

# MIDDLE SEAT



## “SURVIVAL” GUIDE

*Insider advice on how to make the most of your next middle seat “experience.”*

*We've all been stuck in the middle seat on a full flight at one time or another. Does the simple thought of sitting between two strangers get you feeling cramped and claustrophobic?*

*Fear not—you can survive the middle seat, and even become a better seatmate with this advice from business travel expert Chris McGinnis and etiquette expert Anna Post.*

## RESPECTING YOUR NEIGHBORS

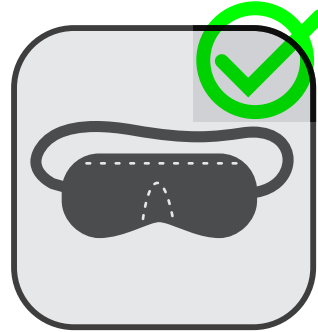
- Sitting in the middle seat is all about marking your territory—starting with the armrests. Are they both yours? Debatable. Can you stage a takeover, inching the other guy off the armrest a millimeter at a time? Not recommended. Business travel expert Chris McGinnis believes **the bright side to sitting in the middle seat is that both arm rests are yours.** While etiquette expert Anna Post doesn't think the middle seat passenger should automatically hog both armrests, she agrees that you can certainly claim one of them off the bat, and if the other is still open after everyone is seated, move right in on that one, too.



- No one likes waking a stranger on a flight, but when you gotta go—you gotta go! If you need to use the lavatory when sitting in the middle seat, Anna advises that as long as you don't roughly shake your neighbor or worse, just start climbing over them, **your neighbor shouldn't be insulted by a gentle tap or a polite "excuse me."** However, if you get up every twenty minutes, don't be surprised if your seatmate starts to give you dirty looks.

## TRAVEL “TOOLS” TO LIVE BY

- Trying to catch a few Zzzz’s while flying isn’t always easy, especially when you have a bright light shining in your eyes from a neighbor’s laptop, reading light or window. Anna recommends **packing an eye mask to black out your surroundings** and trying to pretend you are sleeping alone in a comfy bed—just don’t get too comfortable and start snoring.



- With more and more airlines offering in-flight Wi-Fi and most TV shows available online, flying has become a great time to catch up on all your favorite shows. However, being seated in the middle seat opens up your computer to not one, but two sets of prying eyes. C’mon, do you really want the 16 year old next to



you knowing you have the same taste in TV dramas as he or she does? Chris suggests using a **3M Privacy Filter, a thin plastic film that darkens side views so seatmates can’t snoop on what you are watching.**

- Stuck sitting next to someone who thinks they are at a rock concert as they blare their favorite jam from their headphones? As a frequent traveler, Chris recommends **investing in noise cancelling headphones** that can drown out both the rocker sitting next to you and the noise of the plane itself. But don’t forget to be mindful of how loud the volume is on your music or movie. Anna notes that if you see your seatmate tapping their feet to the beat of your music or laughing along with the movie you are enjoying, chances are your volume is too loud!



- Let’s face it—during the busy travel season chances are good that you are going to get stuck in the middle seat on at least one full capacity flight with little to no room. To make the flight more enjoyable, Chris recommends **checking to see which airlines and flights offer seatback TV systems.** The TV will give you something to focus on other than the fact that you haven’t felt your feet since somewhere over Colorado.

## AVOIDING THE MIDDLE SEAT

- Sometimes surviving the middle seat is all about avoiding it all together. **It's much easier to avoid cramped quarters on a plane with two aisles**, the best being the 2-3-2 seat configuration because there is only one middle seat per row. Talk with your travel agent or check out the airline's website to see which aircraft they generally fly and you may be one of the lucky ones stretching your legs into the aisle.

- Even though you may have been assigned the middle seat when you bought your ticket, that doesn't seal your fate as monkey in the middle. Anna advocates **always checking with a gate agent to see whether or not there are any window or aisle seats available** that you can switch to.



## ONE OF THE LUCKY ONES

- So you may have escaped the middle seat this time, but this isn't the time to gloat. Rather than pointing and laughing at the basketball player who got stuck in the middle seat, Chris suggests that **when you find yourself in the "better" seat, make it a point to ask your trapped neighbor**



**if they need to use the restroom** or have to get anything out of the overhead bins. Anna agrees, and thinks being a sore aisle seat occupant is no way to score good karma points for future journeys.

- We've all been there, comfortably seated in the window or aisle seat when 14B has the audacity to turn and ask you to trade places—something about middle seat motion sickness or looking better from the left side. If someone asks you to switch, Anna advises that you shouldn't feel obligated to do so, but **you could be nice and offer up the armrest or give them a chance to look at the city skyline while you land**. On the other hand, switching to keep a couple or family together is first class all the way.

## MIDDLE SEAT FUN FACTS

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### According to a recent survey\* ...

- A majority of people would **rather** get stuck in traffic (56%), go on a blind date (56%) or **go to the dentist** (54%) than sit in the middle seat on a full flight.
- Fifty percent of people dislike the middle seat so much they said they would be likely to take an aisle seat being offered on the next available flight to **avoid sitting in the middle seat.**
- The number one thing people find **most annoying** about sitting in the middle seat is having a **nosy seatmate** peering over your shoulder.
- Despite all the annoyances that come with sitting in the middle seat, nearly nine in 10 Americans are concerned with **being a “good” middle seat occupant.**
- Fifty-one percent of Americans have no idea what the **proper etiquette** is when it comes to **sharing the armrests** while sitting in the middle seat.

\*Commissioned by 3M Computer Privacy Filters, Global Strategy Group conducted an online survey of 806 adults nationwide between April 14 and April 17, 2009. The margin of error at the 95% confidence level is +/- 3.5.

# ESCAPE THE MIDDLE SEAT

