

Eugene J. Hall

English For Careers

The Language of
Air Travel
in English:
Ground Services



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The Language of Air Travel in English: Ground Services

Illustrations by Bill Robinson

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FOREWORD

This book is one of a series of texts called *English for Careers*. The series is intended to introduce students of English to the language of different professional and vocational fields. The career areas that are covered are those in which English is widely used throughout the world, including air travel, computer technology, the petroleum industry, and so on.

Each book in the series serves several purposes. The first is to give the student an introduction to the particular vocational area in which he or she is interested. The duties of different kinds of jobs are discussed, as well as the problems that might be encountered at work. In this particular book, *The Language of Air Travel in English: Ground Services*, the jobs of airline ground personnel who come in contact with the general public are described. Included are reservations and ticket agents, passenger service agents, and air freight agents. The subject of the book is what these men and women do and what is involved in their work. The book is not intended as a detailed training manual, but rather as a broad introduction both to the opportunities and the problems involved in this kind of work.

From the point of view of teaching English as a foreign language, these books are intended for a student at the high intermediate or advanced level. In other words, the student who uses these books should be acquainted with most of the structural patterns of English. His principal goals as a learner should be mastering vocabulary, using the various structural patterns in a normal mixture, and improving his ability to communicate in English.

These books address themselves to all of these needs. Each lesson begins with a glossary of special terms in which words and expressions used in the vocational area being discussed are defined. This glossary is followed by a vocabulary study which tests the student's comprehension of the special terms and gives practice in their use. In the

reading that follows, these terms are used again within a contextual frame of reference. Each reading is followed by questions for comprehension and discussion. They give the student the opportunity to use in a communicative situation both the vocabulary items and structural patterns that have occurred in the reading.

Each lesson ends with an exercise or exercises. Some of them pose problems that might occur if the student were working in a particular job. He might, for instance, be asked to fill out forms that are used on the job; or he might have to make up short dialogues that involve human problems and situations that arise in connection with the job. In doing these exercises, he will also be practicing both the specialized vocational vocabulary and other new words, as well as the structural patterns that are used with them.

A great deal of successful language learning comes from experiences in which the learning is largely unconscious. In offering these books, it is hoped that the student's interest in his chosen field will increase his ability to communicate more effectively in English.

I wish to express my appreciation to Pan American World Airways and Trans World Airlines for their cooperation in making available much of the material on which this book is based. The Washington offices of both these airlines provided needful help and encouragement for this project.

EUGENE J. HALL
Washington, D. C.

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UNIT ONE

AIRLINE SERVICES

Special Terms

Aircraft: Usually used as a technical-sounding equivalent to *airplane*, but in fact it refers to any type of machine that can be used for flight in the air. Thus, it includes not only airplanes but also balloons, helicopters, gliders, etc. The two most common types of commercial aircraft are *propeller planes* and *jets*. Propeller



A commercial airplane with propeller engines.



A commercial airplane with jet engines.

planes (*props* for short) have conventional internal combustion engines; the propellers themselves are revolving blades. Jet planes have jet engines which provide a propelling force by discharging heated gas from the rear of the engine. Jets are more

modern than propeller planes; they are also faster, smoother, and larger.

Airline: A company which offers air transportation between two or more points. It includes all the support activities, such as aircraft, airports, ticket offices, and so on, that are necessary for providing the air transportation. *Airline* is sometimes written as two words (*air line*) or with a hyphen (*air-line*).

Airport: The place where airplanes take off or land. It includes all the facilities that are necessary for servicing airplanes, passengers, and freight.

Fare: The price charged for transportation. We speak of bus fares, taxi fares, railroad fares, and air fares.

Flight: Used generally for the act of flying. Specifically, however, *flight* is used by the airlines to indicate a trip or journey by one airplane. Every airline flight has a number to identify it. It can be a non-stop flight—direct from Miami to Caracas, for example; or it can be a flight with several stops—Miami-Panama-Bogota-Lima.

Freight: Goods that are transported by surface or air. Many airlines use the term *cargo* instead of freight. Cargo can also refer to goods being transported by ship.

Route: The way or road or line over which transportation moves between two points. Airlines often speak of *short-haul* routes—New York to Washington, for example—or *long-haul* routes—San Francisco to Tokyo. A route can be direct, or it can include other points in between—New York to San Francisco by way of Chicago, for example. The airlines provide service over established routes.

Timetable: A schedule which shows the times at which airplanes or other forms of transportation arrive and depart. Airline timetables also give the type of aircraft, frequency of service, meal service, and other information.

Vocabulary Practice

1. What are the two most common types of commercial aircraft?
2. What is an *airline*? What airlines serve your city or area?

3. What is an *airport*? Describe your local airport.
4. What does *fare* mean?
5. How is the term *flight* used by the airlines?
6. What does *freight* refer to? What do many airlines call freight?
7. What is a *route*? What are the most important air routes in your country or region?
8. What information can you get from a *timetable*?

