

CAREER KIT

Flight Attendant Career Kit: 90-Day Action Plan

How to Become a Flight Attendant

2026-10 edition

Inside: at-a-glance summary · step-by-step path · costs & requirements · 90-day action plan · documents checklist · exams · interview questions · resume bullets · common mistakes · 13-week tracker · resources

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At a glance

To become a flight attendant, you need a high school diploma, customer service experience and the ability to pass an airline's interview, background check and drug test. The airline then trains you for several weeks and you earn your FAA Certificate of Demonstrated Proficiency. The whole process usually takes 3 to 9 months and can cost almost nothing, because airlines pay for the required training.

Timeline	3–9 months from application to first flight
Typical cost	\$0–\$5,000 (airline training is free; private prep schools are optional)
Education	High school diploma or GED
License	FAA Certificate of Demonstrated Proficiency (earned in airline training)
Median pay	\$63,580 per year
Job outlook	+9% (2025–35), much faster than average

Step-by-step path

1. Check the basic requirements

Time: 1 day

Airlines typically require you to be at least 18 to 21 years old, depending on the carrier, with a high school diploma or GED. You need a valid passport, the right to work in the U.S. and the ability to pass a background check and drug test. Many airlines also set height or reach limits so you can reach overhead safety equipment.

2. Build customer service experience

Time: 6–24 months

Airlines hire for people skills. One to two years in a hotel, restaurant, retail store, hospital or call center makes your application much stronger. Learning a second language also helps, especially for international carriers.

3. Get your passport and clean up your record

Time: 2–8 weeks · Cost: \$165 for a first adult passport book

Most airlines require a passport that lets you travel freely in and out of the U.S. Apply early, since processing can take weeks. Check your driving record and social media, because airlines review your background in detail.

4. Apply directly to airlines

Time: 1–3 months

Watch airline career pages, since flight attendant postings often close within days. Apply to regional and major carriers at the same time. Tailor your resume to safety, teamwork and service.

5. Pass the video and in-person interviews

Time: 2–8 weeks

Most airlines start with an online assessment or recorded video interview, then invite you to an in-person interview day. Expect group exercises, a reach test and behavioral questions. Dress in polished business attire and arrive early.

6. Clear the conditional job offer checks

Time: 2–6 weeks

After a conditional offer, you complete a background check, a fingerprint-based security check covering 10 years of history and a drug test. Some airlines also run a medical screening. Answer every form honestly.

7. Complete airline training and earn FAA certification

Time: 3–8 weeks · Cost: Paid by the airline; some pay a training stipend

Airline initial training lasts several weeks to a few months. You learn evacuations, firefighting, first aid, ditching and aircraft-specific procedures. When you pass, the airline notifies the FAA and you receive your Certificate of Demonstrated Proficiency.

8. Start on reserve and build seniority

Time: First 1–3 years

New flight attendants usually work on reserve, on call for open trips. You may be based in a city you did not choose. Schedules, bases and routes improve as your seniority grows.

Costs & requirements

Estimated costs (USD)

Item	Low	High	Note
Passport (first adult book)	\$165	\$165	Expedited service costs extra
Airline initial training	\$0	\$0	Paid by the airline
Interview attire and grooming	\$100	\$500	
Travel to in-person interview	\$0	\$600	Many airlines provide a free or discounted flight
Living costs during training	\$0	\$1,500	Some airlines house trainees; others pay a stipend
Optional private flight attendant prep school	\$500	\$5,000	Not required by airlines or the FAA
Relocation to your assigned base	\$500	\$3,000	Many new hires share crash pads
Total	\$1,265	\$10,765	

Requirements

Age	Usually 18 to 21 minimum, depending on the airline. There is no upper age limit.
Education	High school diploma or GED. A college degree is not required but can help.
Passport	Valid passport and the legal right to work in the U.S.; many airlines require unrestricted travel in and out of the country.
Background and drug test	FAA-required 10-year background check, fingerprinting and pre-employment drug testing, plus random testing on the job.
Physical	Ability to reach overhead equipment, lift bags, stand for long hours and fit safely in jumpseats and aisles. Visible tattoo and appearance policies vary by airline.
FAA certification	Certificate of Demonstrated Proficiency, issued after you pass an airline's FAA-approved training program.
Flexibility	Willingness to relocate to any base and work nights, weekends and holidays.

90-Day Action Plan

Tick each box as you finish the task. Do the phases in order; it is fine if a phase takes a little longer.

