

Birmingham Airport Guide

Top tips for travellers with autism and parents / carers of people with autism.



In partnership with



autism
west midlands

Introduction

We recognise that airports can be stressful environments. This is especially the case for people with autism.

We want to make sure that all passengers feel as comfortable as possible during their time in the airport. We have teamed up with Autism West Midlands to create a guide that can also be used as a tool to help you prepare you, a child or the person you are travelling with for their journey to and through Birmingham Airport.

If you are travelling with someone with autism we can support you during your time at the airport. You must book assistance through your airline or tour operator.

Please contact your airline/tour operator at least 48 hours before departure or arrival at Birmingham Airport and when booking please book DPNA (disabled person needing assistance) assistance. If there is an option to give further information regarding the assistance you need please type the word 'Autism'. This will then enable us to give you the appropriate help.

This guide provides top tips for travellers with autism and parents and carers of children with autism. It can be used alongside the guide for children with autism booklet.

If you are an adult with autism looking for advice and guidance on travelling through the airport please also refer to 'A guide to travelling by plane' on the Autism West Midlands website:


www.autismwestmidlands.org.uk/helpadvice/downloads

Hidden Disabilities Lanyard

Birmingham Airport offers passengers with hidden disabilities a complimentary lanyard or pin badge to enhance their journey whilst still travelling independently. The term 'hidden disabilities' covers a broad range of disabilities, conditions or diseases that may appear 'invisible' but the person may require extra support or be highly sensitive to the unusual airport environment. This scheme is regularly used by people with dementia, autism, ADHD, stomas and diabetes.



If using a sunflower lanyard or pin badge, **you will not receive any further assistance from our Assisted Travel team unless specifically requested.** As you journey through the airport, airport staff may invite you to use express lanes (at security or immigration when you arrive inbound), use enhanced training to make the security experience more comfortable or simply ask if there's anything they can help you with.

You may also see the sunflower symbol on signage, indicating the quickest routes through certain points: 

At the boarding gate, airlines may invite you to board the aircraft first, however this decision is down to the airline and their ground handling agent.

We recommend that you advise your Airline or Tour Operator at least 48 hours in advance of your departure/arrival if you require a lanyard / pin badge or any assistance. You can collect a lanyard and / or pin badge from our Assisted Travel reception desk on the day of travel. Alternatively, you can request these to be sent via post by contacting [Birmingham Airport directly here.](#)

Going to the airport



Top Tips

- ✓ Give yourself plenty of time to get to the airport
- ✓ Plan your journey carefully
- ✓ Consider whether to do a practice journey to the airport so that you or the person you are caring for can understand what to expect

Inside the airport terminal



Top Tips

- ✓ Consider whether to do a practice visit to the airport terminal to help you or the person you are caring for to know what to expect.
- ✓ Consider taking some headphones or ear defenders to help block out loud announcements or music.
- ✓ Consider taking some sunglasses to block out bright lights or bright colours.
- ✓ Consider whether it might be useful to take a sensory toy or an item that could help you or the person you are caring for to feel less anxious.
- ✓ We offer a bypass to the World Duty Free shop to avoid the bright lights, loud music and strong smells in the area. Please contact one of our security officers after you have completed the security search and they will escort you through this bypass route if preferred.

Assisted Travel Service

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Top Tips

- ✓ Book assistance through your airline or tour operator – information about how to do this is in the introduction section of this guide (Please book at least 48 hours in advance).
- ✓ Consider visiting the airport before travelling and finding the location of the Assisted Travel help desk so if something happens on the day of your flight you know where you can go for help.
- ✓ You can collect a Hidden Disabilities sunflower lanyard from the Assisted Travel help desk. Our friendly Assisted Travel team will be happy to offer any support that you require on your journey through the airport.

Check-in



Top Tips

- ✓ Aim to get to your check-in desk when it opens to give yourself the maximum time available to get through the airport. This is normally 2 to 3 hours before the time of departure.
- ✓ Some airlines may require you to check-in online before you arrive at the airport.
- ✓ Make sure all of your luggage is the right size and weight to avoid spending extra time sorting things out at check-in.
- ✓ Have your passports and documents ready before you attend the check-in desk

Security screening



Top Tips

- ✓ Consider practising going through a security check at home so you or the person you are caring for knows what to expect. You could choose the outfit that you or the person you are caring for will wear to the airport on the day.
- ✓ You could identify what you or the person you are caring for will be carrying when going through security.
- ✓ You could show the person you are caring for what they will need to put into a tray before going through the scanners. Large personal electronic items need to be removed from bags and placed in a separate tray. This includes e-readers, tablets and laptops. Liquids, creams and gels must be placed in a clear plastic bag and kept separate in a screening tray.
- ✓ Consider practicing a security body search at home so that you or the person you are caring for knows what to expect.
- ✓ If you are selected for an additional search (you may hear a short alarm sound), this is very normal and our friendly security officers will guide you through this.

Waiting to board the plane



Top Tips

- ✓ You might have a few hours to wait before boarding your plane so consider making a plan for what to do in this time. You could even turn it into a fun activity plan!
- ✓ You can research online on the Birmingham Airport website which shops and restaurants are available to visit in the Departure Lounge to help your planning.
- ✓ You could visit the Sky Zone play area which is suitable for all children and young people – it is free to use and offers: Interactive touch screen tables with quizzes and drawing, Inflatable domes with light projection and musical games.
- ✓ Let the person who you are caring for know when it is time to get on the plane. Remind the person you are caring for to stay close to you so that they do not get lost.

Boarding the plane



Top Tips

- ✓ Consider asking the boarding gate staff whether you will be walking straight onto the plane through a tunnel or whether you will be taking a bus to the plane so you can explain this to the child or young person you are with.
- ✓ Consider putting yourselves at the back of the queue so you can take your time.
- ✓ It might be good idea to explain to the person you are caring for that you may either walk through a tunnel or catch a bus and walk up the stairs to get to the airplane.
- ✓ There may be loud announcements at the boarding gate and it may be busy with other passengers.

Taking Off



Top Tips

- ✓ Before it takes off, the plane is pushed backwards so that the plane is in the right direction to taxi to the runway.
- ✓ Consider taking toys or activities for yourself or the person you are caring for so they have something to focus on during take-off.
- ✓ There will be a loud noise when the plane takes off which is from the engines and wheels. This is very normal, and it will get quieter after a few minutes in the air.
- ✓ Consider taking ear defenders if you or the person you are caring for is sensitive to sound and some sweets to prevent ears 'popping'.
- ✓ It might be helpful to explain to the person you are caring for that they may feel a strange feeling in their ears or stomach when the plane lifts off the ground. You could reassure them by telling them that this is normal.

Coming home



Top Tips

- ✓ Queues can be very long at passport control. Consider taking ear defenders and sunglasses, as well as an activity or toy for you or the person you are caring for to focus on, while waiting in the queue in this crowded area.
- ✓ If you have a Hidden Disabilities sunflower lanyard, our friendly airport team will escort you through a quicker route to the immigration desks once you make yourself known.
- ✓ Have your passports easily accessible to save time when you reach the immigration officer.
- ✓ Make sure to tell your child or young person that they may have to wait for their baggage to be taken off the plane and collected from the baggage reclaim area before they can leave the airport.

We hope that you have found this guide useful.

If you need any help during your visit, please look out for the OCS team or airport staff who will all be happy to assist you.

We would love to hear about your visit to the airport. You can tell us about it by e-mailing us at BHX.Feedback@OCS.com

