



DENVER INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT (DEN) GUIDE

A SUPPORT AND RESOURCE GUIDE FOR FAMILIES AND CAREGIVERS
OF CHILDREN WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

SPONSORED BY:



DENVER
TRANSPORTATION &
INFRASTRUCTURE

DEVELOPMENTAL FX



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(Amenities, Resources & Support)



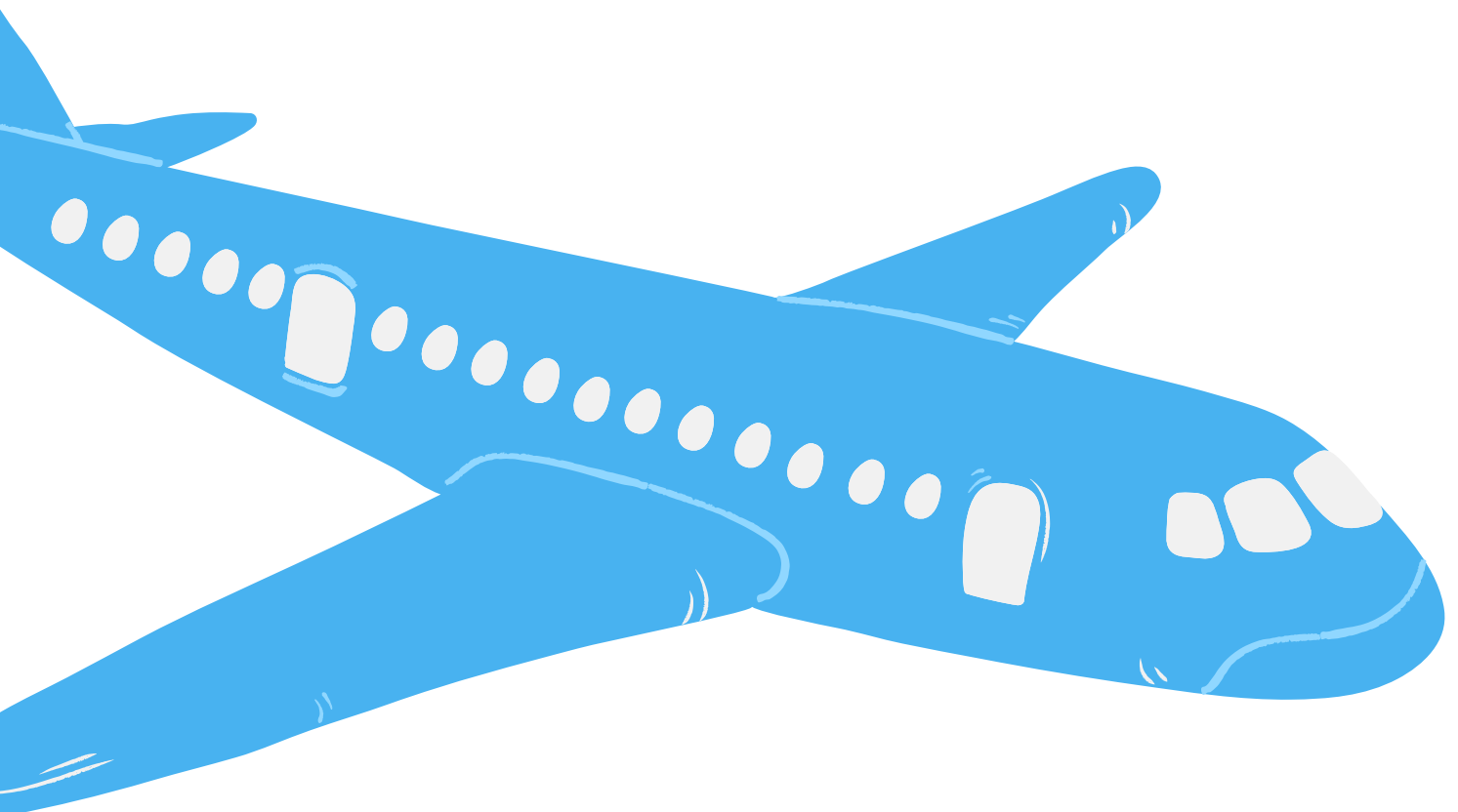
Feedback



Introduction

This guide was created for families and caregivers of children with developmental disabilities to inform, prepare, and promote their ability to travel.

Within this guide, families will learn about what to expect at DEN, how to prepare for airport travel, and resources available to them.

