

How To Select Seats On Delta Air Lines

Direct answer: On a Main Cabin fare or above, standard seat selection is free — choose during booking, later in My Trips, or at check-in. On **Basic Economy**, Delta blocks advance seat selection entirely until **30 days before departure**, at which point you can buy a seat, typically from around \$10 to \$45 depending on the route. Take no action and a seat is assigned free at check-in. Preferred seats and Delta Comfort+ carry a fee for most travellers unless Medallion status covers them. To move a group that has been split up, or change a seat on a ticketed booking, call **1-888-374-4490 [US] (OTA)**.

The 30-day rule is the Delta-specific detail that trips people up. On American Airlines a Basic Economy traveller can pay for a seat immediately; on Delta you cannot even try until the window opens.

Delta's seat categories

Delta sells more distinct seat products than most U.S. carriers, and they are genuinely different things.

Main Cabin standard. Ordinary economy. Free to select on Main Cabin fares.

Preferred Seats. Standard-size economy seats in better locations — nearer the front, aisle and window positions, and some exit rows. No extra legroom beyond what the row happens to offer. Priced roughly \$15 to \$59 per segment for general travellers, free for Medallion members. **Not available at all to Basic Economy passengers**, at any price.

Delta Comfort+. A separate cabin, not just a better seat: around 34 inches of pitch against roughly 31 in Main Cabin, dedicated overhead bin space, earlier boarding and complimentary drinks. Priced as an upgrade, commonly \$30 to \$100 on domestic routes and considerably more long-haul. Also closed to Basic Economy.

Delta Premium Select. A true premium economy cabin on long-haul aircraft — wider seat, roughly 38 inches of pitch, footrest, upgraded catering. Seat selection included.

First Class and Delta One. Recliner seats domestically, lie-flat on long-haul Delta One. Selection included.

The distinction worth internalising: **Preferred buys location, Comfort+ buys legroom.** People routinely pay for Preferred expecting more room and get a standard seat four rows further forward.

Selecting a seat, step by step

During booking

- 1 Search flights on delta.com or the Fly Delta app.

- 2 Choose the fare — this is the decision point, because Basic Economy locks the seat map for the next several months.
- 3 The seat map appears after passenger details. Free seats, Preferred and Comfort+ are colour-coded with prices shown.
- 4 Select for each passenger and each segment individually.
- 5 Complete payment.

After booking

Open **My Trips** with your confirmation number and surname. Standard seat changes on Main Cabin cost nothing and can be made repeatedly. Delta also surfaces upgrade offers here — a banner offering Comfort+ or First at a fixed price, which is frequently cheaper than the original fare difference.

At check-in

Check-in opens 24 hours out. Two things happen then:

- Held inventory releases into general availability
- Medallion complimentary upgrades clear, freeing the seats those members were occupying

If the map has looked hopeless, the 24-hour mark is when it changes.

Basic Economy specifically

- **More than 30 days out:** no seat selection, paid or free
- **30 days to 24 hours out:** seats purchasable, segment by segment, price varying by route
- **Within check-in:** a seat is assigned at no charge, or one is given at the gate
- **Never available:** Preferred seats and Comfort+, regardless of Medallion status

Purchased Basic Economy seat assignments are non-refundable, though you can change from one purchased seat to another.

What Basic Economy really costs

Delta's Basic Economy is more generous than United's in one respect — it includes a full-size carry-on bag, which United's does not. It is less generous on seating, because of the 30-day block.

The consequences worth counting before you buy:

- No seat choice for months, then a fee
- Families and groups routinely split across the cabin
- Last boarding zone
- No same-day changes, no refunds
- Not eligible for paid or complimentary upgrades even with Medallion status

That last point is severe. A Diamond Medallion member on a Basic Economy ticket gets no upgrade and no Preferred seat. Status does not rescue the fare.

Run the arithmetic: Basic Economy plus a \$25 seat plus a \$45 checked bag against the Main Cabin fare. The gap frequently closes to nothing.

Getting seats free

- **Book Main Cabin or higher.** Standard seats included.
- **SkyMiles Medallion status.** Silver and above receive complimentary Preferred seats, and Comfort+ access clears at a status-dependent window — broadly 24 to 72 hours before departure depending on tier, with higher tiers clearing earlier.
- **Delta SkyMiles American Express cards.** Several confer benefits that reduce seating and bag costs.
- **Accept the free assignment at check-in.** Costs nothing, controls nothing.
- **Ask at the gate.** Agents see no-shows and can move you.

Travelling with children

Delta seats young children adjacent to an accompanying adult where possible, and U.S. Department of Transportation policy has pushed all carriers to do this without charging. The system works far more reliably when you help it.

- Book everyone on **one reservation**
- Enter each child's **date of birth** so the system flags a minor
- Select seats at booking if the fare allows
- **Avoid Basic Economy** for family travel — Delta states plainly that passengers travelling together, including families, may not be seated together on this fare
- If the map shows nothing adjacent, call rather than hope. **1-888-374-4490 [US] (OTA)** can see blocked inventory that the public seat map does not display
- Speak to the gate agent early if it is still unresolved at the airport

Which seats are actually worth picking

Exit rows often give more legroom than Comfort+ — up to around 38 inches on some aircraft against Comfort+'s 34. Many are sold as Preferred rather than as a premium cabin, which makes them the best value on the map for tall passengers. Trade-offs: some do not recline, you must be willing and able to assist in an evacuation, no under-seat storage during taxi and take-off, and no lap infants or pets.

