



UNIT-4

Travel Arrangements

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit the learner will be able to:

- ✓ Confidently make business travel arrangements
- ✓ Decide between various different types of transport
- ✓ Find key information regarding visas and passports

Unit 1

Travel Arrangements

Today's Business Traveller

These days, it's normal for businesses of all shapes and sizes to buy and sell products internationally. In fact, it's comparatively rare for an organisation to operate exclusively on a domestic basis. In some instances, it may be necessary for business owners and representatives to travel (nationally and internationally) for business purposes.

The extent to which business travel is required will be determined by the size, nature and objectives of the business. For some businesses, there are no specific national or international travel requirements whatsoever. With others, senior figures may spend much of their working lives travelling all over the world. As an administrative assistant, it is likely that you will be responsible for making most (or even all) major travel arrangements on behalf of your employer.

It's therefore important to familiarise yourself with some of the key principles of making travel arrangements for business purposes. Even if your boss doesn't currently travel a great deal, there's every chance a future employer will rely on you to make travel arrangements on their behalf.

Getting the Trip Under Way

Your primary objective when making travel arrangements is to ensure that your boss gets to their destination and back home again as smoothly, safely and comfortably as possible. Depending on the specifics of the arrangement, costs and speed may also be prioritised. It's therefore a case of first determining what matters most to both your boss and the organization as a whole. For some, it's all about completing business trips for the lowest possible cost. For others, it's about making positive impressions and sparing no expense in doing so.

There may already be a formal process for making travel arrangements at your company and a set of standards you need to follow. Alternatively, you may have near-total freedom over the reservations process from start to finish. In any case, it's important to speak to your boss to find out what he or she expects of you, before going ahead and making any formal plans.

It's far easier to work with a list of demands when making reservations, than to attempt to amend existing bookings at a later time.

Irrespective of whether you are booking the trip yourself or simply taking the traveller's requirements to a travel agent, you'll need assess the following:

- What is the purpose of the trip?
- What are the desired departure and return times and dates?
- Have you checked the traveller's complete itinerary?
- Will they be travelling on their own, or will they be accompanied by other people?
- What are the traveller's preferences in terms of transportation?
- Have you assessed transportation options at their intended destination?
- What kind of budget are you working with?
- Will you also need to organize meals and general provisions for their trip?

Working with a travel agent can simplify the process of making arrangements, as all you need to do is present them with a list of requirements. However, it's becoming commonplace for employers to ask their administrative assistants to organise their travel arrangements independently on their behalf.

The good news being that armed with a computer and Internet connection, there's technically nothing the travel agent can do that you can't handle solo. And once you get to grips with the process, making travel arrangements online really couldn't be easier.

Hotel Reservations

One of the most important things to remember when making hotel reservations is the way in which decent hotels in major towns and cities tend to fill up fast. Even where accommodation options are plentiful, it is still essential that you book as far in advance as possible. Doing so will also ensure you gain access to the best possible prices. Establish the requirements of the individual (or individuals) who will be travelling and contact the hotel on their behalf. The best rates are usually available exclusively for online reservations, but you can always call the hotel directly if you prefer.

Many hotels can provide additional services for business travellers, which may include airport transfers, dry cleaning and so on. If any of these services are needed, discuss them at the time you make the reservation and ensure you receive confirmation that they have been booked. You will always need to provide credit or debit card information of some kind to reserve hotel rooms and additional services, but this does not necessarily mean payment will be taken in advance. To avoid confusion and potential embarrassment, always double check the payment policies of the hotel and relay the information to your boss accordingly.

All major hotels have their own unique policies when it comes to late check in times. For the most part, this will be between 8.00 PM and 10.00 PM, after which the hotel will assume that the guest is not arriving. That is, unless they make contact with the hotel beforehand to advise that they will be

arriving late. As an administrative assistant, it will be your job to both establish the hotel's check in and check out policies, while at the same time ensuring the hotel knows exactly when your boss will be arriving. It's also prudent to provide a contact telephone number, so that the hotel can contact your boss directly if there are any issues or problems encountered along the way. Please note that if you cancel a hotel room after making a reservation, you may be charged in accordance with the hotel's policies. Again, it will be your job to ensure you understand all such policies accordingly.