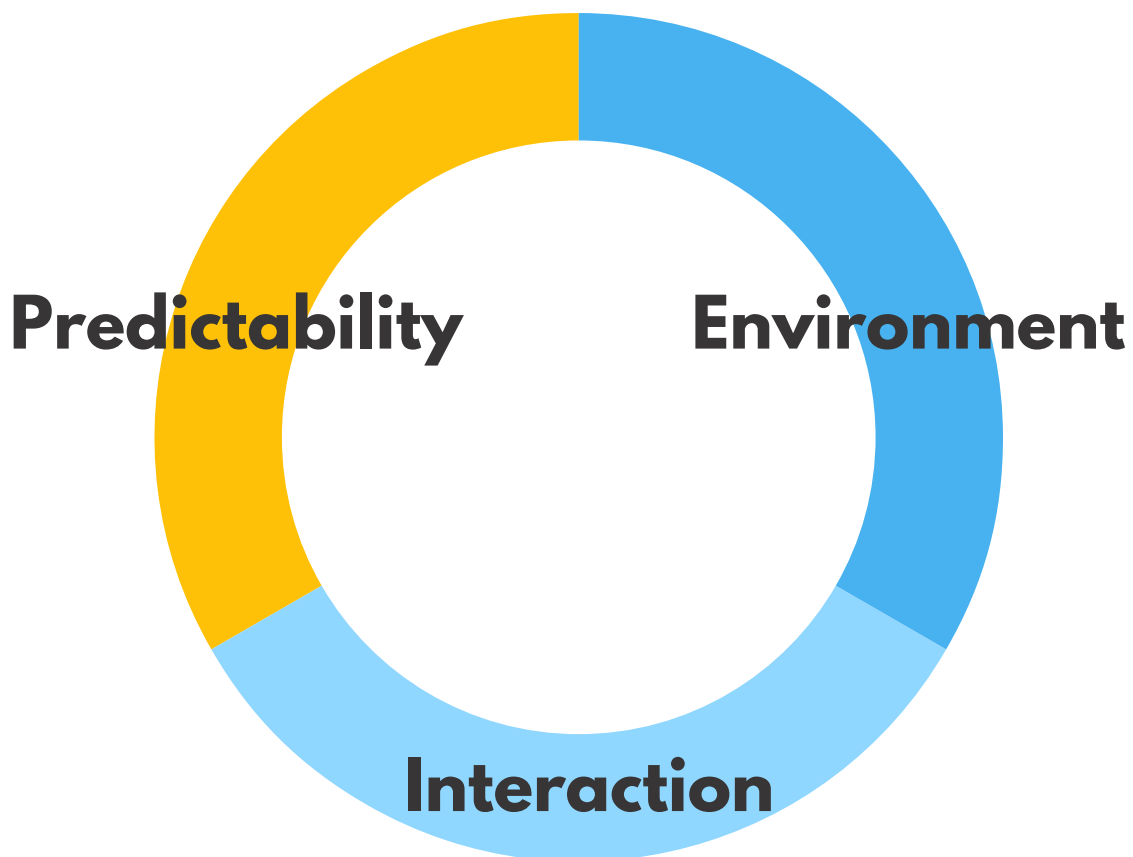




DEN Experience

Air travel is often a stressful event for all of us. It can be especially difficult for children with special needs. When navigating air travel and the airport experience, it is important to understand the unique challenges for your child and family.

ELEMENTS TO THINK ABOUT WHEN TRAVELING:



Environment

The unfamiliarity of the airport, along with its sensory environment of loud sounds, smells, sights, and fast pace, can be overstimulating, anxiety producing, and often result in dysregulation.

Recognizing the airport's complex and challenging environment encourages us to prepare and set up supports to create a safe and successful experience for everyone.

Predictability

Providing as much predictability as you can can help kids feel safe, centered, and confident.

- Be aware of the novelty of air travel
- Create a sense of "expectedness" by building routines and enhancing structure
- Maintain as much consistency as possible

Visual supports help anchor us in time and place, reduce language demands, support attention and focus, and make abstract concepts more concrete. Utilizing visuals helps structure and organize the sequence of travel for predictability, which in turn promotes smooth transitions and reduces anxiety.

You will find numerous visual supports and guidance throughout this guide!

Interaction

Attuning to and tailoring your interaction with your child enhances connection, safety, and playfulness, which can help children maintain a regulated state.

Interaction, starting with connection, can be used to anchor the body's organization and support a child during challenging situations.

Consider your sensory and emotional self:

- How does your tone of voice and language support your child?
- How does your visual presence, gestures, facial expression enhance a feeling of safety?

Attune to your child's cues for clues on how they are handling a situation:

- Consider your child's words, affect and actions, posture, orientation (toward/ away; open/closed), facial expression, eyes, sounds, and language.



Travel Sequence



1

Getting Ready

Weeks Before the Travel Date:

Preparing your family for the airport!

