The 15 Things TSA Wishes Travelers Would Stop Doing Immediately

Having to unpack your bag in front of an impatient line of eager travelers brings new meaning to the term “airing your dirty laundry.” Fortunately, it’s generally avoidable if you follow some simple rules.

Still, TSA checkpoints can feel like a big ball of stress knotted up in your gut, but it doesn’t have to be that way. TSA agents want the process to be easy and painless. So, what are some of the big no-nos that we travelers miss?

For this one, we’ve gone straight to the source and compiled insights from the agency itself. After scouring the data, we’ve pieced together the ultimate guide of what to avoid doing during the TSA screening process.

1. Wearing Too Much Jewelry or Metal Accessories

Wearing too much jewelry or metal accessories is a surefire way to set off the metal detectors and catch eye rolls from the line behind you. It also causes unnecessary extra work for TSA agents, who are less than impressed with your bling.

On travel days, simplify your accessories. Get comfy, dress down, and leave the bedazzling to your destination. Tuck those must-have pieces safely in your carry-on bags. It makes the experience more pleasant for yourself, fellow travelers, and the hardworking TSA agents.

2. Leaving Electronics in Your Bag

Leaving electronics in your bag might seem like a minor oversight, but it's a major hiccup in the TSA's security process. It's not just a matter of simply pulling them out. So, while TSA might love watching *Seinfeld* reruns, they typically don’t want to rerun all your belongings through the scanner.

Adopting a proactive approach means you’re part of the solution, not the problem. Before reaching the conveyor belt, have your laptop and other electronic devices neatly arranged in

the provided bins. A little preparation goes a long way in ensuring everyone gets to their gate on time.

3. Having a Cluttered Carry-On

Maintaining the tidiness of your car is your business. We generally don't care how much junk is in the trunk. But the same rules don't apply to your carry-on luggage. How you pack your carry-on bag can quickly become a problem. The more jumbled the contents, the more likely you'll have to undergo slow manual checks—leaving the folks in line to wish they had just driven to Disneyland instead.

So pack with a purpose. Organize your carry-on bags so electronics and liquids are easily accessible. You'll expedite your own screening and make a few TSA agents glad they didn't pursue a career in auto detailing.

4. Forgetting To Remove Liquids

Forgetting to remove liquids from your carry-on means you'll likely be performing the unpacking and repacking dance at the security line. We're sure you can bust a move, but it's still disruptive to the security flow and annoys TSA agents tasked with enforcing the liquid rule.

The solution is simple. Pack your liquids according to TSA guidelines, making sure they're all under 3.4 ounces and easily accessible. This will make the agents' jobs easier and keep the line moving smoothly, ensuring everyone gets to their destinations with minimal delay.

5. Letting Children Run Rampant

If you're a parent, you know a measly trip to the supermarket can turn apocalyptic on a dime. So, preparing for the worst and hoping for the best is smart when getting through airport security with your little "angels." Kids darting around in anarchy can divert agents' attention from their critical duties.

Talk to your children about expectations during security. It's our duty as parents to engage our children in the process and keep them under control. Easier said than done, but that's part of the parenting gig. It ultimately helps TSA agents maintain order and provide a smoother travel experience for all.

6. Not Declaring Large Sums of Money

Even if you are the Mononoply man, carrying large sums of cash through airport security can be considered suspicious. But if, for some reason, your credit cards are on the fritz, declare what you have on your person to avoid suspicion and potential delays.

We're not just saying this to blow hot air; it's a federal regulation. When you fly into or out of the U.S., you must inform the authorities and have more than $10,000 in cash or similar items. This applies to all types of money, whether domestic or international.

7. Bringing Food That Triggers the X-Ray Machine

This one is for all you chocoholics out there who overstuff your carry-on bags with Hershey Kisses and Rolos. Certain food packaging, especially those with foil wrappings, can trigger alarms. So, get your chocolate fix in the car on the way to the airport, or buy your chocolate to stash away after getting through security.

We cheese fanatics aren't safe either, so we need to think twice about bringing back that primo parmesan from Italy. Surprisingly enough, large blocks of cheese in luggage can appear like explosives in X-ray screenings.