Airline Services

The airlines of the world offer many varieties of services in many different kinds of aircraft. Transcontinental and transoceanic flights are made in giant jet planes, some of which can carry several hundred passengers on each flight. Smaller jets are commonly used on the shorter, more heavily traveled routes between major centers of population—Paris—London, for example, or New York—Chicago. In contrast to the jets are propeller airplanes, as they are now generally called, which are slower and smaller than the jets. Many different kinds of propeller planes fly on short routes into small airports that cannot handle the big planes. The DC-3 (or the Dakota, as the British call it), one of the first successful commercial airplanes, is still used in many parts of the world.

There are several ways in which airline service can be divided into categories. One distinction is between *trunk lines* and *feeder lines*. Trunk lines are those which operate between major population centers. New York to San Juan, Puerto Rico, is an example of a trunk route. Feeder lines, which are sometimes called *local lines*, connect smaller cities and towns with each other or with the major centers and the major airports. A passenger traveling from Binghamton, New York, to Mayagüez, Puerto Rico, would probably take a flight on a

SUMMER SCHEDULE

MIDDLE EAST—EUROPE—SOUTH AMERICA

Hours from GMT	FLIGHT NUMBER	CLASS	DAY	VA 731	VA 734	VA 729	VA 761	VA 733 ^f	VA 723	VA 738	VA 724	VA 711	VA 701	VA 721	VA 703	C O D E
	EQUIPMENT			D8S	D8S	F/Y	F/Y	D10	F/Y	D8S	F/Y	F/Y	F/Y	D10	F/Y	
				Mo	Mo	Mo	Mo	We	Th	Th	Fr	Fr	Sa	Sa	Su	
+2	ROME	f	+													ROM
+2	MILAN	f	+													MIL
+1	AMSTERDAM	f		08 35												AMS
+1	LONDON	f		09 30												LON
+1	FRANKFURT			10 15												FRA
+1	PARIS															PAR
+2	MADRID	f		13 15												MAD
+1	LISBON			14 15												LIS
+1	LAS PALMAS															LPA
-4	SAN JUAN															SJU
-4	CARACAS			17 25												CCS
-4	MARACAIBO															MAR
-5	BOGOTA															BOG
-5	PANAMA															PTY
-5	SAN JOSE															SJO
-5	LIMA															LIM

†—No traffic rights. ‡—Caracas-Maracaibo DC-8. §—Times one hour earlier Rome & Milan eff. Sept. 28; Madrid eff. Oct. 5; London eff. Oct. 26.

An example of an airline timetable.

feeder airline from Binghamton to New York City. There he would change to a major airline which would take him on to San Juan. At San Juan he would transfer to another feeder airline to travel on to Mayagüez.

In the last few years, there has been a rapid development of feeder airlines in the United States and in many other countries. Some smaller cities have no other means of public passenger transportation. In countries where there is a large frontier, such as Canada or Brazil, air service may provide access to some areas even before they are reached by roads. Similarly, in countries with rugged terrain, such as Colombia, airplanes can provide more effective transportation between regions than highways or railroads.

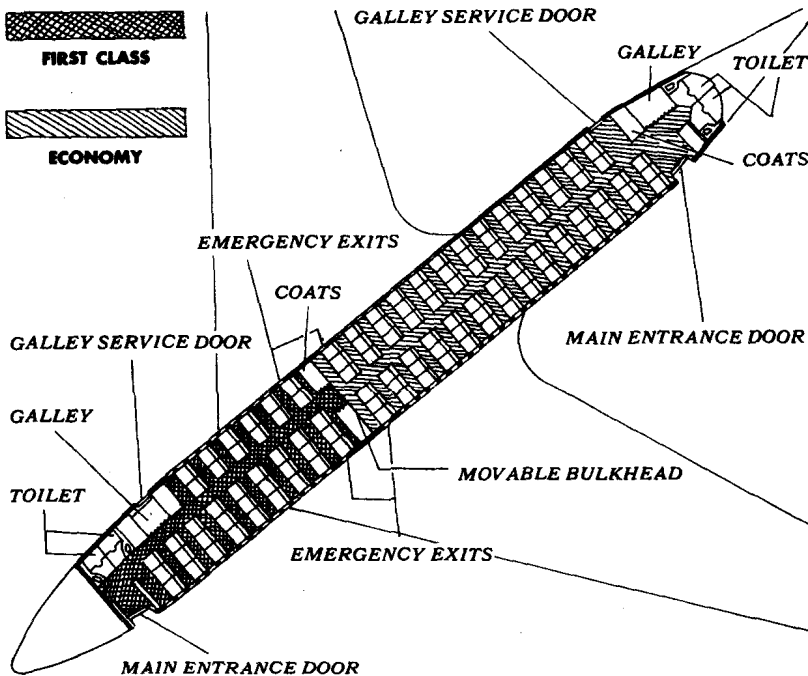
Airline passenger service can also be divided into *scheduled* and *non-scheduled* flights. A scheduled flight leaves at the same time on the same day to the same destination. The schedule for the flight is published by the airline in its timetable. The passenger can make a reservation in advance for a scheduled flight with the reasonable expectation that the flight will leave at a certain time and go to a certain place regardless of the number of passengers who have tickets for the flight. Many scheduled flights often carry only a small number of passengers.

