

Air travel etiquette doesn't start after you board your flight. There are also some simple courtesy rules you should follow while waiting in the airport. The most annoying offender is the obnoxious character sitting next to you yakking at full voice on the cell phone just two inches away from your ear. These days, almost every traveler needs to use the handy cell phone, to keep up with the latest at home, office and schedules. However, for the sake of everyone around you in the airport waiting area, when using your cell phone, go find yourself to a quiet corner. Then you can yell, squawk and scream as loud as you want, as long as you're away from other people's ears.



Another annoying airport character is the slob who must occupy two or three seats with carry-on bags, plopped up feet and other unnecessary items when others must stand and wait. Be considerate, take up just one seat and put your feet and bags on the floor next to you. The worst offenders are those who flake out prone, taking up four or five seats during the busiest times.

We all know airport delays are more and more common in these days of inflated prices and deflated flight schedules. But if you must get some lay-down sleep in the terminal, instead of denying other tired travelers seats in the waiting area, have the courtesy to go stretch out on the floor against a wall in a quiet peaceful area.

GIs, students and other travelers who must do long and frequent airport waits should take backpacks containing blankets, eye shades and quick-blow-up little mattresses and/or pillows to get as much comfort as possible on hard floors and benches. And for your own peace and quiet and simple courtesy, try to do it without blocking foot traffic and otherwise bothering other travelers.

For extending common consideration and etiquette once you've gone aboard your flight, the same general rules apply. Look to your own comfort, but also be aware of the rights of others. I fly frequently and always get the feeling that somehow Murphy's Tobacco Law will strike me as I await take off.

The obvious smoker plops down next to me, and is not only literally dying from lung-destroying

addiction, but also suffering greatly by being denied his poison during the flight. Clothing, hair and body still smell ... make that stink ... strongly of old burnt tobacco. Unable to light up, your seatmate becomes a nervous, fidgeting wreck with a never-ending, irritating cough.

Of course, there are the kids. I raised my own and love kids with all my heart. But not screaming, misbehaving, incontinent and/or barfing little ones on the airplane seat next to me. I know it's both cruel and useless to yell at the harried mother to solve the problem immediately. But there are ways of toning down the disruptions by kids, and to avoid it totally.

When my kids were very little, we tried to schedule red-eye (late night) flights, and with proper preparation, and after a busy day, we were usually successful in lulling them to sleep throughout the trip. We did that more for the sake of the comfort of our kids and ourselves than out of courtesy for other passengers. Whatever the reason, the results were happy people all around.

Etiquette is a fancy way of describing the practice of simple consideration for others in airports and on flights. Or even more basic, it's the application of the Golden Rule on the ground, as well as at 30,000 feet in the air.