

As more airlines ditch Twitter, here's how to quickly reach an airline customer service agent

(Courtesy of Caroline Tanner, The Points Guy)

EDITOR'S NOTE

This post is continually updated with new information.

With summer just around the corner, the [domestic travel industry is closer than ever to reaching pre-pandemic volume](#). High demand and still somewhat stretched systems mean that flyers should come to terms with the fact that there might be some headaches along the way.

While some airlines are still ironing out [operational issues](#) due to outdated technology, carriers across the board are struggling to match pent-up demand for travel.

With that in mind, you should be equipped with the best practices for [reaching airline customer service](#) if something goes awry on your journey.

Though you may have reverted to Twitter direct messages to reach airlines in the past, some airlines, including [Air France](#) and [KLM](#), have [recently decided to eliminate customer service assistance](#) via the social media platform, instead directing customers to other avenues.

Although you can still reach out to some airlines via Twitter, this may be the time to brush up on how to quickly get through to an airline customer service agent to get your derailed trip back on track.

Spoiler alert — one of the most effective techniques is still knowing how to bypass the labyrinth of automated phone menus and reach an actual human to resolve your issue.

General tips for reaching airline customer service

While each system is a bit different, here are some general tips to get help from the airline faster.

Automated phone systems are more prevalent than ever

When you are asked to select a number for a given option based on the specific request you're calling about, trying to skip these automated menus by saying "agent" (or any other response) can make your call longer.

Instead, slowly and clearly say a general sentence about why you're calling so you can be placed in the proper queue.

When in doubt, say 'existing reservation'

If you tell the automated system that you already have a reservation, you'll sometimes end up at a customer service representative faster than had you called to make a new reservation.

Politeness and kindness go a long way

Although you're likely frustrated if you're attempting to reach customer service, remember that the phone agent with whom you're speaking likely was not responsible for delaying your flight or the hold time to get through. Imagine yourself on the other side of the phone fielding dozens of calls like yours when a big delay is ravaging the calculated plans of hundreds of irate travelers.

Most of the people calling airline customer service aren't singing the praises of the airline. However, maintaining a level head and being respectful can make a difference in getting your situation resolved.

Try to avoid calling on the go

You don't want to be approaching the end of a complicated story only to either lose the call or have a phone agent miss the majority of what you're saying. When possible, make sure your connection is solid and your phone battery is charged before calling customer service.

Enter your frequent flyer number, if prompted

Being a member of an airline's loyalty program can only help to reach an agent faster. This doesn't apply across the board, but entering (or speaking) your number certainly doesn't hurt if given the chance. Sometimes, those with higher tier status even have a separate phone line to use, so look on your membership card if you have one.

Try calling the local phone number

If you're trying to get in touch with an international airline, consider calling its home phone line.

For example, try calling the French line for Air France or the German line for Lufthansa. Oftentimes, these call centers have an English option and may get you in touch faster than using a U.S. phone number, which may have fewer staff members.

Also, a pro tip — call these numbers via Skype to avoid international phone charges if that's an issue.

How to contact airline customer service

Next, let's review each major U.S. carrier and how to reach a phone agent the quickest. Bookmark this page, as it's an easy one-stop shop for customer service numbers.

American Airlines

Best approach: Live chat with AA online or via mobile app.

Alternate approach/phone number: 1-800-882-8880.

If you've called the system before, AA will recognize your number and ask you directly what your call is about. If not, say your AAdvantage number slowly and clearly to start the call.

After being greeted by name, say "reservation," then "existing reservation," and then "travel changes." You'll be prompted for a confirmation number. If you don't have one, say, "I don't have it." You're then asked if all flights are in the U.S. After this, you're in the queue to be transferred to an agent.

American is great about giving you an idea of how long your hold time is when it asks if you'd prefer to be called back. If it's still going to be a long hold, enter your phone number, and an agent will return your call, usually right in the estimated window.

Alternatively, you can live chat with AA on either the mobile app or the website. If you're on the computer, head to the [contact page](#) and find the chat icon in the bottom right corner of the page.

This app also has an automated system, but we've found that if you type "delayed or canceled flights," it will spit out a generic answer. If you then select "My question has not been answered," it will put you in the queue for a live agent.

I recently tested the wait times for the chat feature and a phone call to inquire about a flight that AA recently changed without explanation, and here's what I got:



May 10 at 2:56 PM

To help improve our service, this chat may be monitored or recorded by American and our third-party providers in accordance with our privacy policy.

[Privacy policy](#)

Hi, I'm the American Airlines chatbot. I can answer the majority of your questions instantly and help you avoid long wait times. How can I help you today?

Hi-can you help me with a recent flight change?

Please select one of the options below

I've been rebooked

AA.COM

- **AA chat:** 11 minutes, 57 seconds.
- **Phone:** Rather than wait on hold, I opted for the callback option, which said I would receive a call within 27-37 minutes. They called me back in 28 minutes.