A non-scheduled flight, on the other hand, depends on the availability of passengers and aircraft. It is more or less the air version of taxi or rent-a-car service. It takes passengers where they want to go at a time that is convenient for them, as long as a plane is available. Non-scheduled flights may carry only a few passengers in a small plane, or they may carry hundreds of people on a jumbo jet. These latter flights are often called *charters*. Charters are especially popular with groups on vacation since they usually cost much less than scheduled flights on the same routes. We will discuss charter flights in more detail in Unit Eight.

Scheduled airlines often provide non-scheduled services—particularly charter flights—during the tourist season. Occasionally, they also provide *extra sections* of scheduled flights at times when travel over a particular route is especially heavy—during a holiday weekend, for example. An extra section of course depends on the availability of aircraft.

On the flight itself, there is usually a distinction between *first class* and *economy*, which was formerly known as *tourist class*. The first class passenger has more space and receives more in-flight ser-

vice. In most modern jets, the seating plan in first class is usually two seats on each side of the aisle; in economy there are usually three seats side by side. The first class seats are usually farther apart so that the passenger has more room for his legs. To the passenger, the chief difference between first class and economy may well be the cost—first-class fares are much higher than economy fares.



A diagram of the seating arrangement for a passenger flight. Note that more space is allowed for first-class than for economy-class passengers.

Many airlines offer one-service flights, especially on short, heavily traveled routes. On a few routes, notably New York-Washington, New York-Boston, and Los Angeles-San Francisco, there are *shuttle* flights. The passenger does not have to make a reservation in advance, and he pays for his ticket either at the departure gate or on the flight itself.

A final distinction is between *passenger* and *freight* (or *cargo*) service. In the early days of the airlines, freight was usually carried in the

baggage compartment of the plane. In some cases, freight was even carried in the passenger compartment. In this event, the reclining seats were taken out, the passengers sat in "bucket seats" along the sides of the plane, and the freight was strapped down in the middle of



Typical reclining seats on a passenger flight. They are removable so that they can be arranged in different configurations.

the compartment. Nowadays, small shipments may still be carried in the baggage compartment, but there are also special planes which provide both scheduled and non-scheduled air freight service. Some of these planes are converted from passenger aircraft; others are specially designed to carry freight. With these special planes, freight in bulk can be moved by air, though the cost is usually considerably higher than surface shipment.

The airline industry is still very young. The first scheduled service across the Atlantic, for instance, began in 1939. Today the airlines carry millions of passengers every year on both local and long-distance flights. In some areas of the world, air service is the only ef-

fective means of public transportation. The airlines are still growing rapidly and at the same time occupying an increasingly important place in the economy of many nations. They employ thousands of people to handle the passengers and freight that they carry.

Many of these people work in various technical jobs where they have little or no direct contact with the public—in aircraft maintenance or air traffic control, for example. Thousands of others, however, come into daily contact with the traveling public. They include reservations and ticket agents, ground service personnel, stewardesses and other flight personnel, and many others. In this book, we will describe the work of airline ground service personnel who deal with the public. In a subsequent volume, we will describe the work of flight attendants and other airline employees whose jobs are performed in flight.

Discussion

1. Why do some airlines still use propeller airplanes?
2. What is the difference between *trunk lines* and *feeder lines*? Are there any feeder lines operating in your area? If so, what are they? With what trunk lines do they connect?
3. Why has there been a rapid development of feeder lines in recent years?
4. What is the difference between *scheduled* and *non-scheduled* flights?
5. For what purpose are *charters* especially popular? What particular advantages do they offer to the passenger?
6. What is an *extra section*?
7. What is the difference between *first class* and *economy* service?
8. What is a *shuttle* flight?

9. How was *freight* carried by the airlines a few years ago? How are large shipments of freight carried by the airlines nowadays?
10. What are some of the types of jobs that are offered by the airline industry? What kinds of jobs will be discussed in this book?
11. Why would you be interested in working for an airline?

Review

- A. Fill in the spaces in the following sentences with the appropriate word or phrase.

Example: The term aircraft includes not just airplanes, but also helicopters, gliders, and balloons.

1. When he looked at the _____, the departure time for his flight was given as eight o'clock, but the agent told him that it left at eight-fifteen.
2. Even though it cost more, he preferred to travel _____ because there was more space for his legs.
3. _____ planes came into service on the airlines in the 1950s; before that time _____ were used.
4. There was so much business over the Christmas weekend that the airline put on several _____.
5. The _____ for economy service is less than that of first class service.
6. He couldn't get a seat on the nine o'clock _____, so he took one that left at eight.
7. The customer was in a hurry for the shipment, so they sent it by air _____, even though it cost a little more.

8. He didn't need a reservation to get a seat on the _____
_____ from New York to Washington.
9. The _____ from New York to Paris on that airline
always goes by way of London.
10. Several _____ airlines connect the small cities with
the large cities.

B. Use the following words and expressions in sentences of your own.

aircraft	flight	trunk line
airline	timetable	feeder line
airplane	fare	route
airport	first class	short-haul
scheduled	economy	long-haul
non-scheduled	charter	shuttle
extra section	freight	cargo