Provide visual & verbal support to assist processing and predictability of trip

- Visually indicate trip on calendar
- Provide verbal/visual reminders 1 week/days out, etc. (e.g., "Five more sleeps until we go to Florida!")
- Make it exciting! Talk about all the fun and interesting things to see and do at the airport
- Talk about the purpose of the trip



Make a packing list

- Write words or draw pictures depending on reading level



Set out suitcases and start to pack items

- Check off items as they are packed

Prepare a visual schedule and/or social story

- **Check out the free examples of social stories on page 9!**

Become familiar with the travel process

- Read books about going to the airport or watch clips on YouTube

Do "practice run" at home (role play) or at the airport (walk through the steps until security)

TIP:

If possible, flying nonstop simplifies everything!

In addition, you can pay more to select your seats!

Weeks Before the Travel Date:

Preparing the airport for your family!

Contact the TSA Cares line at least 72 hours in advance of trip for screening assistance:
(855) 787-2227

Arrange Meet & Assist Services at least 48 hours in advanced if needed -
a service provided by DEN Airport. **Click here for the DEN Meet & Assist Service Request**



KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

BE PROACTIVE!

Every airline has unique supports and policies...

- For the best travel experience we recommend you connect directly with your airline before your travel date
- Decide what information you would like to share; e.g. who is traveling, what the relationships are, struggles, etc.
 - Be sure to ask this is placed in the passenger's record so that it is available throughout travel

What is a Social Story?

"First used for children with autism, social stories are mainly used to explain a social situation to a child, teen, or adult experiencing social challenges.

The National Fragile X Foundation described this tool as follows: Social stories are usually written specifically for one person and personalized based on their challenges. They're not intended to change behavior, instead the goal is to clarify social situations or explain something new while hopefully encouraging self-management through self-awareness and self-calming. They're used most often to help children deal with change, new routines, transitions, unique situations, and understanding other people's point of view."

www.fragilex.org



**CLICK ON THE BOXES
BELOW TO VIEW
EXAMPLES OF SOCIAL
STORIES FOR THE
AIRPORT:**



**Carol Gray: Airport
Social Stories**

**Carol Gray: Airport Social
Stories - Practice Edition**

Visual Schedule

1



park or drop off

2



check bags

3



wait in line

4



go through security

5



ride the train

6



walk to gate

7



wait at gate

8



find our seats

9



plane takes off

10



play plane games

11



plane lands

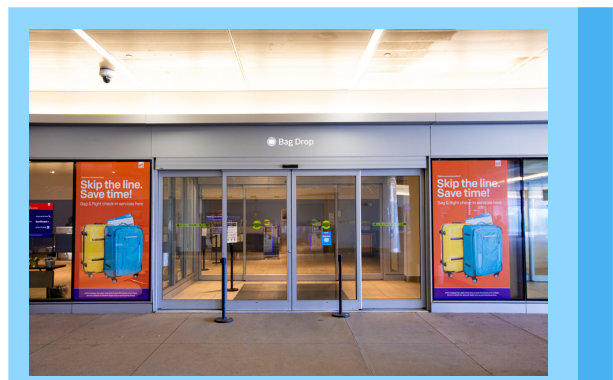
12



get our bags

1 Day Before/Day of the Travel Date

- **Check in for flight online and choose seats**
 - Do this online or via airline app
 - Have boarding passes ready on phone
 - Show your child the boarding passes
 - Print one for them at check in or at home if they'd like to hold it themselves
- **Review visual schedule and/or social story**
- **Double check all items are packed**
 - Ensure select items that cannot be packed prior are ready to go
- **Participate in regulating/organizing sensory routines before heading to airport**
 - Go for a walk, listen to calming and/or favorite music, perform a breathing exercise, etc.
- **Be prepared. Feel confident!**
 - Be knowledgeable about the resources/supports available
- **Consider using Bag Drop**
 - Available for domestic flights only on participating airlines
 - Must drop bags 90 minutes prior to departure
 - Available on the RTD platform and on 75th Avenue off Pena Blvd near the entrance to the Pikes Peak Shuttle Lot



Packing Prep



Prepare a Travel Backpack/Goody Bag

Help your child pack a bag specifically filled with items that they can utilize at the airport and on the plane

- **Favorite Toy**
 - Does your child have a favorite toy? Bring it! This item can be what they hold throughout the entire experience for comfort and security
- **Fidgets**
 - If your child often needs something to touch, bringing a fidget toy will give them something to do with their hands
- **iPad, phone, etc.**
 - Make sure to download shows, movies and other entertainment before trip!
- **Headphones** (either for listening or noise cancelling)
- **Pillow and/or blanket**
- **Water bottle** (must be emptied before security)
- **Snacks**
 - Snacks/meals can be brought through security
 - Gum and mints are a great way to provide some oral-motor input throughout the travel experience for regulation
- **Waiting Activities**
 - With toys: coloring, books, Legos, iPad...
 - Without toys: scavenger hunt, yoga video, sing a song, I Spy...