The one caution to using the app is that the agents can't take payment information. Depending on what you need, the phone may be your only option.

Alaska Airlines

Best approach: Text "ALASKA" to 82008 or online chat.

Alternate approach/phone number: 1-800-654-5669.

When you call, an automated bot will answer the phone. Say, "Change my reservation." You'll then be asked for your confirmation number. You can say, "I don't have it," and you'll be put in line to talk to an agent.

Other options are to text "ALASKA" to 82008, and an agent can help you over messaging or chat Alaska via its [contact page](#). When chatting online, you'll have to enter your name and Alaska Airlines number. You'll immediately be put in the queue for an agent.

I tested all three options for their current wait times:



Chat



Alaska Air

End

Caroline Tanner 03:32 pm

change my reservation

Natalie 03:33 pm

Hello, this is Natalie in Boise reservations. May I have your full name and confirmation code please?

Type here...

Send

Provided by **Five9**

ALASKAAIR.COM

- **By phone:** One minute and 20 seconds.
- **By text:** One minute.
- **By online chat:** One minute.

For me, the phone option was the slowest in this test, but just by seconds, so in this case, all offered very prompt help.

Delta Air Lines

Best approach: Live chat via the mobile app.

Alternate approach/phone number: 1-800-323-2323.

When calling, say "existing reservation." If you've called the number before, it will automatically recognize your account. If not, key in your SkyMiles number. By not selecting any of the automated prompts, you'll be put in line to speak to an agent. You'll be given the option to receive a callback instead of waiting on hold.

Alternately, if you head to the Delta app, scroll to the "contact us" option under "more" on the bottom right corner of the app screen. You have the ability to message Delta for quick text communication.

Here's another quick wait time comparison:



Hi there-are you available to help with a reservation?

I can assist you with your question

If you are a SkyMiles member, you can sign in for a secure and personalized experience

Would you like to log in?

- A) Yes, log in
- B) No, continue as guest

B

Delivered

Okay, no problem

Happy to help! Could you clarify what you'd like to know about flights?

- A) Book a flight
- B) Flight change
- C) Check flight status
- D) View my itinerary



Message Delta Air Lines



DELTA AIR LINES

- **Text conversation:** Less than a minute.
- **Phone:** Five and a half minutes.

Both interactions were relatively short, but I would personally recommend the app. TPG editor Clint Henderson was connected to a live agent within three and a half minutes when calling in by phone, but wait times can vary widely.

JetBlue

Best approach/phone number: 1-800-538-2583.

Alternate option: Online chat.

On the phone, select option two for reservations and hit two again to signal an existing reservation. You'll automatically be put in a queue and given an estimated wait time.

You can also chat on a mobile device or your desktop browser. Head to the [JetBlue "Contact Us"](#) page and scroll to where you see "Chat with us." From there, I selected "Booking questions" and "Fare Types" and then clicked "I still need help." The app quoted me an estimated 10-15 minute wait time.

At the time of this story, the JetBlue phone line greeted me with a message suggesting travelers with time to spare should consider calling back due to "site maintenance." For the sake of this story, I ignored that message and was quoted a seven-minute wait time for a customer service agent.

Here are the current wait times compared:



jetBlue



Estimated wait time

5-10 min wait

Leave

No

For faster personalized assistance in the future, enroll in our free TrueBlue program (you won't lose your place in line).

Join TrueBlue for award travel
and other perks

Hello! We estimate a 15 minute wait to chat with a Customer Support Crewmember. Are you able to wait? (REPLY YES or NO)

Yes

Thank you, we will be with you as soon as possible.

Type here



JETBLUE.COM

- **By chat:** Nine minutes.
- **By phone:** One minute and 32 seconds.

In this case, I'd probably opt for the phone, though the results may vary when it comes time for you to call in.

Southwest Airlines

Best approach/phone number: 1-800-435-9792.

Alternate option: Live chat via the Southwest app.

Call the reservations number listed above, and then select option two, followed by option one or two for domestic and Puerto Rico or international travel. You'll be transferred to an agent or given an estimated hold time.

Alternatively, you chat via the Southwest app. However, know that the automated chat aggressively keeps you away from a live agent.

For the sake of this story, TPG credit cards editor Senitra Horbrook tried requesting help via the app for an upcoming flight in her account.



A bot with Heart



Thanks! Do you want to check out some self-service articles while I get ready to connect you with an Agent?

Yes

No



A bot with Heart · 11:22 AM

No

Can you describe what you need assistance with today?



A bot with Heart · 11:22 AM

Help

If applicable, please enter your confirmation number. (A Southwest Airlines confirmation number is 6 characters consisting of a combination of letters and numbers.)



A bot with Heart · 11:22 AM

Help

Great! I'll get you over to an Agent now!

