

Flying Question Checklist for the Non-Pilot Passenger

Non-pilot passengers have a right to ask any of the questions provided below before boarding an airplane or helicopter, large or small, jet or single-engine Cessna, regardless of the situation. With few exceptions, pilots love sharing their passion for aviation with strangers and friends. Not meant to be exhaustive, this is just a shortlist of conversation starters.

1. Have you been flying for a long time? Do you have an instrument rating?
2. Where did you learn how to fly? How often do you fly? Do you fly in the clouds or at night often?
3. How do pilot medical exams work? How often do you get one? How do you feel today?
4. Do you fly this airplane often? Who owns/maintains it? Is it hard to fly? Is anything broken?
5. Can you land at any airport? How did you choose the one(s) we're landing at today?
6. How much fuel does it take to get where we're going? How much fuel do we have on board?
7. What's the weather like here and on the way? Will it be bumpy? What is the weather at our destination? Will we go through the clouds? Should I "be on the lookout" for anything?
8. Do you think we might get any ice on our trip? If we get ice on the plane what will you do?
9. How much weight can we take on board today? What happens if we are overweight?
10. Are we going over water or wilderness? Do you have life vests or other safety gear?
11. What if you pass out or I get uncomfortable? What will we do? How can I get help? Show me.
12. How do the seatbelts and doors work? How can I adjust my seat? Can move around in flight?

Once airborne, you have a right to ask any questions you'd like answered, but understand that during takeoff and landing and in busy airspace the pilot(s) will need to focus their attention on flying, monitoring the systems, and talking on the radios. As a passenger, you can be helpful by looking out for other airplanes, helping other passengers if they experience discomfort, and keeping children and pets under control. If want to be able to help in a pinch, ask about taking a couple of hours of instruction.

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