SUPPORT & RESOURCES AVAILABLE:

Bookmark These Helpful Websites Ahead of Time:



FlyDenver.com

user-friendly
comprehensive guide



DENEatsDelivered.com

order, pay and have food
delivered right to your gate



People Who Can Help

Ambassadors

wear plaid purple vests and
rimmed black hats (mainly
in terminal)

Customer Service Agents

wear black pants with
purple or purple plaid shirt
and grey vest or jacket
(mainly on concourses)

Ways to Get Assistance:

- Customer service - **(303) 342-2000**
- Connect to a DEN live agent by scanning a QR code at strategic locations around DEN or by using a kiosk at one of the information booths
- Web chat or text for help - **click here for Live Chat**
- Information booths are located in the terminal and center core area on each concourse
- Email: **info@flydenver.com**
- Social Media: Facebook | Instagram **@denairport** | Twitter **@DENAirport**
- Overhead page request: (303) 342-2300

HIDDEN **disabilities**

A square logo featuring a bright yellow sunflower with a dark brown center, set against a solid green background.

**Look for the Sunflower Program at DEN,
a new initiative here to support travel for all.**

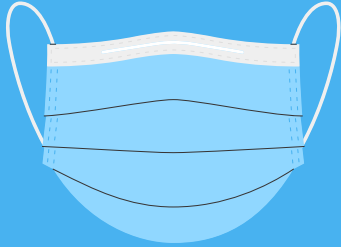
The Hidden Disabilities Sunflower Scheme Limited program was started in the UK to offer support to travelers who have hidden disabilities, and now is offered at airports across the world - including DEN!

Travelers can wear a sunflower lanyard or carry another Hidden Disabilities Sunflower product, which will be recognized by airport staff and concessionaires as a sign that they may need extra time, understanding, and support.

**For more details about the
program, please visit the
Hidden Disabilities website
at
[HiddenDisabilitiesStore.com](https://www.HiddenDisabilitiesStore.com)**



STAY UP TO DATE:



COVID-19

For the latest information about COVID-19, please refer to the U. S. Department of Transportation, Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Guidelines.

[Click here to see current FAA Guidelines](#)

ONGOING CONSTRUCTION AT DEN

Construction continues in the Jeppesen Terminal.

To help keep your airport experience as smooth as possible, please give yourself extra time and consult the interactive map at [FlyDenver.com](https://flydenver.com).

[Click here to see the interactive map at FlyDenver.com](#)



AIRPORT MAPS

Current airport maps are available at **[FlyDenver.com](https://flydenver.com)** and in print at customer service booths

2 Arrival

Plan to arrive early so that the next steps do not feel rushed!



Arrival Options:

- Drop off at curbside
- Ride RTD train
- Drive and park
- Ride Apps & Taxis Service
- RTD Bus
- Shuttle Services & Rental Cars

Airport Parking:

6 lots to choose from:

- Garage East, Garage West, Economy East, Economy West, Pikes Peak/Mt. Elbert Shuttle Lots, 61st and Peña

[Click here to learn more about parking at the airport](#)

Off-Airport Shuttle Parking:

US Airport Parking, The Parking Spot, Park N' Fly @Park DIA, Canopy Airport Parking, FINE Parking, Wally Park, Park 2 Fly

[Click here for more info on off-airport parking](#)



DEN Parking Office Contact:

E-mail: park@flydenver.com

Phone (general information): **(303) 342-7275**

Phone (accessible parking): **(303) 342-4645**

RTD A Line Train

Offers 8 total stops from Union Station to Denver International Airport

- Cost: \$10.50 per person for airport
- Drop off is at south side of airport - then take escalator to terminal or elevator within Westin Hotel
- **Click here to visit the RTD A Line website**



SkyRide Bus

- SkyRide buses depart from each SkyRide stop on an hourly basis
- **Click for SkyRide Bus website**

Ride App (Uber/Lyft):

- Drop off: level 5, curbside
- Pick up: level 5, island 5

3 Ticketing/Check-in (Level 6)

CHECK IN:

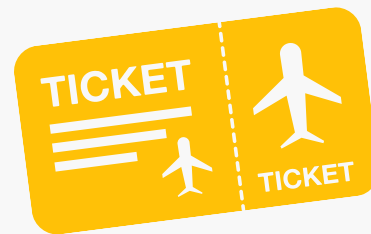
Know where your airline's check in area is to check in and check baggage.

Option: Check if your airline offers self check in kiosks or curbside service to check bags

- For Baggage Drop information please visit FlyDenver.com/easycheck
- Available for domestic flights only on participating airlines
- Must drop bags 90 minutes prior to flight departure
- Available on the RTD platform and on 75th Ave. off Pena Blvd, near the entrance to the Pikes Peak Shuttle lot
- If you prefer checking in with a person utilize a full service line - *required if traveling with a service or emotional support animal

TIP: Online check in is a great option if you're just carrying on!

