

Special assistance



We'll help you fly

Help for passengers with disabilities or restricted mobility

Heathrow
Making every journey better

Assistance – it's best to book ahead

Assistance is free at Heathrow.
If you book ahead, we'll be ready
when you get here.

To book the help you need, you should speak to your airline, tour operator or travel agent. Let them know at least 48 hours before you fly.

They'll want to know a few things about you. Here's a checklist.
If you fill it in now, you'll be ready to answer their questions.



| | | | | | |
|--|--------|--------|------|------|------|
| Are you taking your own wheelchair or scooter? | | Yes | No | | |
| If 'yes', your airline will need some details: | | | | | |
| Make: | | | | | |
| Model: | | | | | |
| Weight: | | | | | |
| Height: | Width: | Depth: | | | |
| Battery type: (dry or wet cell, etc) | | | | | |
| Your assistance code: | | | | | |
| WCHR | WCHS | WCHC | BLND | DEAF | DPNA |

(See page 14 for an explanation of assistance codes)

'If you can't give 48 hours' notice we'll still do our best to help, although it may take us longer to do so
You can find your airline's contact details on our website at:
[heathrowairport.com/help/contact-us/airline-contacts](https://www.heathrowairport.com/help/contact-us/airline-contacts)

Should you be flying with an escort?

Some people's disabilities are too severe for them to travel alone. If any of the following apply to you, you'll need someone to accompany you at Heathrow and on your flight.

- You'll be travelling on a stretcher or in an incubator, or you'll need medical attention during your flight. You need an escort who can attend to your personal and medical needs
- You have a mental disability that means you cannot understand or respond to safety instructions
- In an emergency, you'd be unable to evacuate the aircraft on your own
- You have severe hearing or vision impairments that mean you'll be unable to communicate with airline staff.

Please contact your airline for further advice

Tag your luggage before you leave home

If you can make your luggage stand out, it'll be easier to spot it on the carousel. For example, you could attach a bright ribbon, tag or luggage strap.

You should also tag your wheelchair if it's going in the aircraft hold. We recommend sealing it in a cover in case parts get detached during transit. It's worth removing detachable parts and putting them in a separate bag for safe-keeping.



Arrive in good time for your flight

When you get to Heathrow, you can head straight for your airline check-in desk or one of our special assistance areas. Your airline will call us over when you reach check-in, and there's always someone ready to help in the special assistance areas. Whichever route you choose, we'll be there to help you check-in. We have special assistance areas located in all of our check-in areas, where our staff are available to assist. Please refer to page seven where the locations are described.

The important thing is to give yourself enough time to catch your flight. When you book your ticket, ask your airline when you should check in.

Need help? Use the 'help points' at any time

Another option when you arrive is to call us from one of the many 'help points' at Heathrow – see the list below. When you call from a help point, we'll tell you how long till we can be at your side.

You can use the help points at any stage of your journey.

Just look for this symbol: 

Help point locations

- Heathrow Express stations
- London Underground stations
- Hilton Hotel, Terminal 4 (accessible from the terminal)
- Sofitel, Terminal 5 (accessible from the terminal)
- Terminal car parks (short stay parks are next to the terminals)
- Central Bus Station
- Bus stops (all terminals)
- Taxi ranks (all terminals)
- Car drop-off and pick-up points (all terminals)
- The Help Bus
- Any of the other help points at Heathrow.

Easy parking at Heathrow

The closest car parks to the terminals are the official Heathrow car parks. They all have wide, conveniently placed bays reserved for blue-badge holders. We display car park prices at all car park entrances, though you'll often find that it's cheaper to book in advance online at [heathrow.com/parking](https://www.heathrow.com/parking)

For security reasons, the normal blue badge rules don't apply on Heathrow roads. The only place where you can rely on your blue badge is a car park. Park anywhere else, and your car will be towed away.

Short stay parking

Short stay parks are the ones closest to the terminals. Height restrictions apply:

- **Terminal 1:** Car parks 1 and 1a: 2m (6ft 6in)
- **Terminal 3:** Over-height area: 2.75m (9ft); other floors: 2.2m (7ft 2in)
- **Terminal 4:** 2m (6ft 6in)
- **Terminal 5:** Overheight area: no restrictions; all other floors: 2.2m (7ft 2in).

If your car is too tall, you'll need to park in a long stay or business car park. Or you can use the West Ramp Coach Park system. To find out more, call Heathrow Ground Operations on 0844 335 1000.

Business and long stay parking

The blue badge spaces in business and long stay car parks are always close to bus stops and admin offices. If you feel you have more specific needs contact us at feedback@heathrow.com



Accessibility at Heathrow

You'll like Heathrow: it's a highly accessible airport. We have wide corridors and ramps, accessible toilets, telephones at wheelchair height and seating reserved for disabled passengers. Most of all, we have a well-trained assistance team to help you fly.

Help for the blind and visually impaired

Help is much better when you get to know your helper. So our aim is that the same person will accompany you all the way from check-in to boarding your plane. If you want to go shopping in the departure lounge, they'll be there to help. But if you prefer to do your own thing, we'll give you a pager so we can stay in touch. We won't let you miss your flight.

