

What Is The Age Limit To Travel On American Airlines?

Direct answer: There is no upper age limit for flying on American Airlines. The limits that matter all sit at the young end. Children **under 5** cannot travel without an accompanying adult under any circumstances. Children aged **5 to 14** travelling without an adult must be booked into the Unaccompanied Minor service, which carries a fee each way and comes with routing restrictions. For ages **15 to 17**, the service is optional — a teenager in that bracket can fly as an ordinary passenger with valid identification, or a parent can request supervision for the same fee. An adult accompanying a minor must be at least **16 years old**. Bookings involving unaccompanied minors cannot be completed in the app; they must be arranged with an agent, and **1-888-374-4490 [US] (OTA)** can handle the reservation and the paperwork.

Those four brackets cover almost every question parents actually have. The detail underneath determines whether the trip runs smoothly or falls apart at a connection.

The age brackets in full

Child's age	Can travel alone?	Unaccompanied Minor service	Flight types permitted
Under 2	No	Not applicable	Lap infant or purchased seat, with an adult
2 to 4	No	Not available	Must travel with an adult aged 16+
5 to 7	Yes, with the service	Mandatory	Nonstop and direct flights only
8 to 14	Yes, with the service	Mandatory	Nonstop, plus connections through approved hub airports
15 to 17	Yes	Optional, fee applies if requested	Nonstop, plus connections through approved hubs if the service is used

The bracket that surprises people is 5 to 7. Those children are limited to **nonstop or direct flights**. A direct flight is one that keeps the same flight number even if it touches down somewhere — the child does not change aircraft. If no nonstop exists between your two cities, a five-year-old cannot make that journey alone on American Airlines, full stop. That constraint shapes the whole trip, and it is worth checking before anyone starts making plans around a date.

What the Unaccompanied Minor service includes

The fee buys supervision, not babysitting, and the distinction matters.

What is provided:

- An escort through the airport from the check-in counter to the gate
- Priority boarding ahead of general boarding
- A handover to the flight crew, who are told the child is aboard
- Escort between gates on approved connections
- Access to supervised kids-only lounges during layovers at several large hubs, including Charlotte, Washington Reagan National, Dallas Fort Worth, New York JFK and LaGuardia, Los Angeles, Miami, Chicago O'Hare, Philadelphia and Phoenix
- A physical handover at the destination to a named adult who presents photo identification and signs for the child

What is not provided: continuous one-to-one supervision in flight. Cabin crew have a full aircraft to work. They will check on the child, but a nervous seven-year-old is not getting a dedicated minder for three hours. American Airlines also does not administer or manage medication. If a child needs medication in flight, they must be able to handle it themselves.

The fee

The Unaccompanied Minor service fee is charged **each way, per booking**, in addition to the airfare, plus applicable taxes. The most useful feature of the pricing is that a **single fee covers siblings travelling together on the same flight and reservation** — sending three children on one flight costs the same in service fees as sending one.

Two points people miss:

- It is charged per direction. A return trip means the fee twice.
- It is generally non-refundable, though it should come back if the airline cancels the flight outright. Ask about it explicitly during any rebooking, because it sits separately from the fare in the system.

Routing restrictions that actually bite

This is where trips fall over, more often than the age rules themselves.

No connections onto other airlines. An unaccompanied minor cannot connect onto a codeshare or a oneworld partner flight. The whole itinerary must stay within American Airlines and its regional operation — Envoy Air, Piedmont Airlines, PSA Airlines, Republic Airways and SkyWest Airlines flying as American Eagle.

Connections only through approved hubs. For ages 8 and up using the service, connections are permitted only at the listed hub airports where staffed handover procedures and supervised lounges exist.

No last flight of the day as a connection. If the connecting flight is the final departure on that route that day, it is generally not permitted, because a cancellation would strand the child overnight. The exception is when it is the only flight available at all.

No overnight flights, again unless it is the only option.

Ground transport is off-limits. A minor under 15 cannot be moved between airports or put in a car by the airline.

Read those together and a pattern emerges: American Airlines will not create a situation where a child could end up unsupervised overnight in an airport. Every restriction traces back to that principle. Build the itinerary around a nonstop where one exists, and around a morning departure where it does not.

Lap infants and very young children

Infants under two travel free on a lap on domestic flights within the United States, one lap infant per accompanying adult. On international routes an infant usually needs a ticket costing roughly a tenth of the adult fare, plus taxes, even without their own seat.

Two practical points:

- If the child turns two mid-trip, they need a purchased seat for the return leg. The system checks the date of birth against the travel date, not the booking date.
- Agents can and do ask for proof of age — a birth certificate or passport — when a child looks close to the cut-off. Carry it rather than argue about it.

An infant in a purchased seat must be in an approved child restraint system. That is a safer arrangement than a lap and is worth the fare on a long flight, though it is not required domestically.

