

UNACCOMPANIED MINOR CHECKLIST 2026

*Every U.S. Airline's
Age Cutoffs, Fees & Restrictions*

INSIDE:

- All 6 major airlines side by side
- American's 10 approved hubs
- Who counts as an "adult" companion
- TSA gate-pass + REAL ID 2026 rules
- The split-reservation trap
- Airline + TSA + DOT phone numbers

Unaccompanied Minor Information

Please have information completed for the Southwest Airlines Customer Service Agent before arriving at the counter. Thank you for your assistance.

Please print legibly.

Customer's name _____ Date of birth _____
 Gender _____ Destination city _____ Flight # _____

Parent/Guardian at destination

Parent/Guardian _____ Relationship _____
 Address _____
 City _____ State _____ Zip _____
 Home phone (____) _____ Bus. phone (____) _____
 Cell phone (____) _____

1st Alternate contact at destination

Parent/Guardian contact at destination _____
 Relationship _____
 Home phone (____) _____ Cell phone (____) _____


Parent/Guardian at origination city

Parent/Guardian at originating city _____
 Relationship _____
 Address _____
 City _____ State _____ Zip _____
 Home phone (____) _____ Bus. phone (____) _____
 Cell phone (____) _____

All Six Major Airlines at a Glance

Before you book, know exactly what each carrier requires. Age cutoffs, fees, and routing rules vary significantly — and mistakes can result in your child being denied boarding.

Airline	Mandatory UM Ages	Fee (each way)	Flight Restrictions	Optional 15–17?	Booking
Delta	5–14	\$150 (up to 4 kids)	Nonstop only ages 5–7; connections OK 8–14, no last connection of day, no red-eyes (9 PM–5 AM)	Yes	Phone only
American	5–14	\$150 (all siblings)	Nonstop only ages 5–7; connections OK 8–14 through 10 approved hubs only	Yes	Phone only
United	5–14	\$150 (tiered)	Nonstop only at every age — no connections at all	Yes	Online OK
JetBlue	5–13	\$150 per child	Nonstop only; no UK/Europe; max 3 UMs per flight	No service 14+	Online OK
Southwest	5–11	\$100 mainland / \$35 inter-Hawaii per child	Nonstop or direct only; no international flights	12+ = Young Traveler (free)	Online OK
Frontier / Allegiant / Avelo	No service	N/A	Solo travelers must be 15+	N/A	N/A

 Breeze Airways also does not offer UM service. Solo travelers must be 13 or older, and only on nonstop flights.



American Airlines' 10 Approved Connection Hubs

If your child is age 8–14 and flying American Airlines with a connection, the layover **must** occur at one of these airports. Any connection through a non-hub airport will be auto-rejected by the booking system.

CLT

Charlotte

DCA

Washington Reagan

DFW

Dallas/Fort Worth

JFK

New York Kennedy

LAX

Los Angeles

LGA

New York LaGuardia

MIA

Miami

ORD

Chicago O'Hare

PHL

Philadelphia

PHX

Phoenix

⊗ Even at an approved hub, American's booking system **blocks the last connection of the day** to prevent overnight stranding if a flight is delayed.

These 10 hubs are the only valid layover points for unaccompanied minors on American Airlines. If your itinerary routes through any other airport, the booking will be rejected automatically — not at the gate, but during the reservation process itself.



Companion-Age Table: Who Counts as an Adult?

Booking your child with an older sibling? Read this before you buy. Most carriers require the accompanying passenger to be a real adult — not just a "bigger kid."

Delta

Companion must be at least **18**. Same cabin required.

United

Companion must be at least **18**. Must be on same booking and flight.

American

Companion must be at least **16**. Must be on the same reservation (PNR).

JetBlue

Companion must be at least **14**. Linked reservations OK.

Southwest

Companion can be **12 or older**. Must be on the same reservation.

⊗ **The trap:** Putting your 6-year-old on a Delta flight with their 13-year-old sibling does NOT waive the UM service. Delta will deny boarding at the gate.



i Two ID Rules — Don't Confuse Them

- Your child: No ID required for children under 18 on domestic flights.
- You (the parent dropping off): REAL ID-compliant driver's license OR a passport. Required at the ticket counter AND at the TSA checkpoint. If your ID isn't REAL ID compliant, \$45 one-time ConfirmID fallback via pay.gov (10-day travel window, no guarantee).

TSA Gate-Pass Walkthrough

Follow these five steps exactly. One missed detail — like a non-compliant ID — can prevent you from reaching the gate and ground your child's flight entirely.