Days 1–30

Weeks 1–4

Goal: Get eligible and build your application

- ☐ Check age, height and appearance rules at 5 target airlines
- ☐ Apply for or renew your passport
- ☐ Order your driving record and fix any errors
- ☐ Write a one-page resume focused on service, safety and teamwork
- ☐ Take an in-person CPR and first aid course
- ☐ Clean up your social media profiles
- ☐ Set job alerts on every target airline's careers page

Days 31–60

Weeks 5–8

Goal: Apply and master the video interview

- ☐ Apply to at least 3 regional and 3 major airlines as postings open
- ☐ Write STAR stories for 10 common behavioral questions
- ☐ Record yourself answering questions and review your tone and posture
- ☐ Practice a 60-second introduction
- ☐ Research each airline's values, bases and fleet
- ☐ Buy and tailor one polished interview outfit

Days 61–90

Weeks 9–13

Goal: Win the in-person interview and prepare for training

- ☐ Rehearse group exercises with a friend
- ☐ Prepare thoughtful questions to ask interviewers
- ☐ Gather documents for the background check and 10-year history
- ☐ Plan finances for training and the first months on reserve
- ☐ Research crash pads near likely bases
- ☐ Learn the phonetic alphabet and 24-hour time
- ☐ Send thank-you notes after every interview

Documents checklist

Gather these early. Keep originals in one folder and scans in the cloud.

- ☐ Valid U.S. passport
- ☐ Driver's license or state ID
- ☐ Social Security card
- ☐ High school diploma or GED (and college transcripts if any)
- ☐ 10-year employment history with supervisor contacts
- ☐ 10-year address history
- ☐ Professional references (3)
- ☐ CPR and first aid certificate
- ☐ Resume tailored to the airline
- ☐ Proof of language skills, if claimed

Exams & how to prepare

Airline initial training exams

What it is: Written and hands-on tests on emergency procedures, evacuation drills, first aid and aircraft equipment. You must pass to earn FAA certification.

How to prepare: Study the training manual every night and practice commands out loud; most airlines require high passing scores, often 90% or more.

Airline pre-employment assessment

What it is: Online personality or situational judgment questionnaire used to screen applicants.

How to prepare: Answer consistently and honestly; the test looks for safety focus, teamwork and calm service under pressure.

Interview questions

1. Why do you want to be a flight attendant?

Tip: Focus on safety and caring for people, not travel perks.

2. Tell me about a time you handled an angry customer.

Tip: Use STAR and show you stayed calm, listened and solved the problem.

3. Why do you want to work for our airline?

Tip: Mention specific values, routes or service style you researched.

4. Describe a time you worked on a team under pressure.

Tip: Highlight clear communication and your specific role.

5. What would you do if a passenger refused to follow a safety instruction?

Tip: Show firm, respectful communication and knowing when to involve the captain.

6. Tell me about a time you went above and beyond.

Tip: Choose a real example with a clear result for the customer.

7. How do you feel about relocating and working holidays?

Tip: Say yes clearly; hesitation is a common reason for rejection.

8. Describe a time you disagreed with a coworker.

Tip: Show respect and a resolution, never criticize the other person.

9. How do you stay calm in an emergency?

Tip: Give a real example and mention following procedures.

10. What does safety mean to you?

Tip: Explain that safety comes before service in every decision.

11. Tell me about a time you made a mistake at work.

Tip: Own it, describe the fix and what you changed.

12. How would you handle a medical emergency on board?

Tip: Talk about staying calm, alerting the crew and using your first aid training.

Resume bullet examples

Adapt these to what you actually did. Use numbers wherever you can.

- Resolved 40+ guest requests per shift at a 300-room hotel front desk, maintaining a 95% satisfaction score
- Trained 6 new team members on service standards and safety procedures
- Handled cash and payments accurately in a high-volume restaurant serving 500 guests daily
- Calmly de-escalated customer complaints, reducing manager escalations by 30%
- Hold current American Red Cross CPR, AED and first aid certification
- Assisted travelers in English and Spanish at an airport retail location
- Recognized as Employee of the Month three times for teamwork and reliability
- Maintained perfect attendance across 18 months of rotating weekend and holiday shifts

Common mistakes to avoid

1. Paying for an expensive private school that claims it can certify you
2. Talking about travel perks instead of safety in interviews
3. Applying to only one airline and waiting
4. Saying no or hesitating when asked about relocation
5. Leaving gaps or errors in the 10-year background history
6. Missing short application windows because you did not set alerts
7. Underestimating the cost of the first months on reserve

13-week progress tracker

Fill this in by hand each week.

Week	Focus	Done?	Notes
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			
11			
12			
13			

Resources, salary & disclaimer

Resources

- **BLS: Flight Attendants**

<https://www.bls.gov/ooh/transportation-and-material-moving/flight-attendants.htm>

- **Association of Flight Attendants-CWA**

<https://www.afacwa.org>

- **U.S. passport application**

<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/passports.html>

- **American Red Cross CPR and first aid classes**

<https://www.redcross.org/take-a-class>

- **FAA flight attendant certificate law (49 U.S.C. 44728)**

<https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/49/44728>

Salary

Bottom 10%	Median	Top 10%
Under \$35,110	\$63,580 per year	Over \$136,430

Outlook: Employment of flight attendants is projected to grow 9% from 2025 to 2035, much faster than average, with about 18,500 openings each year.

Source: BLS Occupational Outlook Handbook, May 2025 data —

<https://www.bls.gov/ooh/transportation-and-material-moving/flight-attendants.htm>

Disclaimer. Requirements vary by state and change over time. Verify with the official sources listed. This guide is not legal or career advice.