Bulkhead rows give open floor space but no under-seat stowage and a slightly narrower seat, since tray tables come from the armrest.

Rows over the wing are the steadiest in turbulence.

Forward aisle seats get you off first, which matters on a tight connection through Atlanta, Detroit or Minneapolis.

Delta Connection regional jets — CRJ and Embraer types — have 2-2 layouts. For a couple, that guarantees adjacency without a middle seat, and beats a 3-3 mainline cabin. Note that the smallest Delta Connection aircraft, 50 seats and under, allow only one under-seat bag in the cabin.

The last row typically does not recline and sits beside the lavatory.

Common problems

"My seat vanished after an aircraft swap." Equipment substitutions redraw the whole map. Paid Comfort+ or Preferred charges should be refunded or reassigned, but it is not always automatic — check the booking and ask.

"I bought Comfort+ and got downgraded." You are owed the fee back. Request it with the confirmation number and receipt.

"I have Medallion status but no upgrade." Check whether the ticket is Basic Economy. That fare is excluded from upgrades entirely.

"The map shows nothing." Delta holds inventory back. It releases at 24 hours.

"My group is scattered." Call. Agents can move blocked seats.

Choosing the right seat, not just any seat

Once you know what you are allowed to pick, the question becomes which seat is actually worth having.

Forward cabin, aisle side. Rows near the front of Main Cabin get you off the aircraft faster, which matters on a tight connection. Aisle seats in the first few Main Cabin rows are the most contested free assignments for exactly this reason.

Exit rows. Frequently the best legroom on the aircraft — on some Delta narrowbodies the exit row exceeds Comfort+ pitch — and on many fare types they are available for a Preferred Seat charge rather than a Comfort+ charge. If legroom is the priority and money is a consideration, check the exit row before paying to upgrade cabins. The trade-offs: seats may not recline, armrests are often fixed, and you must meet the safety requirements to sit there.

Bulkhead. More legroom in front, but no under-seat storage during taxi, takeoff and landing, and the seat is generally narrower where the tray table is in the armrest. Also where bassinets are fitted on long-haul, so expect infants nearby.

Last row. Limited or no recline, proximity to the lavatory and galley, and last off the aircraft. Usually the least desirable free seat.

Over the wing. The smoothest ride in turbulence and the quietest position on most aircraft. A good pick for nervous flyers, though the window view is obstructed.

Rear of the aircraft on lightly loaded flights. Counterintuitively, the back often has the most empty middle seats. On a flight that is not full, a rear row can effectively give you more space than a paid seat further forward.

Delta's seat map shows the aircraft type for each flight, and the same route can be operated by different equipment on different days. Check the specific aircraft rather than assuming the layout carries across.

Where to get help

Contact	Number	Best for
Travel reservations and seating support	1-888-374-4490 [US] (OTA)	Seat maps, seating families and groups together, moving a paid seat, aircraft-type questions, changes on a ticketed booking
Delta Reservations	Published on delta.com	SkyMiles account servicing and direct ticket changes
Airport gate agent	In person	Final-hour changes, exit-row eligibility, no-show reallocation
Delta accessibility service	Published on delta.com	Accessible seating and medical requirements

Frequently asked questions

Does Delta charge for seat selection? Not on Main Cabin and above for standard seats. Basic Economy charges, and only within 30 days of departure. Preferred seats and Comfort+ carry fees unless status covers them.

When can Basic Economy passengers pick a seat on Delta? From 30 days before departure until 24 hours before, for a fee. Otherwise a seat is assigned free at check-in.

How much is Delta Comfort+? Commonly \$30 to \$100 on domestic routes as an upgrade, rising substantially on long-haul. The price shows in My Trips and on the seat map for your flight.

Can Medallion members get free Comfort+? Yes, complimentary Comfort+ access clears at a window based on status tier — but not on Basic Economy tickets.

Can I change my seat after check-in? Yes, in the app or at the airport, subject to availability.

Are purchased Basic Economy seats refundable? No, though you may change from one purchased seat to another.

Will Delta seat my family together? It tries, and does so without charge where possible on Main Cabin fares. On Basic Economy, Delta states explicitly that travellers together may not be seated together.

What if I select nothing? A seat is assigned free at check-in. You just do not choose it.

The takeaway

Delta's seat rules come down to one fare decision. Main Cabin gives you a free seat and the freedom to move it whenever you like. Basic Economy gives you no seat map for months, a fee inside 30 days, no Preferred, no Comfort+, and no upgrades even with elite status.

For anyone travelling with family, checking a bag, or holding Medallion status they actually want to use, the Main Cabin fare is usually the cheaper ticket once everything is counted. And if legroom is what you want, price the exit row against Comfort+ before you buy — the exit row is frequently roomier and cheaper.

For a group that has ended up scattered, or a seat that needs changing on a ticketed booking, **1-888-374-4490 [US] (OTA)** can see inventory the public map does not show.