Airport signs are black on yellow for optimum contrast.

Help for the hard of hearing

You'll find induction loops throughout the airport, all flagged with the symbol. Many payphones and credit-card phones take hearing aids, and we have text payphones in the arrivals hall of every terminal.

Special-assistance areas

You'll find special-assistance areas before and after security in every terminal (see adjacent page). They give you low-level flight-information screens, induction loops and seats with arms on both sides. They're convenient for wheelchairs and close to accessible toilets.

Terminal 1

For the latest information on T1 locations, contact us on feedback@heathrow.com

Terminal 2

Before security: at check-in zone C next to security and Travelex Bureau de change.

After security: on gate level next to World Duty Free

Terminal 3

Before security: on the first floor, opposite Internet Café, above zones A and B in departures.

After security: at the back of World Duty Free in the additional seating area.

Terminal 4

Before security: at check-in zone B next to Excess Baggage in departures.

After security: the Serenity Lounge to the rear of World Duty Free and to the left of Costa Coffee.

Terminal 5

Before security: at check-in zone G in departures.

After security: the Lichfield Suite, which is located opposite Gate 20.

Terminal 5B

After security: before the entrance to gates 18 – 24, and next to the lifts opposite Café Apostrophe.

Accessible toilets

Our terminal maps show where they are:

[heathrowairport.com/heathrow-airport-guide/airport-maps](https://www.heathrowairport.com/heathrow-airport-guide/airport-maps)

Buggies can't go everywhere

When you get to Heathrow, you may find that you have to switch from electric buggy to wheelchair or from wheelchair to buggy at some point on your terminal journey. And there may be a delay between the two. If you do have to change from one to another, it's because some parts of our terminals are inaccessible to buggies.



Passing through security and boarding your flight

Help with security

We'll be on hand to escort you through security. If you prefer to make your own way, that's fine too. Just make sure you give yourself enough time. Many airlines now insist that passengers reach security at least 35 minutes before their flights.

Since wheelchairs activate our metal detectors, we have to search wheelchair users by hand. You can always ask to be searched in private, out of sight of other passengers – just let our security staff know. If you can walk unaided through the metal detector, you may think that's preferable to a personal search.

In the departure lounge

Once you've been through security, your time's your own. We have special-assistance areas in the departure lounge after security. You can wait there with our special-assistance team or you can wander round the shops and restaurants. Although we're happy to help with any last minute shopping, we can't escort you around all the shops or sit with you in restaurants.

Boarding your flight

When your flight's called, we'll escort you to your gate in good time to catch your plane. Most disabled passengers travel by electric buggy, but some may be escorted one-to-one. If you're making your own way, make sure you give yourself enough time. Whatever happens, we'll be ready to help should you need us.

Generally passengers who need assistance board the plane first. Occasionally it's the other way round. If you're travelling with your own wheelchair, we'll hand it to the ground-handling team at the aircraft door. They'll stow it in the aircraft hold ready for use when you land at your destination.

If you need help getting to your seat, we'll ask you to sit in an aisle chair so that we can wheel you to your seat. We can also help with stowing your hand luggage in the overhead lockers.



Landing at Heathrow

Leaving your aircraft

It's standard airline practice to let other passengers off the plane first. That creates plenty of room and reduces stress for passengers who need assistance.

If you need help getting from your seat, we'll use an aisle chair to wheel you to the aircraft door. And if you're travelling with your own wheelchair, we'll bring it to the door ready for use as soon as you leave the aircraft.

Most passengers needing assistance travel through the terminal by electric buggy, but some may be on a one-to-one escort.

Making your way to the arrivals hall

We'll be by your side all the way: through immigration, baggage reclaim and customs. If you're travelling alone, we'll lift your bags from the carousels at baggage reclaim.

We'll escort you to the arrivals hall and waiting friends or, if you prefer, take you further – to any one of the following locations:

- Terminal forecourt
- Short stay car park next to the terminal building
- Central Bus Station or terminal bus stops
- Terminal Help Bus pick-up point
- London Underground or Heathrow Express platforms
- Terminal linked hotels – Hilton or Sofitel
- Airline check-in or ticket desks
- Terminal landside host desk
- Anywhere else within the airport boundary.

Connecting to other flights

If you're connecting to another flight – in the same or another terminal – we'll help you get there with the minimum of fuss and stress. Bear in mind that connecting times can be tight and aircraft have to leave on time.

It's worth thinking about connection times when you book your flight. For example, waiting for your own mobility equipment to be recovered from the aircraft hold will increase the time you need for a comfortable connection. If your disabilities are likely to make it difficult for you to board your connecting flight on time – especially if you have to change terminals – it may be better to choose a later connection.

Connecting in the same terminal

We'll give you all the assistance you need: when checking your onward tickets or boarding cards, through the security control point and onwards to your departure gate and the aircraft. For more details, see the sections 'In the departure lounge' and 'Boarding your flight' or further information on travelling through security on page eight.

Connecting in another terminal

At Heathrow we use coaches to transfer connecting passengers between terminals. We'll escort you to your coach and ensure you are met in your the next terminal. From that point onwards, the procedures are the same as those described in the preceding pages.



