinks purchased on the flight from a flight attendant.)
- Medications are okay to bring on board. Snacks will be provided on the plane (on flights over 175 miles) but aren't available to purchase.

## How to Best Prepare and Pack Food for Travel on Southwest Airlines Flights?

Most food is okay on most planes. However, canned food, gel or liquid-based foods, fruit and vegetables must be screened at security. If traveling from Hawaii, Puerto Rico, or the U.S. Virgin Islands to the U.S. mainland, you can not bring fruits and vegetables on the plane.

Frozen foods are also allowed on the plane, but the ice or ice packed keeping your food cool must be frozen solid during inspection. There can't be any liquid from melting ice. Your food must be able to fit in your carry-on or personal items.

## Can Passengers Carry Alcoholic Beverages and Other Drinks on Southwest Airlines?

- You can bring non-alcoholic drinks from home through security if they are less than 3.4 oz.
- Formula and breastmilk are allowed in greater quantities, but they might be tested and screened at security.
- Alcoholic beverages are allowed if they are less than 3.4 oz, but they must remain sealed and not consumed during the flight (alcohol can be purchased on the flight.)
- Larger quantities of alcohol can be put in a checked bag, per TSA regulations (make sure you check out the regulations for alcohol for a checked bag).
- You can bring non-alcoholic drinks onto the plane you purchased after security and before boarding the flight.

# Flying Southwest With Allergies

## How Does Southwest Airlines Accommodate Passengers Flying with Allergies?

We work hard to make sure all passengers have a safe, healthy flight. We don't serve peanuts on our flights; however, some snacks may be made in the same facilities where peanuts are processed.

We can't prevent others from bringing peanuts or peanut products on the plane, and we also can't guarantee that there isn't peanut residue on the seats, tray tables, seat belts, etc. Make sure to read the labels of any snacks we provide before consuming them to ensure you aren't allergic to any of the ingredients.

If you have a severe allergy to animals, let the gate attendants know, and they will do their best to seat you as far away as possible from any service animals on board. However, they can't guarantee an environment free of allergens on the plane or at the terminal (perfumes, cleaning solutions, latex, etc.). Make sure to bring your Epi-pen, allergy medication, etc., to help manage any unexpected symptoms.

Read More: Southwest Airlines' Official Passenger Allergies Policy




# Understanding Southwest Airlines Baggage and Checking Policies

## What Are the Current Southwest Airlines Baggage Policies for Checked and Carry-On Luggage?

Carry-On Bags: You can bring one carry-on and one personal item.

- Personal items can be a purse, briefcase, backpack, or other small item that can easily fit on the floor in the seat in front of you.
- Carry-on luggage must be smaller than 24” (L) x 16” (W) x 10” (H).
- Sharp objects, pepper spray, liquids more than 3.4 oz, firearms, and other items are not allowed in your carry-on or personal items.




Image source: https://www.southwest.com/help/baggageImage source: https://www.southwest.com/help/baggage

Checked Luggage: Your first two pieces of checked luggage are free with Southwest Airlines.

- Each checked bag can weigh up to 50 lbs and be less than 62 inches (L+W+H).
- If your bag is over 100 lbs and over 80 inches, it must be shipped as Air Cargo.
- Golf clubs and skis fly free, and surfboards fly free to Hawaii, and each item takes the place of one of your free checked bags.
- International travelers must check their bags at the ticket counter (not the curb), and luggage must be checked at least 60 minutes before your flight departs.

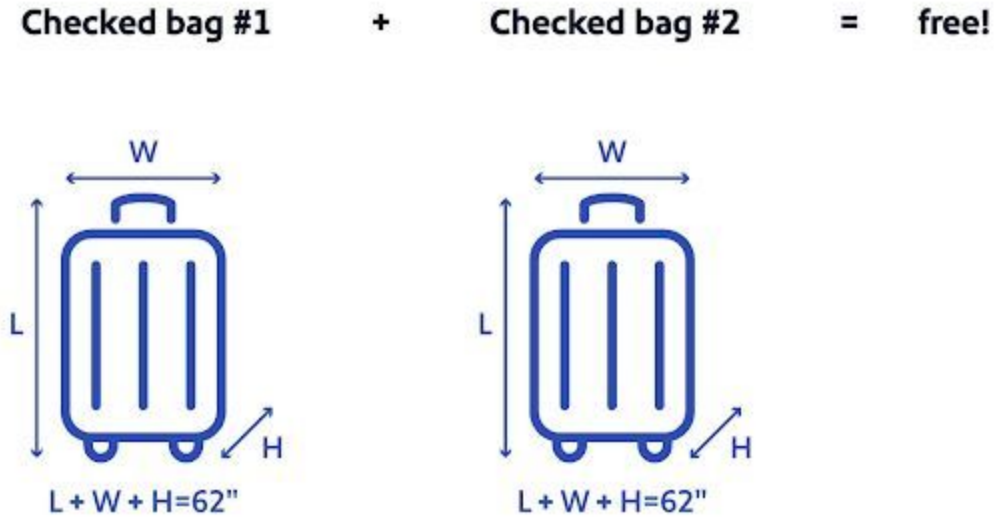



Image source: https://www.southwest.com/help/baggageImage source: https://www.southwest.com/help/baggage

