

NOTICE TO MUSICIANS TRAVELING ON AIRLINES

The following are the Transportation Security Administration's (TSA) revised policy and procedures regarding the screening and carriage of musical instruments through security screening checkpoints at our nation's airports and transport of musical instruments aboard aircraft (reprinted from www.tsa.gov)

Transporting Musical Instruments

- You may bring musical instruments as carry-on or as checked baggage. To help passengers who are traveling with instruments, we partnered with musical organizations around the country to understand the challenges of transporting musical instruments, and we recommend the following.
 - Check with your airline prior to your flight to ensure your instrument meets the size requirements for their aircraft.
 - Pack brass instruments in your checked baggage.
 - Bring your stringed instruments, within carrier size limitations, as carry-on items.
 - If you have an instrument in your checked baggage, include short written instructions, where a security officer will notice them, for handling and repacking your instrument. Make sure these instructions are very clear and understandable to someone with no musical background.
- Carrying Instruments Through Screening Checkpoints
 - You may carry one (1) musical instrument in addition to 1 carry-on and 1 personal item through the screening checkpoint. This is a TSA Screening Policy. Airlines may or may not allow the additional carry-on item on their aircraft. Please check with your airline before you arrive at the airport.
 - Security officers must x-ray or physically screen your instrument before it can be transported on an aircraft.
 - Security officers will handle musical instruments very carefully and will allow you to be as involved as possible in any physical screening.
 - If security officers cannot clear the instrument through the security checkpoint as a carry-on item, you should transport the instrument and checked baggage instead.
- Instruments as Checked Baggage
 - You may bring musical instruments as checked baggage as long as they fit within the size and weight limitations of the airline you are taking.
 - We encourage you to stay with your instrument while security officers screen it to make sure it is repacked properly.
 - Owners should be present when an instrument is removed from its case for screening. For this reason, musicians are advised to add at least 30 minutes to the airline's recommended arrival window when checking their instrument.

The following is an article written by Charlie Maguire in 2008:

“Taking Off” With Your Instrument

No, I'm not talking about the benefits of practicing!

Travel with your instrument when you fly, has always been fraught with disaster, but there was one bright spot in 2007, when Delta Airlines, responding to the boycott by the AFM; rescinded their policy prohibiting musical instruments as carry-on baggage. Delta will now allow you to carry-on your instrument, something they never would have allowed just a year earlier.

That happened to me. I only had my guitar in a soft “gig bag” that was too light to be checked as baggage; forcing me to borrow a guitar for my concert appearance when I flew to Atlanta on a Delta flight in 2006.

I learned the hard way that it's always good to check in with your airline and the “powers that be” just in case there is a policy change, by either the airline or the Transportation Safety Administration (TSA).

Download a pdf version of this page, print it and put it in your instrument case for quick reference if you encounter an unenlightened TSA officer as you go through the security checkpoint ([click here to download](#)). I especially encourage you to include some “short written instructions...understandable to someone with no musical background” regarding how to unpack and repack your instrument for travel. Further, if you decide not to carry on, or are forced to check your instrument as baggage, you have the right to “be present when an instrument is removed from its case for screening”, in order to protect your instrument from mishandling.

Above all, don't lock your case or TSA may break the locks to get a look inside. Instead, use heavy duct tape over the latches to keep them closed, whether you carry on or check.

*Happy landings in 2008!
Charlie Maguire*