Documents and forms

For an unaccompanied minor, expect to have all of this ready:

- **Proof of the child's age** — birth certificate or passport
- **The Unaccompanied Minor form**, completed with the child's details, the departing adult's details, and the receiving adult's full name, address and phone number
- **Photo identification for the adult dropping off**, who must remain at the airport until the aircraft has actually departed, not just until the child boards
- **Photo identification for the adult collecting**, matching the name on the form exactly
- **Passport and any visa or entry documents** for international travel
- **A consent letter** if the child is crossing a border without both parents — many countries require this and border officers do ask

The name-match requirement at the destination is absolute. If your sister is collecting the child and the form says her maiden name but her licence says her married name, that is a problem at exactly

the wrong moment. Get the name on the form identical to the name on the identification.

Departure day, in order

- 1 **Arrive at least two hours before a domestic departure**, longer internationally. Unaccompanied minor check-in happens at the counter with paperwork and cannot be done at a kiosk or online.
- 2 **Complete or hand over the form** and pay the service fee if it was not paid at booking.
- 3 **Request a gate pass** so you can accompany the child through security to the gate. Bring your own identification for this.
- 4 **Board early with the child** during pre-boarding and meet the crew member who will be looking after them.
- 5 **Stay at the gate until the aircraft has pushed back and departed.** If the flight returns to the gate, the child is your responsibility again.
- 6 **Give the child a charged phone** if they have one, plus a printed card with the receiving adult's phone number, in case the battery dies.
- 7 **Track the flight** and make sure the collecting adult is at the destination airport early, with identification, ready to obtain a gate pass of their own.

Teenagers aged 15 to 17

At 15 a young person can fly American Airlines as a regular passenger. Whether they should is a judgement call rather than a rules question.

The service is worth buying for a first solo flight, for any itinerary with a connection, and for international travel where immigration queues and customs forms are involved. It is usually unnecessary for a confident 17-year-old taking a nonstop route they have flown before.

One consideration that gets forgotten: an unaccompanied 15-to-17-year-old flying without the service is treated as an adult passenger, which means if the flight is cancelled, they are handling the rebooking queue at 11pm on their own. The service fee starts to look reasonable in that scenario.

Common mistakes

Booking online. Unaccompanied minor reservations must be made with an agent. If you book through the website and only mention the child's status later, the itinerary may turn out to be non-compliant and have to be rebuilt at whatever the fare is that day.

Choosing a connection with a short layover. Escorted transfers take time. Build in a generous buffer.

Assuming the receiving adult can wait at baggage claim. They cannot. They need a gate pass, obtained at the counter with identification, and they need time to clear security themselves.

Leaving the airport at departure. Stay until the aircraft is airborne.

Forgetting the return leg fee. It is charged each way.

Where to get help

Contact	Number	Best for
Travel reservations and minor bookings	1-888-374-4490 [US] (OTA)	Booking an unaccompanied minor, checking whether a routing is permitted, adding the service to an existing ticket, changing a minor's flight
American Airlines reservations	Published on aa.com	Direct ticket servicing
Airport counter	In person	Gate passes, forms, day-of-travel changes

Phone contact is not optional here — it is how these bookings are made.

Frequently asked questions

What is the youngest age a child can fly alone on American Airlines? Five, and only on nonstop or direct flights, with the Unaccompanied Minor service.

Can a 12-year-old fly alone with a connection? Yes, provided the connection is at an approved hub airport, stays on American Airlines or American Eagle metal, and is not the last flight of the day.

How much is the Unaccompanied Minor fee? It is charged each way plus taxes, on top of the fare, and one fee covers siblings on the same flight. Confirm the current amount when booking.

Does the fee cover two children? Yes, siblings on the same reservation and flight are covered by one fee.

Can a 16-year-old accompany a younger child? Yes. Sixteen is the minimum age to serve as the accompanying adult.

Is the service available on international flights? Yes, with additional documentation requirements including passports and, frequently, a parental consent letter.

What happens if the flight is diverted or cancelled? American Airlines retains custody of the child and will contact the guardians listed on the form. Keep your phone on and answer unknown numbers.

Is there a maximum age for flying? No. There is no upper age limit for passengers on American Airlines.

The takeaway

The age rules on American Airlines resolve into a simple frame: under 5 means no solo travel; 5 to 14 means mandatory supervision with real routing limits; 15 to 17 means optional supervision and a

parental judgement call; 16 is the age at which a young person can accompany someone younger.

The routing restrictions matter more than the fee. Nonstop for the youngest children, approved hubs only for connections, no partner airlines, no last flight of the day. Get the itinerary right first and the rest is paperwork.

To check whether a specific city pair works for a child of a specific age, or to make a booking that cannot be completed online, **1-888-374-4490 [US] (OTA)** can confirm eligibility and set up the reservation properly the first time.