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Big Kid

Flying Alone: When Is My Child Old Enough?

Posted by [Jeanne Sager](#) on March 19, 2010 at 11:13 AM

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Sending your child on an airplane alone is a big step for any parent.

A lot of kids rack up frequent-flyer miles, especially in divorced families where the parents live in different cities. Airlines allow children to fly alone, but the rules for these "unaccompanied minors" vary from airline to airline.

Some airlines allow kids 5 to 11 to travel alone only on direct or non-stop trips, while others allow them on any domestic flight.

Check with the airline before booking a ticket, and expect them to ask for proof of age at the gate. There is generally an extra fee to cover the escort the airline will assign your unaccompanied minor.



Flickr Photo by [dchousegrooves](#)

Don't be surprised if your 5-year-old is uncomfortable without Mom or Dad on a plane, says Dr. Charlotte Reznick, an associate professor of psychology at UCLA and author of [The Power of Your Child's Imagination: How to Transform Stress and Anxiety into Joy and Success](#).

Reznick suggests aiming for 8 or 9 for their first solo flight, but she admits logistics may make it necessary to send a 5-year-old alone. Take several trips with the child before they go it alone, she says, regardless of the age. It's also better to start kids off on short flights rather than a cross-country or international trip.

CafeMoms tend to agree with Reznick -- in a recent query on the bulletin boards, most moms weighed in that 8 and up was the [best age for the solo flight](#) though some waited for 11 or even 16.

Has your child taken a solo flight? How old were they?

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