



If you hate stomping at the crowded airline gate like horses ready for the race, there's a way to pay so you can go aboard first. Southwest, the bargain airline with the no-reserve seats, has been doing it for several years. For \$10, you can be part of its Early Bird Check-in, go aboard first, get your choice of seats and be first to stash your carry-on in an overhead bin.

Now, some of the reserved-seating airlines are offering the same. American's Boarding and Flexibility Package permits passengers who buy their tickets online the same privilege. AA charges from \$9 to \$19 each way for early boarding. Other airlines have similar features. United's "Premier Line" early boarding service costs \$19, and Ryanair's current early boarding charge is \$5.

As with all airlines, the extra payment doesn't actually mean you'll be the very first aboard. Passengers with highest class tickets and the handicapped, as with all airlines, still continue to go on ahead of everyone else.