Use an electronic boarding pass by downloading your airline's mobile app - one less thing to keep track of!



Print a ticket if your child would like to hold and use

Prepare for potentially long lines inside airport - carry some small fidget items just in case!

Wheelchairs can be requested ahead of time through your airline or at the ticket counter

Companion passes: check directly with airline at check in if you're escorting a passenger all the way the their flight (e.g. a minor)

CHECK IT OUT!

You may be able to find open areas along the windows if a quiet moment is needed



Looking for some outdoor space?



Check out the plaza, located through the exit doors at the south security checkpoint



TERMINAL AMENITIES & RESOURCES:

**Information
Desks**



**Non-denominational
Chapel**



AEDs

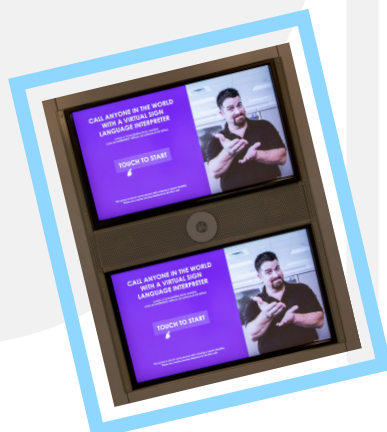
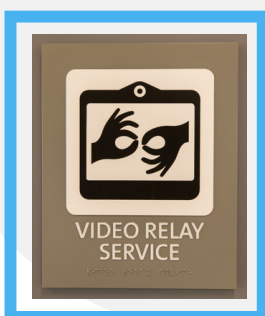


Luggage Carts



**Video Relay
Service**

(for those who use ASL)



TERMINAL AMENITIES & RESOURCES:

Family Restroom



Companion Restroom

- West side of Level 5 at the train exit area
- Adult adjustable height changing table
- NOT in any concourse



Nursing Room

Available in Terminal and Every Concourse



Ambassadors

- Always wear purple vest and rimmed hat
- Positioned in main terminal



Customer Service Agents

- Wear black pants with a solid purple or purple-plaid shirt with and a grey vest or jacket
- Customer Service Agents are only in the Jeppesen Terminal



4 Security

Usually the hardest part!

Going through security can be challenging due to the high stress, frantic environment and the complex sequence and requirements

3 Security Checkpoints:

These are current as of May 2022, but may change. Check flydenver.com for the most up-to-date information.

NORTH

Level 5

- TSA Pre-check ONLY
- Clear for those who have TSA Pre-check

SOUTH

Level 5

- Standard
- Clear for those who do not have TSA Pre-check

A-BRIDGE

Level 6

- Standard

Be ready!

- Check wait times of security checkpoints to find the shortest line by [clicking here](#)
- Have ID and boarding pass readily available
- Wear easily removable clothing (shoes, jackets, belts)
- Remember to pour out liquids!
 - Keep liquids and gels in 3 oz or less containers



TSA Pre✓ CLEAR

TSA PreCheck and Clear can make security more efficient

- Print and prepare TSA disability notification card if desired and hand to TSA agent
- [Click here to download TSA disability notification card that you can personalize](#)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

DEN Meet & Assist Services:

Meet & Assist allows you to request assistance getting to and from your gate when you arrive, depart, or connect through DEN. The service is complimentary and is used by customers needing a little extra care and attention.

Questions? Email DEN.Concierge@flydenver.com

Click here to contact DEN Meet & Assist

- **Note that you must book at least 48 hours in advance!**

TSA

Call TSA Cares Helpline 72 hours in advance for any assistance during screening process - (855) 787-2227

You can also email TSA Cares - click here for the form

View the TSA Disabilities and Medical Conditions Page by clicking here

Note that TSA is a government agency that operates independently from Denver Airport

HELPFUL HINT: The Restricted Access TSA lane can be used for any traveler with a disability

Security Sequence

Get in the first line

Have boarding pass and ID ready as you approach the TSA agent

Scan or hand your boarding pass and ID to the TSA Agent when prompted

Pick a security line

Grab a bin (or 2 or 3)

- Place large electronics in their own bin
- Remove your hats, shoes, belts and jackets
- Limit liquids, gels and aerosols to 3 ounces or less and place them all in a clear, one-quart, zip-top bag

Push bags and bins through sensor

Wait in line to move through body scanner

Walk through body scanner

Gather all items

- Utilize benches at end of security to put on shoes

Head to train!



wait in line



give ID



put bags in bin

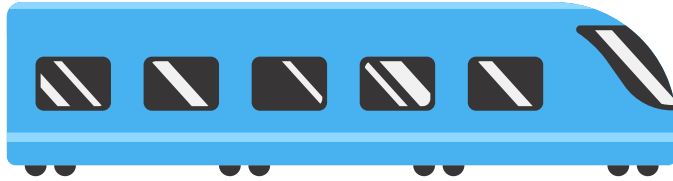


go through sensor



collect our things

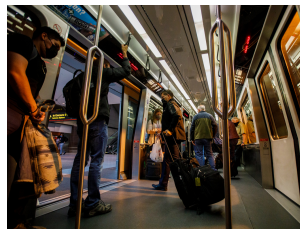
5 Train



Usually the
FUN part!

