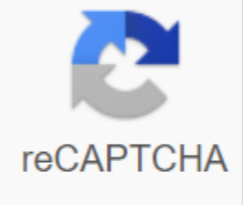




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Elite status under the frequent flyer program can get you the best seats on the plane. Not long after our best discussion of frequent flyer programs, together comes a primer on the games of these programs to get to elite status faster. Last week we asked you to share your favorite frequent flyer program, then we have collected the most... READ MORE How earning miles in general has become less useful in the last few years, many people are still crazy about getting the most miles and having elite status. This 5 minute Ignite talk given to OSCON 2011 (O'Reilly Open Source Convention) shows the extremes people can go on free flights and upgrades to first class. Evan Handshaw-Plath tips include volunteering to get bumped off overbooked flights, flying a long route to your destination (e.g. flying almost around the world for what might otherwise be a short trip), opening and cancelling credit cards just for bonus miles, and more. Yes, it's some extreme offers, but if you fly a lot for work and are almost at the elite level of status, doing a mile run or one of these tactics can get you there. You can also check out our previous (and more reasonable) suggestions on how to get the most out of your frequent flyer miles. You may not consider yourself a gamer, but if you watched your frequent flyer miles climb... More Ignite Oscon 2010 - Hacking frequent flyer programs (via Boing Boing) Illustration by Angelica Alzona.Flyer beware. There has been a lot of disdain directed at the airline lately, and for good reason. United Airlines literally pulled the man off the plane because they needed his seat for an employee, and kicked some of the girls out because they were wearing leggings. Delta booted a family of four because their youngest son used the seat assigned to their eldest son. Spirit Airlines has cancelled a ton of flights due to labor disputes, getting stuck with tons of passengers. Then United was in the news again recently when they canceled someone's ticket to use the phone to record interactions with airline employees. Besides, there was this whole thing with the rabbit. Needless to say, people with guns in their hands, and airlines like United are taking quite a big success. When it comes to flying, crew members do their best to make the flight comfortable, enjoyable,... Read moreHold up though. These stories upset people, shouting about their rights as a paying passenger. But did you know what these rights really are? Before you go complain too much and boycott, maybe you should know that's what when it comes to buying a plane ticket. Pilot's rights exist, thanks to transport, but they're pretty freakin' barebones. As probably not even close to what you think they are. Let's wake it up, won't we? A few rights you have, like FlyerFirst Off, you absolutely need to know that airline airlines legal right to ensure that any passenger does not fly at any time, even if the passenger does not want to give way. This means that you are a gentleman or misses paying a customer. You can be removed for being drunk, having a crying baby, smelling butt, not wearing shoes, or even because they are overbooked and need your place for someone else they consider more important. Excuse me. Here's what THE DOT has to say about this: Overbooking is not illegal, and most airlines rebook their scheduled flights to a certain extent in order to compensate for the non-show. Passengers are sometimes left behind or hit as a result. When oversaead, the Department for Transport (DOT) requires airlines to ask people who are in no hurry to give up their seats voluntarily in exchange for compensation. These passengers, faced with their will, with a few exceptions, are entitled to compensation. If you are unwittingly removed from the plane or denied boarding, you are entitled to another free ticket unless you break the law. The Department of Transportation explains that this refundable ticket must be equal to 200% of your one-way ticket that day (maximum \$650) if replacement carriages must arrive at their destination one to two hours after the initial arrival time (one to four hours for international flights). This goes up to 400% if the arrival time is later than two hours. Basically, you will get another ticket to where you need to go, but you will be late. However, you can also insist on a check instead of a new ticket, and keep your original ticket, which you can still use on another flight with the same carrier. And when it comes to in-flight services you've already paid for, they should refund those payments to you as well. If you feel that you have been improperly removed from your flight, you can file a formal complaint with the Department of Transportation. If that's not good enough, you can also try to take the fight to the small claims court if you can prove some financial loss, but it's a tough fight to win. However, if your flight is delayed or cancelled, things are a little different. You have even fewer rights. FOR DOT: Contrary to popular belief, airlines are not required to compensate passengers whose flights are delayed or cancelled for domestic routes. As stated in the overbooking chapter, compensation is required under the domestic travel law only when you are faced with an oversold flight. Yes, you're reading it right. If your flight is cancelled, they should not do anything for you. They don't even have to provide you with any convenience if you're stuck somewhere because of cancellation. Most airlines will put you on another flight or offer something to you as a gesture of customer service, but You don't have