When there's no airbridge to your aircraft

Some aircraft have to park away from the terminals. Instead of boarding or disembarking directly from the terminal via an airbridge, passengers have to cross the airfield by coach and then board or disembark via steps.

When passengers can't manage the steps, we use a vehicle known as an ambulift to lift them to and from the aircraft. An ambulift has a secure cabin that raises to the height of the aircraft door. Passing from the ambulift cabin to your aircraft is much like passing from an airbridge to an aircraft.

The ambulift will take you directly from the terminal to your aircraft or from your aircraft to the terminal if you're landing at Heathrow. It's very convenient.

There's room inside an ambulift for several passengers who need assistance, but there may not be space for all the people travelling with them. If several disabled passengers are boarding your flight, we may have room for only one person to accompany you in the ambulift.

Assistance dogs are welcome

We're used to dealing with assistance dogs at Heathrow. The one thing we insist on is proper documentation. No assistance dog can fly out of the UK without a valid pet passport and a valid booking for the flight. Please make sure you have all the paperwork in place before you fly.

It's the same if you're coming to the UK. You must have documentation for clearance under the Pet Travel Scheme. Your dog may be impounded if you try to bring it into the UK without proper documentation.

Flying from Heathrow

When you come to Heathrow with an assistance dog, it's best to make for our landside host desk (there's one in every terminal) or call for assistance using one of the help points. We'll then escort you both to your check-in desk.

The check-in team will check your pet passport and flight bookings, then issue you with a boarding pass. After that, the procedures are the same as for any other passenger who needs assistance.

Coming to the UK

After you leave your aircraft, you'll be met by a representative from the Heathrow Animal Reception Centre. They'll check your dog and your documentation for clearance under the Pet Travel Scheme. If everything's in order, they'll give you a clearance certificate. You must have that clearance certificate before you try to go through immigration or customs.

After that, the procedures are the same as for any other passenger who needs assistance.

Connecting flights at Heathrow

Even if you're just passing through the airport, the checking procedures for your assistance dog are the same as for dogs entering the UK. If everything's in order, the representative from the Heathrow Animal Reception Centre will give you a clearance certificate. You'll need that certificate to board your next aircraft.

After that, the procedures are the same as for any other connecting passenger who needs assistance. The one difference is that we provide plenty of relief areas for assistance dogs. Just like you, your dog will appreciate a break from the routine of flying.



Airline assistance codes

To make sure everyone knows exactly what sort of help you need, the airline industry uses a set of six four letter codes. It sounds a bit bureaucratic, but it really does help everyone work together to make your journey easier.

Choose the code that best matches your abilities and the type of help you need. Don't forget to quote this code when you book your assistance.

| Your assistance code | Your abilities | The help you need |
|------------------------------------|---|---|
| WCHR (wheelchair – ramp) | You can walk short distances and walk up and down aircraft stairs on your own. | You need a wheelchair or a buggy to get through the terminal and to the aircraft gate. |
| WCHS (wheelchair – steps) | You cannot walk up and down aircraft stairs, but you can walk in the cabin on your own. | You may need a wheelchair or a buggy all the way to the aircraft door. |
| WCHC (wheelchair – cabin seats) | You cannot walk or stand, and need help to and from your cabin seat. | You need help all the way to and from your seat, and may possibly need a special cabin lifting chair. If you have your own wheelchair, you'll need it again immediately after disembarkation. |
| BLND (blind passenger) | You are blind or partially sighted, and may be travelling with an assistance dog. | You may need help through the terminal and up and down aircraft steps. If you're travelling with an assistance dog, you'll need it in the cabin with you. |
| DEAF (deaf passenger) | You are deaf, deaf-mute or hard of hearing, and may be travelling with an assistance dog. | You may need help with terminal announcements. If you're travelling with an assistance dog, you'll need it in the cabin with you. |
| DPNA | You have an intellectual or development disability that needs help. | You need help with everything you do. |

Standards of care for passengers in need of assistance

At Heathrow we believe that everyone should be able to fly. So we do our best to help passengers who can't manage the journey on their own. Assistance for passengers with disabilities or reduced mobility is free. All we ask is that you book at least 48 hours ahead so that we can be ready for you.

Our assistance doesn't just meet the minimum standards set by European legislation, it goes further. Our aim is to make every journey better for every single passenger.

Omniserv, our assistance partner

To give you superb professional help we've appointed an independent company called Omniserv to take care of all passengers who need assistance. Both we and Omniserv regularly meet with charities and other organisations for the disabled. We want to know how we can improve our services for disabled people. If you have any comments or suggestions, you can contact us via the links and addresses on the back cover.

Complaints

If you're not happy with the way you were treated at Heathrow, please let us know. We promise to get back to you within seven days.

You can find our contact details on the back page.

If you're still not satisfied, you can refer the matter to our regulator, the Civil Aviation Authority, at the following address:

Civil Aviation Authority
CAA House
45 – 59 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6TE

www.caa.co.uk



If you require this publication in an alternative format,
please contact us:

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