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW:

- The train arrives every 2 minutes
- There is a gap when stepping onto the train
- The train can come to a sudden stop, disrupting balance
- Trains have limited seating but there are grab bars to hold onto
- The doors close quickly
- Trains are often full
- After boarding, move to the center to make room for others
- The train is underground, lighting and noise/vibration may be different and off-putting
- There are escalators, stairs, and elevators available to reach the gates after arriving



NOTE: You do NOT need to take the train if you are going to A gates

TIP: The center car of the train is typically the least crowded

Train Sequence

Take elevator, escalator, or stairs down to train area

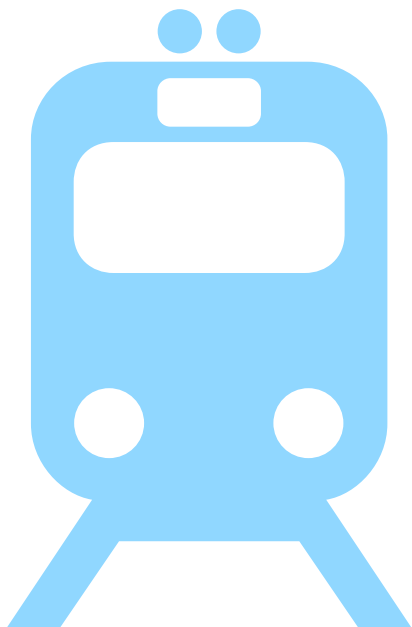
Wait for train to arrive

Board the train

Sit down or hold bars while you ride to concourse

Exit the train at A, B, or C concourse

Take the elevator, escalator, or stairs up to main concourse



board train



hold on or sit down



exit train at A, B, or C



ride escalator up

6 Concourse

AMENITIES AT ALL CONCOURSES:

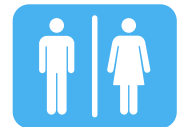
Shopping & Dining

- These are varied (plan ahead and have back up choices if something is closed)
- **Eats Delivered!**
 - A service that allows you to order food directly to your gate
- Download the **At Your Gate App** or **utilize this link to order**



Restrooms

- All restrooms are considered ADA accessible
- Large, private unisex/family restrooms are located in Jeppesen Terminal and on each concourse
- NO companion care restrooms on concourses



Outlets

- Charging outlets are located almost everywhere, but always good to bring a cord-free charger if you have one!



WiFi

- **DEN Airport Free WiFi**
- **DEN Airport Free WiFi 2.4**



Water Refill Stations



Nursing Rooms

- Available in the terminal and every concourse

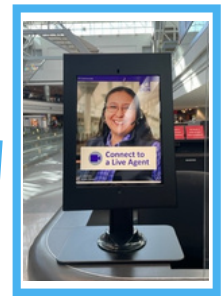


Pay Phones



Virtual Assistance

- United Airlines offers virtual assistance at DEN Airport - look for signs with QR codes!



Pet Relief

- Located outside the terminal and in every concourse



Mail Drop

- Consider writing a letter as a waiting activity!



Wheelchair and Cart Services

- Schedule with your individual airline

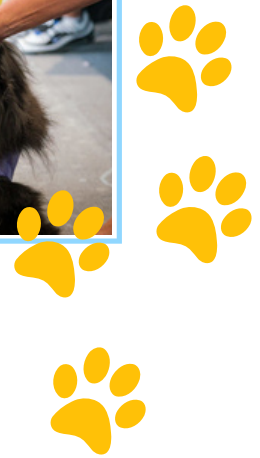


CONCOURSE RESOURCES:

Therapy Dogs!

