



*All that running, just to be bumped?*

Q: A couple of friends are really ticked off about being involuntarily bumped from a flight. Their taxi was caught in traffic and they got to the loading gate five minutes before the flight. The airline had already given their seats to stand-by passengers, but found them a later flight, and they missed connecting flights. They complained, but got no explanation nor offer to pay for their delays. What did they do wrong?

A: They may have done nothing wrong if they followed the rules. There are situations where being bumped involuntarily should have some cooperation from the airline. First, if you are bumped, immediately get a written statement from the check-in clerk and in many cases you should be eligible for recompensation. Ask to get on the next flight to your destination by that airline or on any other available one with similar flight schedules.

Don't be late for check-in or you may miss your seat. You must have a confirmed reservation and have checked-in before the required holding time of your seat expires. With most airlines, that's within 30 minutes of take-off. Although not their fault because of bad road traffic, that's where your friends went wrong.

Sometimes, if the flight isn't full or there is a delay at the check-in deadline, the agent will probably allow you to board. However, if you're late and miss the deadline and your seat is given to a stand-by passenger on an oversold flight, you have no rights of recompensation.

If the bumping wasn't your fault, and the airline puts you on another aircraft that gets you to your destination within two hours on domestic flights or four hours on international flights, you may qualify to be paid. You can get an amount equal to a one-way fare, with a maximum of \$200. If it takes longer, you may get a maximum of \$400.

Summary: If your friends met the required arrival time and complied in every way with airline rules, and were bumped involuntarily, they may try to seek compensation. Of course, a late taxi is not usually a good excuse. However, they may write or have their travel agent write to the airline and explain the situation clearly.