01

At the Ticket Counter

Show your REAL ID or passport. Tell the agent you need a gate pass to walk your unaccompanied minor to the gate. The agent prints your child's boarding pass and your gate pass.

02

At the TSA Checkpoint

Present your gate pass and ID. You will be sent to the **STANDARD lane**. PreCheck and Global Entry benefits do NOT apply to gate passes, even if you are enrolled.

03

REAL ID Note (Effective Feb 1, 2026)

If your ID isn't REAL ID compliant, you can pay \$45 for TSA's ConfirmID service via pay.gov. It covers a 10-day window. If TSA cannot verify your identity, you do not get the gate pass — and your child cannot fly alone that day.

04

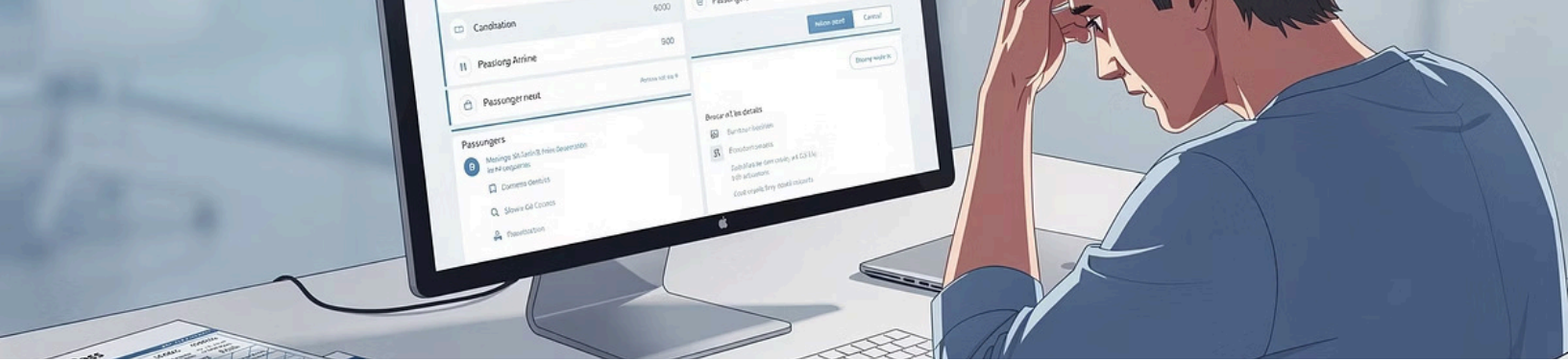
At the Gate

Wait with your child until boarding is complete AND the aircraft has actually departed. The airline requires the departing adult to stay on premises in case the flight returns to the gate.

05

On the Receiving End

The named pickup adult shows up at the gate with matching ID before the flight lands. They wait at the gate until the airline crew hands the child over.



The Split-Reservation Trap

CRITICAL FOR CUSTODY & AWARD BOOKINGS

The Problem

If your child is under 15 and booked on a separate reservation from your own — even if you are sitting next to each other on the same plane — the airline's automated system flags them as a solo flyer. The result is one of three bad outcomes:


- Automatic unaccompanied minor fee charged
- Routing restricted to UM-eligible flights only
- Child's ticket cancelled entirely 24–48 hours before departure

This Happens Most Often When:

- You use award miles for one ticket and pay cash for the other
- You and the child's other parent book separately (split custody)
- Last-minute changes split the original reservation

The Fix

Call the airline within 24 hours of booking. Ask the agent to link the two reservations and add a **TCP code (To Complete Party)**. This tells the booking system you are traveling together as one party.

 You may need to ask for a supervisor — frontline agents don't always know the term "TCP code."

Why It Matters

A split reservation is one of the most common and costly mistakes parents make. The cancellation can happen silently — you may not find out until you arrive at the airport. Always call to confirm the link was applied successfully.



Things the Airline Won't Do

Set expectations now to avoid problems at the gate. These are firm policies — not negotiable at check-in or boarding.

No Medication Administration

Flight attendants cannot administer medication. This applies to EpiPens, inhalers, and prescriptions. If your child cannot self-administer, the airline will not transport them alone.

No Companion Bumping

If the named pickup person doesn't show, the airline will not release the child to anyone else — even a sibling or grandparent with valid ID.

No First Class Upgrades

Most carriers restrict UMs to economy seats near the rear of the aircraft for crew visibility. Cabin upgrades are not permitted.

No Advance Seat Selection (United)




United assigns the seat within 72 hours of departure; parents cannot choose it in advance.