to. And... Oh, wait, that's it. Those are your rights as a flyer. Let's say your airline is doing something to you off (shocking hypothetical, I know). If you... MoreWhy all these crazy things keeps HappeningOkay, so now let's see how some of these specific instances went down. Just to be clear, these explanations are not in defense of airlines, but so you can understand why these things happened. Knowing why not doing your actions correctly, but it will help you cope with the reality of flying in this day and age. For example, what happened to Dr. David Dao was really awful, no doubt, and United handled it as badly as possible. But here's the thing - Dao politely asked several times to get off the plane, and he refused. Your gut reaction is probably something like Good for him, it's crap, he pays the customer, he shouldn't leave. No, it doesn't matter in the eyes of the airline or the law of the sky. Remember? Airlines can remove you from the aircraft at any time if they want to, as long as they properly compensate you under the law. It is classified as involuntary denied boarding, and the number one thing that will get you in hot water, or manhandled if it strikes them fancy- does not follow the instructions of the crew. If the crew or security told you to get off the plane, do so. On Sunday, a man was forcibly pulled from a United flight headed from Chicago to Louisville after... Read more about the FFAA rules in the article ... no person may attack, threaten, intimidate or interfere with the performance of a crew member on board the aircraft that is being operated. Dao was asked to disembark repeatedly (for the reason of, I know, but so far), he refused to obey, saying that he had patients to see the next morning, they sent a Chicago PD on board, he continued to refuse, then the Chicago PD and the flight crew made a call to physically remove him, which they were technically entitled to do. You can't like it, and United's insane actions were a terrible debacle, but they breaks. In 2016 alone, more than 46,000 passengers were shaven from flights, so this is incredibly common. Let's look at the rest of these examples: The girls who were kicked off that United flight to wear leggings were also breaking some rules. They were not regular passengers, and used free vouchers for staff tickets that required them to fly in accordance with the airline's strict dress code. Their leggings are not eligible for the said dress code, and they were denied a landing-simple and simple. Ordinary passengers can wear leggings. The family, who were booted from a Delta flight, had a child flying in a seat he was missing He was assigned to his older brother, who who flew home on a separate flight, meaning the ticket (and seat) did not belong to the child who was actually on the plane. You can't do that. Child or not, in the eyes of the airline it is no different from an adult flying with someone else's ticket. Spirit Airlines can cancel each of its flights whenever they like. That would be bad for business, of course, but they can do it if they choose it. Most airlines tend to try to get you on your next available flight, and some airlines may even approve a new ticket for you on a new carrier, but it is entirely up to the airline. There are no official rules, and as mentioned, they don't even owe you compensation. If they put you on your next available flight though, you are unlikely to be given any convenience until you are stuck. This is especially common with low-fare airlines like Spirit.Lastly, United crew can refuse to board someone who records them without their permission because, again, the crew can refuse to board anyone at any time. In all states of consent, recording audio without their permission is illegal in any way. It happened in Louisiana, which is not an all-party state, but the crew still has the final say. If you do something to upset them or tick them off, be prepared to pay for it. Don't get me wrong. None of this is fair, so to speak, but it's the way it is right now. You have to abide by the rules of the aircraft and flight crew at any time, period. This is the reality of flight in our post 9/11, a corporation controlled by the world. You are entitled to compensation for lost time and inconvenience in some cases, and you have the right to file a formal complaint with the Department of Transportation, and, well, that's it! Airlines are within their rights to kick you out of an overbooked plane even if you... More Know your rights, but understand RealitySo yes, airlines basically deserve their bad reputation because they continue to handle almost every situation they are presented without the slightest grace or sliver of humanity. But the media frenzy, the general misunderstanding of the rights of the flyers, and the people of all too real self-righteousness are what feeds the flames of this raging campfire. There's more to make this messed up equation than people are being mistreated, and it's important you know all the variables if you're going to fly. Let's hope that all media coverage of these incidents teaches the airline a lesson and helps change its rules for the better. But until you get to give up the crew, you don't get to do whatever you like because you're a paid customer, damn it, and you don't get to break the rules (even if they seem ridiculous). You have the right to remain silent, to tilt the chair at cruising altitude, and watching a scary comedy while you sip Fresca off from cup, which is too small if the airline says otherwise. Have a good flight. United's market capitalization, in fact, the company's current value, has fallen more ... Read more

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