



Holiday season brings on the most bumping of the year. For those who haven't yet experienced the unhappy occasion, bumping is the term for when, despite the fact that you have a ticket, you're forbidden to board a flight. The situation usually involves overbooking by the airline, and all seats are occupied, although more tickets were sold than actual seats available.

It's a common airline practice, especially at holiday times, to avoid losing money. Airline beancounters know, on any flight, some passengers with tickets will miss the flight. They don't want to fly with empty seats, although a full aircraft could require one or more passengers to be bumped. There are two bump terms. One is voluntarily, when asked, and is called Voluntarily Denied Boarding. This happens when the flight is full and late-arriving ticket holders won't be permitted to board unless already-aboard passengers opt to give up their seats.

The incentive for this willing bumping is usually cash and/or free tickets for future flights. Additionally, airline counter personnel will attempt to get the volunteer on the next available flight. If the delay will be overnight until the next available flight, the airline may also pay for a nearby hotel room.

The other way to be bumped from your flight is Involuntarily Denied Boarding. This means the flight is overbooked and one or several already seated passengers may be chosen to be bumped. If it happens to you, there are several steps to take.

First, if you believe this flight is absolutely essential for you, as calmly as possible tell the attendant your reason. It could be for a medical condition, serious family situation, important business meeting or other need to stay on the flight. If still denied, get desk attendant's name and report the facts as soon as possible on the airline customer service phone or Email address.

Whether being bumped is voluntary or not, be sure you've forwarded the info immediately to anyone waiting for you at your destination airport. If family, business associates or others also expect you to arrive at a certain time, be sure to inform them of your change of schedules. When you've confirmed booking on a later flight, pass on that info ASAP.