

# PC tips for your PC

## 10 tips to make your computer a better travel companion

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It's your notebook, workmate, business consultant, mobile office, movie theater and — more often than not — your solitary buddy. The variety of traveling PCs is mind-boggling: from widescreen to compact to tablet to palm-size. Whichever the variety, your PC is often a hassle when you fly. You search for power to feed it, you tote around endless accessories, you juggle it at security, and you look for places to stash it on board.

Come to think of it, it's a lot like a baby — but that's another story.

As a flight attendant, I've seen my share of PC woes. Here are 10 tips to make your computer a better travel companion.

**1. Power up.** If you think you'll be able to juice up between flights, think again. Outlets for passenger use are disappearing as fast as airport energy bills are rising, and when you do find an outlet, it usually has someone hooked up to it already. So bring an extra battery — it's worth the weight.

**2. Choose your seat wisely.** On the airplane, get a seat by the window so you are not bothered by passengers with weak bladders. If possible, get a seat in an exit row, at the front of the economy section, or on the bulkhead aisle; these rows typically have more space — or have no seats in front of them — so you can extend your screen without interference.

**3. Protect against snoopers.** If you have WiFi access on your computer, secure it. When I turn on my computer in flight, I often find I can access most of the laptops on board. So, if you don't want me — or any other nosy person — looking into your files, learn how to secure your connection.

**4. Cover your ears.** If you (or your child) want to play a game or watch a movie, be considerate and wear earplugs. If someone in a neighboring row is not using earplugs, and the audio annoys you, call the flight attendant. Common courtesy will work its way out.

**5. Close it up.** When flight attendants pass with the drink cart, close your screen until they have served everyone in your row. Accidents and turbulence can cause spillage onto your keyboard, ruining your flight and possibly your PC.

**6. Get your Net for free.** Many airports offer free wireless Internet access these days, but not all of them. If you have WiFi capability on your laptop, go to [freewifispot](#) to find out where you can access the Internet for free.

**7. Extend it.** Check with your airline to see if your flight has an in-seat power supply. If it does, then spend 10 or 12 bucks on a universal flight adapter cable. Different computers have different power cords, so check the specifications carefully; some models come with different plugs so they can adapt to most any laptop — as well to cell phones, PDAs and DVD players.

**8. Eyes front!** Why is it that when your computer is open, everyone feels it's OK to look at your business? I have to admit I am guilty of this impropriety myself from time to time. If you really must keep your work to yourself, invest in a privacy filter to keep prying eyes off. 3M and other manufacturers make several models.

**9. Be considerate of others.** Porn and flying don't mix. I had to stop four passengers last year from playing X-rated DVDs. Why anyone would want to be turned on during a flight is beyond me. Different strokes for different folks — just not on the airplane!

**10. Back it up.** Technically, you are not allowed to put your laptop in the seat pocket in front of you for takeoff or landing, but did you know it's OK to put it behind your back against the seat? This is actually a good idea: The computer poses no danger to anyone and there is no way you'll leave it behind accidentally.

Laptops are an ingrained way of life for most of us now, and as technology expands, so too will the services and places that support it. For instance, in the works are power stations at airports where you can quick-charge a dying battery, and you will soon find free WiFi spots in most airports, as well as DVD-rental stands in many terminals.

Technology is fascinating as well as frustrating, and the airline that keeps up with the current technology demand is sure to be the winner.

James Wysong has worked as a flight attendant with two major international carriers during the past fifteen years. He is the author of the "The Plane Truth: Shift Happens at 35,000 Feet" and "The Air Traveler's Survival Guide." For more information about James or his books, please [visit his Web site](#) or [e-mail him](#). Visit [Tripsos forums!](#)