An Agent is headed your way now

Unfortunately, there are no agents available at the moment. You can always call us at [855-234-5234](tel:855-234-5234).



A bot with Heart · 11:23 AM

SOUTHWEST

"Basically, I just typed 'Help' to the bot prompts until it said I could be connected to an agent," she said, before being immediately greeted with "A bot with Heart." A few minutes later, the app told her "there are no agents available at the moment," instead directing her to call for more help.

In my experience, calling Southwest yielded a live person within one minute and 49 seconds. Given this and that the app seemingly does not connect you to help, skip the app for now and just call from the beginning.

Spirit

Best approach/phone number:-1-855-728-3555.

Alternate option: Online chat.

When calling Spirit, select option two for changes to an existing reservation. You can then select option two and then option one to be put in the queue for a customer service agent. Unfortunately, Spirit does not estimate a wait time over the phone. Even so, I only waited five and a half minutes before being connected to an agent on my test call.

You can also chat with Spirit on WhatsApp and via the [Spirit Airlines contact page](#). I've found the fastest way to navigate the contact page is the following:



We're here to help if you have any questions!

Change or Cancel Flight



Which do you need help with?

Change My Flight



All bookings are subject to cancellation and modification charges. This includes bookings that are purchased with a reservation credit. For more information on these charges, simply click the Spirit logo below.

Would you like to change your flight?

Yes, change it.



Go to spirit.com/#mytrips , enter

SPIRIT.COM

- Select "Change or Cancel My Flight."
- The bot will prompt you to modify your flight online before asking if that answered your question.
- Select "Not yet!"
- Select "Speak to a Representative."
- Select "Additional request."
- Enter your first and last name, along with your email address.
- When asked for your confirmation code, select "skip."
- You'll then be quoted a wait time.

This online process yielded an estimated 10-minute wait time, but I ended up waiting on hold for 30 minutes before ending the chat.

United

Best approach/phone number: 1-800-421-4655.

Alternate option: Online chat.

If you've called United before, the system should recognize you. All you need to do is say "reservations" to be automatically put in line to speak to a human.

The wait time for a phone agent was six minutes in this case after being quoted a two-minute hold time. You can also chat with [United via the customer support](#) page by logging in to your United MileagePlus account, scrolling to the bottom and clicking on "Chat now."

Not finding what you're looking for? Let's talk!



Chat with us
Agents available

[Chat now >](#)



Call us
Talk with an agent

[View directory](#)

UNITED.COM

When I attempted to "Chat now," the app would not work for me. However, when TPG's Summer Hull (who has United 1K status) tried it out, she was connected to an agent within 2 minutes after just a few prompts for an agent from a list of options.

But in my case, I had no choice but to accept the six-minute phone call hold.

Advanced options to reach airline assistance

Download the DoNotPay app

This app is helpful in a variety of ways far beyond travel, but it does have a "[jump the phone queue and never wait on hold again](#)" feature where the app will direct your request to the right airline and forward the call to you after waiting on hold.

Head to the "Customer Service" section of the app, where it will ask you which company you are having a problem with, and you respond with the airline you want to call.

The app will then ask for a brief description of what you want to talk about and ask if you want the app to have the airline call you instead of you waiting on hold. DoNotPay has built a database of priority and VIP customer service numbers for tons of companies.

For legality, if you opt into recording the exchanges, the app automatically plays a message informing both parties they'll be recorded. A human voice detection system hears when a real agent picks up the phone and then rings your phone.

Try a foreign call center

As previously mentioned, dialing a [foreign call center](#) is another strategy for reaching agents in a more reasonable amount of time. This requires an app such as Skype, Talkatone, Viber or Google Voice to make the calls affordable.

Common call center numbers that advanced travelers use to get help include Singapore (+65 6823 2095) and Hong Kong (+852 3002 1208) for British Airways, the Japan call center (+81 3 3298 4719) for Etihad Airways, the Australia call center (+61 02 9101 1948) for American Airlines, and the Japan call center (+81 0570 077733) for Delta.

Just remember to add or take away the necessary zeros before the phone number if you're calling from the U.S.

Use the Spanish line

You can also try the foreign language-speaking agents for U.S. airlines, especially if you speak multiple languages. But if you are in a pinch, know these agents will also generally speak English. While we don't recommend this as a first step, if all else fails and you have the option to push two for Spanish, go ahead and try that way to get quick help when the English line is hopelessly backed up.

Bottom line

[Elite status members of an airline's frequent flyer program](#) usually have access to different phone numbers and can enjoy shorter wait times and potentially better service. But not everyone has elite status — but during peak times, even elite members may be faced with a lengthy queue.

But whether you have airline elite status or not, there is usually more than one way to get help from an airline customer service agent, so it pays to know of a Plan B or even C if you need help in a hurry and can't otherwise get through.