CATS (Canine Airport Therapy Squad)

- Schedules vary so be on the lookout for therapy dogs at each concourse
- Check the twitter feed @DENAirport with the tagging of #DENCATS



Police/Paramedics

- Phone: (303) 342-4211



Information Desks



Lost & Found

- Jeppesen Terminal, East Level 1 near Doors 111 and 113
- **Click here to file a claim if you've lost an item.**
- Phone: (303) 342-4062



GATE SPECIFIC AMENITIES & ACTIVITIES:

A

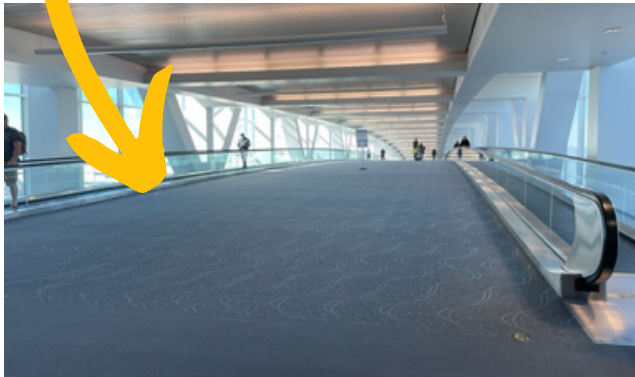
A-Bridge Walkway:

GET MOVING!

There is lots of space to move!

CHECK OUT THE ART!

[Click here for the DEN Art Guide](#)



'Rest & Recharge'

Concourse A mezzanine has an area called Rest and Recharge (no signage)



B

Find the
Sparkle
Floors!

A NOTE ABOUT PLAY:

Play and playfulness can enhance a sense of safety and resilience during stressful situations. Encouraging fun throughout your airport experience can reduce stress for the whole family.

Check out the following page for games and activities you can play anywhere!

GAMES THAT YOU CAN PLAY ANYWHERE!



- **Cosmic Yoga - [click here](#)**



- **I-Spy**

- For beginners, you might start with "I spy (the object)." For more of a challenge, use descriptors such as color, function, initial sound/letter in the word.

- **Guess How Many**

- Guess how many people are waiting to board. Then, count them up and see who was closest!



- **Window Watching**

- **Scavenger Hunt**

- **[Check out the Airport Scavenger Hunt on the next page!](#)**



- **Airport Alphabet Game:**

- Find something in the airport that starts with the letter A (and then continue on with the rest of the alphabet!)



- **Printable activities**

- such as bingo sheets and word searches, check out **Pinterest** or **[click here for CampDEN printables](#)**

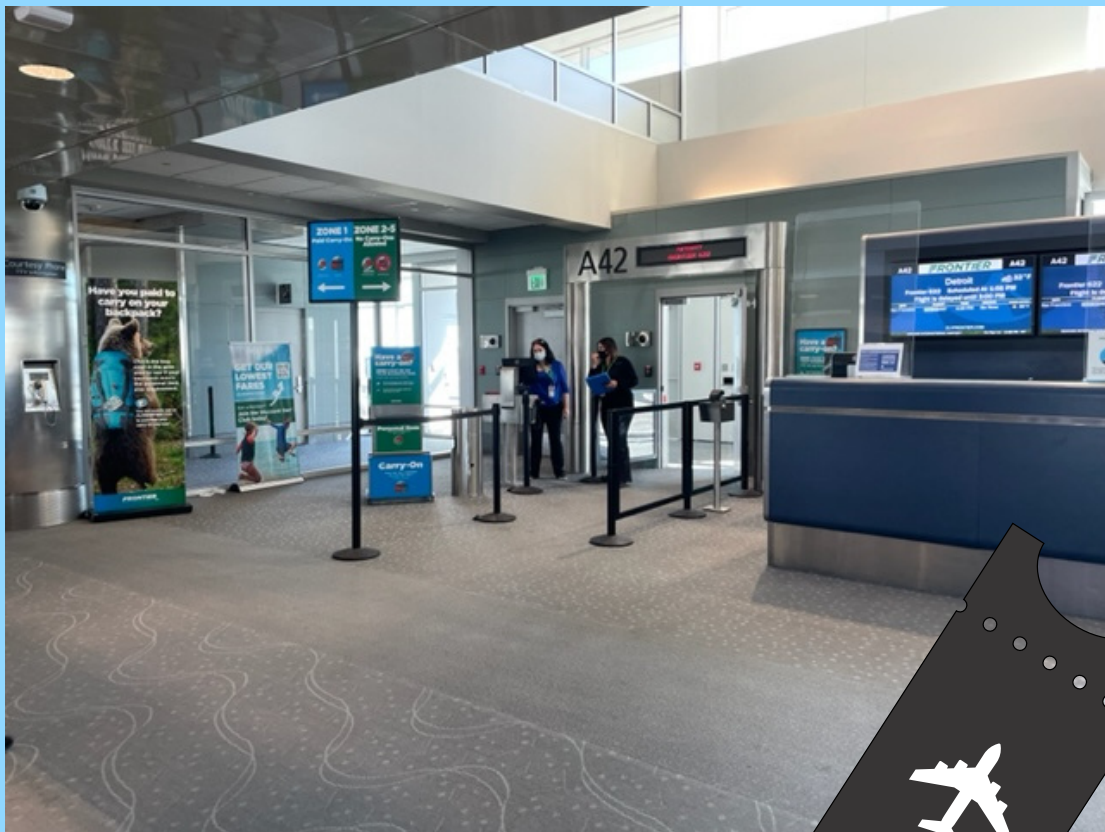


AIRPORT Scavenger Hunt

- A red suitcase**
- Someone eating a sandwich**
- A musical instrument**
- A Denver sports team hat**
- Someone reading a book**
- Something that costs $> \$5$ but $< \$6$**
- A water bottle with stickers on it**
- A city name that starts with N**
- A dog**
- A map**

