

Tips for First Time Air Travelers

If you haven't flown before, these steps will help make for a smooth trip.

1. Pack wisely

- AmeriCorps VISTA does not pay for checked bags, so pack a small bag that can be carried onto the airplane and stowed in the overhead bin. Maximum size is 22" x 14" x 9".
- Bring only what you're going to need for the PSO. The PSO is only three days, so you don't need a lot of clothes. The dress code is nice casual.
- Follow the TSA rules regarding liquids, gels and aerosols for carry-on baggage. You may bring liquids in 3 ounce containers that fit in one 1-quart plastic zip-top bag. Read the [Transportation Security Administration \(TSA\) Liquids Rule](#) for details.
- Follow the TSA rules regarding prohibited items (like knives, scissors, and cigarette lighters) in carry-on baggage. Read the [Transportation Security Administration \(TSA\) Prohibited Items web page](#) for details.
- Bring a sweater or jacket (even in summer) as meeting room air conditioning is hard to regulate.
- Remember to bring a government-issued photo ID.

2. Check in Online

- Within 24 hours of your departure time, go to the website of the airline you will be flying. Click on the link for online check-in and enter your name and flight number (or record locator code, which can be found on your itinerary). Complete the check-in process and print your boarding pass or send it to your smartphone.

3. Get there early

- Arrive inside the airport terminal 90 minutes before your scheduled departure time. Security screening lines can be long.
- Check in advance where the long-term (or economy) parking is located so you can find it quickly. Some airports operate a shuttle van from remote parking to the terminal, so factor in time for that.

4. Check-in at the inside counter or kiosk

- If you did not check in online, go to the counter or kiosk for the airline you will fly. Provide your identification and itinerary to the agent.
- If you are unable to carry your bag onto the plane, check your bag (fee likely \$20-\$40 in each direction); VISTA does not reimburse for checked bags except with prior approval. Some airlines do not accept cash, so be prepared to pay with a credit or debit card.
- Agent will tag your bag with an identifying sticker (please make sure your bag has an identification tag with your contact information).
- Receive your boarding pass.

5. Go to the Security Checkpoint

- Walk to security with your carry-on luggage. (Remember, no liquids over 3 ounces.)
- Show identification and boarding pass to the TSA agent.
- Remove your jacket, belt, and shoes, and place them in a gray bin. Remove all metal objects from pockets (keys, coins, cell phone) and remove laptop from its case, and place these in a bin as well. Put the bin on the conveyor.
- When directed by agent, walk through metal detector or scanner.
- Be sure to retrieve all your personal items.

6. Board the plane

- Arrive at your gate 30 minutes prior to departure time.
- Wait for the agent to call your boarding group or row number to begin boarding.
- Provide your boarding pass to the agent and retain the stub.
- Enter the jet bridge, board the airplane, and find your seat.
- Stow carry-on luggage (large item in the overhead, small item under seat in front of you).
- Sit, turn off your cell phone, and fasten your seat belt.
- Enjoy the ride.