Read More: Southwest Airlines' Official Carry On Baggage Policy

## What Should Passengers Know About Checking Bags with Southwest Airlines?

- Checked bags can be up to 50 lbs and less than 60 inches (L+W+H).
- Bags weighing more than 50 lbs or bigger than 60 inches will result in an overweight bag fee ( $100 per bag weighing 51-70 lbs and $125 per bag weighing 71-100 lbs.)
- We recommend tagging your checked bag in some way to make it easier to identify (ribbon, ID badge, etc) and labeling your bag with your contact information.
- Checked luggage has more flexibility regarding contents, but there are still some things you can not bring in your checked bag. These include alcohol that is 140 proof or higher, gunpowder, arc lighters, and other items.
- Firearms can be packed in checked luggage; however, there are many regulations and rules to follow when transporting a firearm.
- Make sure you read the TSA's information to know what can and cannot go in a checked bag.

Read More: Southwest Airlines' Official Checked Baggage Policy

# Traveling with Car Seats on Southwest Airlines

## What Are the Best Car Seats for Airplane Travel, and How Does Southwest Airlines Accommodate Them?

The only car seat or child restraint system (CRS) approved for use onboard Southwest are convertible-type car seats designed for forward and backward installation in a forward-facing aircraft seat. Approved devices have hard sides and backs, include integrated shoulder straps, and can be secured to a Passenger seat via channels through which the aircraft seatbelt is threaded and attached.

You can bring any brand of car seat on board. Car seats must be narrow enough that they don't block seats for other passengers. Some families opt for a window seat so they can put the car seat in the window seat, ensuring it doesn't block seats or aisles.

Non-approved car seats, such as booster seats, cannot be used to secure a child or infant, but they are permitted in the cabin (as long as they fit in the overhead bin) and can be checked at the gate or with your checked luggage.

## Are Special Car Seat Bags Required for Flying with Car Seats on Southwest Airlines?

Car seat bags are not required; however, they are welcome and encouraged. You can purchase a car seat bag from Southwest for $17 if you forget or decide at the last minute to use a car seat bag.

# Southwest Airlines Stroller and Car Seat Travel

## What Is Southwest Airlines' Stroller Policy for Traveling Families?

Strollers are allowed throughout the airport from the curb to your gate. You can check your stroller at the gate or, if you'd rather, check it with other checked luggage at the curb or ticket counter. However, many families prefer the ease and convenience of a stroller as they walk through the airport.

Strollers and car seats are free to check. Make sure to label your stroller, including any components that come apart (if your car seat clicks into your stroller, make sure you label both, just in case). Before heading to the airport, make sure you know how to set up and take down your stroller easily.

## Are There Size or Type Restrictions for Strollers on Southwest Airlines Flights?

There are no size or type restrictions for strollers for Southwest Airlines flights. Any full-size stroller can be checked free of charge at the curb, ticket counter, or gate.

## Which Strollers Are Ideal for Airplane Travel, and Does Southwest Airlines Have a Preferred Stroller Bag?

Any stroller will be helpful as you navigate the airport with a little one. The best airport strollers should be easy to open and collapse (try to find one with single-hand opening and closing), relatively compact when folded, and easy to wipe down when spills happen.

Stroller bags are optional but highly recommended to ensure the safe travel of the stroller.

# Maximizing Your Southwest Companion Pass

## What is the Southwest Companion Pass and How Does It Work?

A Companion Pass is exactly what it sounds like—you can choose a companion to go with you on your flights for free for at least a year (you'll have to pay taxes and fees, but those are usually very minimal). To earn a Companion Pass, you need to take 100 qualifying flights on Southwest Airlines in a calendar year or earn 135,000 points on your Rapid Rewards Credit Card in a calendar year. Once you qualify, you can use your Companion Pass for the remainder of that year plus the next calendar year. You can change your designated companion up to three times per calendar year, but any trips they have booked must be completed or canceled before you change your companion.

## How Can I Earn a Southwest Companion Pass?

To earn a Companion Pass, you must take 100 one-way or 50 round-trip flights with Southwest in a calendar year or earn 135,000 points on your Rapid Rewards Credit Card. Make sure to check for promotions when you sign up to help you earn points even faster.

## Tips for Effectively Utilizing Your Southwest Companion Pass

We have a few tips for earning a Companion Pass. First, check promotions often, as some of the sign-on points are anywhere from 50,000 points to 80,000, depending on the type of card you get. Then, use your card to earn points in categories like dining, travel, and home and lifestyle purchases. Finally, remember that all the points you earn offer you a Companion Pass, and you can use those points to book more travel (yes, with your Companion in tow, all for the cost of taxes and fees).

# Ensuring a Smooth Journey for Your Family with Southwest Airlines

Traveling with your family is easy with Southwest Airlines. Our team works hard to make flights smooth, safe, and fun. There's a lot to consider when traveling with little ones, from carry-on

policies to gate-checking strollers, but we're here every step of the way to help you get to your destination with ease.

While this page is informative, there are more details in the links in each answer that will give more clarity and information. If you have travel tips for families, ideas for plane entertainment for little ones, product recommendations, or any other helpful information, leave a comment below. Need a little more help? Ask your question below or visit the Southwest Community for ideas from fellow travelers.  We can't wait to see you and your family on your next flight with Southwest Airlines. Happy travels!