8. Not Being Ready With Your ID and Boarding Pass

Nobody wants to wait around while you fumble to find your boarding pass or identification, and don't even try the sob story of how you can't find it. You'd have better luck getting into that trendy NYC nightclub without an ID.

To avoid delays or causing a ruckus, have your ID and boarding passes readily accessible before approaching the TSA agent. It's a simple measure that reduces wait times and contributes to a stress-free security screening experience for everyone involved.

9. Ignoring Instructions

Whether or not you follow the instructions when putting together your IKEA bedframe is up to you, but adhering to TSA agents' instructions is non-negotiable. Depending on the degree of ignorance, both could potentially land you in similar positions on the floor.

However, whether or not you end up on the floor during security checks, screening interference fines run between $5,830 - $11,300. Agents are trained to guide you safely through the screening process. Do yourself and everyone a favor—remove your shoes, empty your pockets, or comply with whatever else TSA deems necessary to ensure safe travel.

10. Talking on Your Phone

We, the people, generally don't care to hear random phone conversations no matter where we are, whether Billy's blocking the eggs at the grocery store or chattering away in the airport security line. Even if we did find the conversation intriguing, we certainly don't want to hear the one-sided version. TSA agents don't care for your conversations, either.

If you're on the phone when passing through security, it's much more difficult for agents to guide you through the screening process. You'll miss important instructions and hold up the line. Please—save calls for the lounge. Better yet, send a text.

11. Attempting To Bring Prohibited Items

It's hard to believe what some folks try to travel with, but fortunately for us, the TSA shared some of the top prohibited items they've uncovered during security checks. All you ninjas out there should rely on other skills and keep your ninja-throwing stars tucked away in your sock drawer at home. Keeping any realistic replica rocket-propelled grenades out of your luggage is also advisable.

Use some common sense, but also familiarize yourself with the specific regulations of airlines and the Transportation Security Administration regarding carry-on items. Attempting to bring prohibited items into the cabin can lead to avoidable hold-ups and complications during the security screening process.

12. Wearing Complicated Footwear

It's a travel day, folks, not the latest sultry foot-focused scene from Tarantino's latest flick. Let's keep the fancy footwear for the dinner party at your destination. Shoes with a million snaps, straps, buckles, or buttons can ride in your checked luggage.

Try Velcro straps or slip-on loafers that can easily be put on and taken off without much effort. We understand that you take pride in your foot hygiene, but TSA agents generally

don't stop to admire your fashion sense—they just want to keep the line moving and maintain the safety of passengers in the process. We thank you for your cooperation.

13. Making Inappropriate Jokes

Getting through airport security is not the best time to work out your stand-up routine. Know your audience and avoid bombing—pun intended. Seriously, though, don't make jokes about bombs, weapons, or terrorism. TSA agents rightfully take such comments seriously, which could lead to delays, further screening, or a private tour down a dimly lit back hallway.

Instead, keep your interaction with TSA polite and cordial. If you have to make small talk, it's a good time to mention how the weather impacts your life. Otherwise, follow instructions and keep the line moving.

14. Petting Members of the TSA K9 Unit

We get it—dogs are our best friends. They always greet us with a smile and hardly ever argue about what's for dinner. However, trained TSA canines are not your lay-around-the-house chasing squirrels type of dog. They're highly-trained bomb detectors working to keep us safe.

Interacting with these animals can distract them from their duties. So do yourself and everyone else a favor—admire them from a distance and avoid any interaction unless explicitly permitted by the handler.

15. Asking TSA Agents to Change Gloves

Requesting your TSA agent change gloves seems logical, especially considering the risks associated with cross-contamination. Nobody wants those little germy hitchhikers joining their travel party. However, it's standard procedure for TSA agents to change gloves frequently, and doing so upon every special request would significantly slow down the screening process.

The screening process's primary goal is to ensure all travelers' security and well-being. TSA Cares offers assistance and information for travelers with specific needs or concerns. You can contact TSA Cares 72 hours before traveling to inquire about screening policies, procedures, and what to expect at the security checkpoint.