7 Boarding

- Double check your boarding time! It is different - and often much earlier- than your departure time!
- DEN recommends being inside the airport two hours before boarding time
- Most airlines allow families and young children to board first
 - However, when arriving at your gate you can let the attendant know that you need to be seated first
- Review the boarding sequence on next page to provide predictability for your child
- To provide even more predictability you and your child can watch other flights board before yours or watch YouTube videos of it!



Boarding Sequence

Arrive and wait at the gate

Wait for the boarding announcement

Get in line when your group is called

Show your boarding pass to the agent to scan

Walk down the jetway (hallway/bridge) to the plane

Step onto the plane and look for your seat

Place carry on luggage in overhead bins and put smaller bag under the seat in front of you

Get settled in and comfy!

Look around to locate bathrooms, emergency exits, etc.



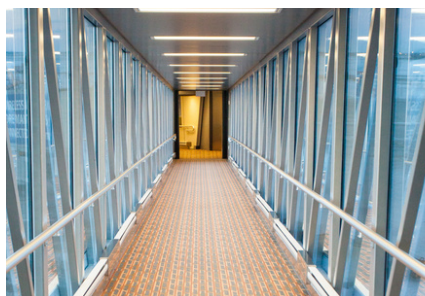
find gate



wait in line



give boarding pass



walk down jetway



find seat on airplane



8 Flight

Describe how the inside of the plane will look!

- There are rows of seats located on each side of the aisle - these are labeled with numbers and letters to tell you where to sit!
- Once seated there are fun trays to put snacks, toys, and entertainment on! Flight attendants will ask you to put these up when you're taking off or landing
- Seatbelts have two ends that go over your lap
- Your seat can lean back, get comfy!
- A mini bathroom!
 - Changing tables are not always available



Time to get out that goody bag!

What did you pack? Set up an activity schedule for which activities to do throughout the flight

- See our schedule examples throughout this guide
- Option to purchase WiFi and utilize throughout flight - or download shows, movies, podcasts ahead of time



Review the boarding sequence on page 34 and flight sequence on page 37 to provide predictability for your child

THE **SENSORY** EXPERIENCE

Loud noises may occur during take off or landing

- Maybe it's time for some music or noise cancelling headphones

Unexpected sounds

- Attendants or the pilot may speak on overhead during your flight

Changes in pressure

- Pack gum and chewy snacks to help with this odd sensation

Small spaces

- It's a tight squeeze so pack efficiently

Crowded

- Planes pack in a lot of people - talk to your child and practice how to interact with strangers

Sense of time

- Provide visual or verbal time references throughout the flight to make the experience more concrete

Vestibular sensations

- Sometimes changes in elevation can make our stomachs feel "off"

Take off and landing

- Hold on tight - it can be a **bumpy** ride at times - pretend you're on an amusement park ride!



Flight Sequence

Remain seated as other passengers board the plane

Flight attendant reviews and demonstrates safety plan/features

Fasten seatbelt and turn off electronics (for now)

Plane takes off - it might be a little bumpy!

Eat snacks

Listen to music

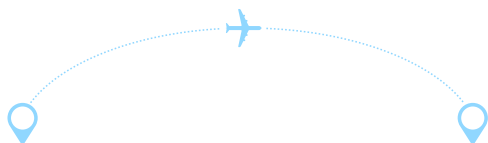
Watch shows or movies

Play backpack activities

Keep your seatbelt fastened whenever you are seated

Flight attendant will announce when the plane is landing, signaling the end of flight - turn off electronics (for now!)

Plane lands - it might be a little bumpy again!



sit in seat with seatbelt



listen to instructions



plane takes off



play plane games



plane lands

9 Baggage Claim

The flight is over! Now let's find your bag.

- At DEN, you will claim your bags in the Jeppesen Terminal on level 5
 - East and West, dependent on airline
- At other airports, when your flight ends your baggage claim area will be announced
- Take the train from your concourse to the terminal
- DEN has 19 carousals for baggage
 - **1-9 are on the east side of terminal**
 - **10-19 are on the west side of terminal**





Feedback

TELL US WHAT YOU THINK!

**If you've used this guide, we'd
love to hear from you!**

Please email us with comments or
suggestions at info@developmentalfx.org

DEVELOPMENTAL FX

**therapy
that**

fits

Airport photos provided courtesy of Denver International Airport