Rather than booking directly with the hotel, it can be easier and more cost-effective to use an online comparison site. Examples of which include Booking.com and Trivago - both of which compare deals from thousands of hotels via hundreds of websites. Along with a simplified search and reservations process, using these kinds of comparison sites almost always results in significant savings. However, booking through such sites may also invalidate eligibility for a hotel's loyalty program or VIP scheme where applicable. Your job will be to assess which option is preferable for your boss and your organisation, in accordance with priorities and requirements.

Transportation Reservations

Airline

Again, you will need to determine whether it is better for your boss and your business to book trips using one specific airline, or to use a comparison site to find the best deals on a trip-by-trip basis. Regular use of a major airline like British Airways can open the door to a variety of perks and privileges. However, comparison sites can simplify the process of finding the best possible deals available for any individual travel reservation.

Contacting airlines by telephone is an option, but you will usually find all the information you need to make reservations on their website. You could also save yourself a lot of time by booking online.

The following is a list of major airlines:

- Aer Lingus
- Aeromexico
- Air Canada
- Air China
- Air France
- Air Jamaica
- Air New Zealand
- AirTran Airways
- Alaska Airlines
- Alitalia
- All Nippon Airway
- America West
- American Airlines
- Asiana Airlines
- ATA
- Austrian Airlines
- BMI British Midland
- British Airways
- Cathay Pacific
- China Airlines
- Continental (merged with United)

- Delta
- El Al
- EVA Airways
- Finnair
- Frontier Airlines
- Hawaiian Airlines
- Iberia
- Icelandair
- Japan Airlines
- KLM
- Korean Air
- Lan Chile
- LOT Polish Airlines
- Lufthansa
- Malaysia Airlines
- Mexicana
- Midwest Express
- Northwest
- Qantas Airways
- SAS
- Southwest Airlines
- Spirit Airlines
- Swiss International Air Lines
- Thai Air International
- United
- US Airways

Electronic Tickets

These days, the vast majority of major airlines issue electronic tickets. Paper tickets are also available if preferred, but are no longer mandatory. Electronic tickets - also referred to as e-tickets - provide digital confirmation of your booking. They are delivered by way of e-mail and (in accordance with the policies of the airline) may be presented at the airport in the form of a printed copy or a digital version on the traveller's Smartphone. In some instances, airlines charge an additional fee for printing and issuing paper tickets, which is why most travellers now use electronic tickets exclusively.

It's important to remember that the information printed on the electronic tickets must be *identical* to the information on the traveller's ID. The traveller will need to present a valid form of ID at the airport, which for UK travellers means a current and valid passport. If there are any discrepancies whatsoever on the electronic ticket - even the smallest spelling mistakes - the traveller will not be allowed to pass through security.

You must therefore ensure that all information entered when booking the flights is identical to the information on the traveller's ID and documents. Please also be aware that while most airlines now accept digital boarding passes, some will only accept printed copies.

Train Travel

Today, with time being money, more and more executives prefer air travel. Still, there are executives who either prefer not to fly or genuinely enjoy leisurely travel by train. Railway travel

can also provide additional time for work to be done en-route, with Wi-Fi and power outlets now available as standard on most modern trains.

If your employer prefers rail travel, you can find out about schedules and services in general by logging on to National Rail Enquiries at <http://www.nationalrail.co.uk/>. Tickets can be purchased directly from the various train companies, or by using third-party services like Trainline <https://www.thetrainline.com/>.

Automobile (Car Rental)

Your boss may want to rent a car at their destination, which again has been simplified enormously by the internet. Every aspect of the booking process can now be handled online, though there's still the option of contacting the rental company directly if preferred. Some car rental companies offer preferential rates for business customers and repeat customers, which are worth investigating if your boss travels on a regular basis.

The following is a list of the major car rental companies:

- Alamo
- Avis
- Budget
- Europcar
- Enterprise
- Thrifty
- Global
- Hertz
- Sixt
- Holiday Autos

Car rentals are handled much the same way as hotel reservations. You'll need to provide a credit card and driving license in order to guarantee the reservation. You will also need to know the following in order to make a car rental reservation:

- City
- Specific rental location in the city
- Car pick-up time
- Car drop-off time
- Car class

Check with your employer to determine the required car class. A variety of car classes are available for rental including:

- Economy
- Compact
- Midsize
- Standard

- Full size
- Premium
- Luxury
- Convertible
- