

Emotional support animals

An emotional support animal, typically a dog or cat, provides support for an individual with a mental health-related disability and is not trained to perform a specific task(s) or work.

Southwest Airlines welcomes emotional support animals onboard our flights when a Customer is able to provide required documentation which is described below. Southwest Airlines does not accept unusual or exotic species of animals.

Each Customer may bring only one emotional support animal. An animal must be in a carrier that can be stowed under the seat in front of the Customer or on a leash at all times while in the airport and onboard the aircraft. An animal must be trained to behave properly in a public setting and under the control of the handler at all times. An animal that poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others, causes a significant disruption of cabin service, or engages in disruptive behavior will be denied boarding. Examples of disruptive behavior include (but are not limited to):

- Scratching, excessive whining or barking
- Growling, biting, lunging
- Urinating or defecating in the cabin or gate area

NOTE: Therapy animals, which provide affection or comfort to members of the public and are not trained to perform a specific task(s) for an individual related to a disability, may be eligible to travel in accordance with our [Pet Policy](#) for a fee.

Documentation requirements to travel with an emotional support animal

A Customer seeking to travel with an emotional support animal must provide to a Southwest Airlines Employee current documentation (not more than one year old on the date of travel) on letterhead from a licensed mental health professional or medical doctor who is treating the Customer's mental health-related disability. The letter must state all four items below:

1. The Passenger has a mental or emotional disability recognized in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders
2. The Passenger needs the emotional support animal as an accommodation for air travel and/or for activity at the Passenger's destination
3. The individual providing the assessment is a licensed mental health professional or medical doctor, and the Passenger is under his or her professional care AND
4. The date and type of mental health professional's or medical doctor's license and the state or other jurisdiction in which it was issued

Printable instructions for [Traveling with an Emotional Support Animal](#) (PDF).

Booking a reservation

We strongly encourage a Customer to notify us in advance if he/she will be traveling with an emotional support animal. When booking a new reservation, Customers may use the "Special Assistance" link (situated on the Passenger & Payment Info page) to indicate that he/she will be seeking to travel with an emotional support animal.

If a reservation has already been created, click on the "FLIGHT | HOTEL | CAR" link located on the top of our home page. Then, select "Manage Reservations" from the "Flight" column, input the required information, and select "Continue." From that page, click on the "Special Assistance" link. After selecting an option(s), click "Continue" and the information will be saved to the reservation.

A Customer traveling with an animal(s) that is unable to be accommodated in the space of a single seat may be required to purchase an additional ticket or rebook onto a later flight. The additional ticket is not eligible for a refund after travel. Contact us about any disability-related travel needs or questions by calling 1-800-I-FLY-SWA (1-800-435-9792) prior to travel.

If an animal does not meet the qualifications to travel as an emotional support animal, the animal may be eligible to travel in accordance with our [Pet Policy](#) for a fee.

A Customer traveling with an emotional support animal is solely responsible for researching and complying with applicable laws, requirements, and/or procedures of each location on the Customer's itinerary with respect to the acceptance of the animal. See more information for travel to [Hawaii](#), [Puerto Rico](#), or [international locations](#).

At the airport

A Customer traveling with an emotional support animal must check in with a Ticket Counter or Gate Agent to present required documentation. Once documentation is verified, an updated boarding pass will be provided to the Customer. The Customer may be asked about the nature of the animal at different points throughout the journey, and it is important to keep the documentation accessible for presentation to Southwest Employees.

NOTE: Airport operators may require an emotional support animal to be kenneled or carried while in the terminal building. A Customer traveling with an emotional support animal is solely responsible for researching and complying with applicable laws, requirements, and/or procedures of each locality on the Customer's itinerary with respect to the animal.

Onboard

An emotional support animal must be in a carrier that can be stowed under the seat in front of the Customer or on a leash at all times while in the airport and onboard. In accordance with federal safety regulations:

- A Customer traveling with an emotional support animal cannot sit in an [emergency exit seat](#).
- The animal must be positioned so as not to obstruct Customers' expeditious evacuation in the unlikely event of an emergency.
- If a Customer opts to carry his/her emotional support animal in a pet carrier, the carrier must be properly stowed for taxi, takeoff, and landing under the seat in front of the Customer's seat.
- A leashed animal can be placed on the Customer's lap (provided the animal is no larger than a child under the age of two) or on the aircraft floor.

Animals must not:

- Extend into the aircraft aisle
- Occupy an aircraft seat
- Occupy a tray table
- Extend beyond the footprint of the Customer's seat

Service Animal Relief Areas

Service animal relief areas are available at each of the locations we serve. Southwest Airlines Employees will direct a Customer to these areas upon request.