Liability Waivers Required

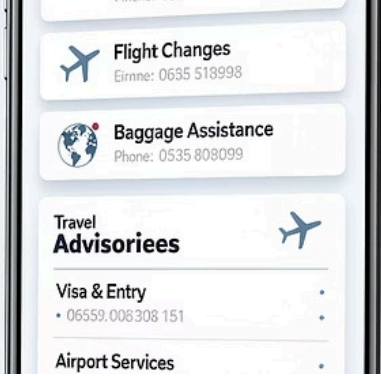
Southwest specifically requires the booking parent to sign an indemnity clause holding the airline harmless for the child's actions in flight.

Pre-Flight Checklist

Print this page. Pack it with your child's documents. Work through each item in sequence — do not skip steps.

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
|  One Week Before |  Day Before |  Day Of, At the Airport |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Confirm flight is nonstop or pre-approved hub connection<input type="checkbox"/> Confirm pickup person can be at the gate with ID before plane lands<input type="checkbox"/> Confirm your own ID is REAL ID compliant<input type="checkbox"/> Call airline to verify UM form is on file with all three contacts | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Call airline to confirm UM booking is active and not auto-cancelled<input type="checkbox"/> Print boarding pass and UM form copy<input type="checkbox"/> Charge your child's phone; load emergency contact card | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Arrive 2 hours early (3 if international)<input type="checkbox"/> Get gate pass at ticket counter (REAL ID or passport required)<input type="checkbox"/> Go through STANDARD TSA lane (no PreCheck on gate passes)<input type="checkbox"/> Walk child to gate, hand over to gate agent<input type="checkbox"/> Stay at gate until aircraft has actually departed |

 **On Arrival End:** Pickup adult at the gate with matching ID before plane lands → Wait at gate until airline hands child over → Confirm receipt with departing parent by phone.



Official Resources

Save these numbers before you travel — if anything goes wrong, call the airline first.

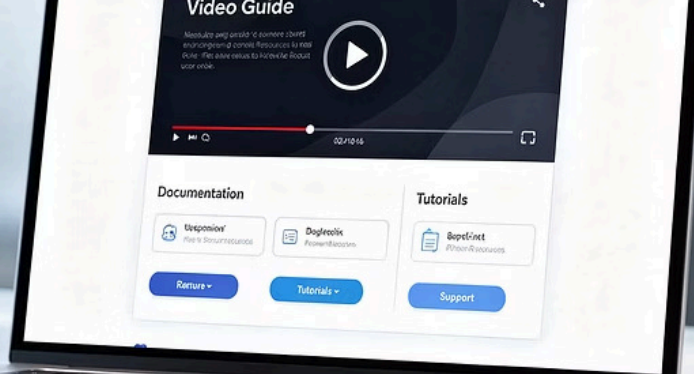
Airline Reservations & Unaccompanied Minor Desks

Airline	Phone	UM Resource URL
Delta Air Lines	1-800-221-1212 (24 hrs)	delta.com/us/en/children-infant-travel/unaccompanied-minor-program
American Airlines	1-800-433-7300 (24 hrs)	aa.com/i18n/travel-info/special-assistance/unaccompanied-minors.jsp
United Airlines	1-800-864-8331 (24 hrs)	united.com/ual/en/us/fly/travel/special-needs/unaccompanied-minors.html
Southwest Airlines	1-800-435-9792 (24 hrs)	southwest.com/help/booking/young-traveler-unaccompanied-minor
JetBlue Airways	1-800-538-2583 (24 hrs)	jetblue.com/help/unaccompanied-minors

Government & Travel Authorities

Agency	Phone / Hours	Website
TSA Contact Center	1-866-289-9673 (M–F 8 AM–11 PM ET; Sat–Sun 9 AM–8 PM ET)	tsa.gov
TSA REAL ID / ConfirmID	pay.gov	tsa.gov/realid
DOT Aviation Consumer Hotline	1-202-366-2220	transportation.gov/airconsumer

Carriers without UM service — solo travelers must meet minimum age: Frontier (1-801-401-9000, 15+), Allegiant (1-702-505-8888, 15+), Avelo (1-346-616-9500, 15+), Breeze (chat at flybreeze.com, 13+ nonstop only).



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The video that goes with this guide is on GovClarity's website — along with every PDF guide, every blog post, and every related video published.



Watch the Full Unaccompanied Minor Video

All the details, examples, and the four mistakes section — embedded right on the blog post at govclarity.net



Read the Full Blog Post

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