



Recent reports are that one out of 100 checked bags is returned to its owner with at least one valuable article missing. If that happens to you on a flight, most likely suspects are baggage handlers and airport security staff.

Airport security opens bags, but usually in front of you, and are closely monitored by video. Additionally, security people are concerned with carry-on materials, not usually involved in checked luggage.

Baggage handlers are not authorized to open checked bags, but are not always in camera view. In both cases of airport workers, at least 99.9% do their jobs honestly. However, when news of thefts are revealed, it reflects on all of them.

If you believe anything has been stolen from your checked luggage, here are steps you can take to report it:

1. When packing, make a list of everything you'll check, including serial numbers of electronic gear and sales records of jewelry and other valuable items. A good idea is to be able to show copies of purchase receipts.

2. If, after you reach your destination, and believe something was stolen from your checked bag, make sure first you didn't forget to pack it. Before you report it, contact someone at home to verify what's missing.

3. When you're certain something is missing, report it immediately to airline authorities. Do it at the airport, or if you've already arrived at your destination, email your info to the website or call the airline's passenger support number.

4. In addition to reporting a missing item from your checked bag to the airline, you should report it also to the Transportation Security Agency. Do that if you find an official note inside your bag that indicates your bag was opened and inspected at any time by a TSA representative.

5. Act quickly, because there's always a time limit for reporting stolen items from your checked bag. In most cases, it must be within 48 hours of arriving at the flight's destination.

5. There's also a what-if factor involved in checking bags that contain valuable materials. Not only does checking add from \$50 to \$100 extra cost per flight by many airlines. There's also the wait and crowding at the baggage carousels after the flight, as well as the possibility that your bags are on wrong flights or lost.

6. Do you really need to check the most valuable stuff? Consider avoiding the problems by keeping them with you when you fly, either within carry-on baggage, large purse, knapsack or in zippered coat pockets.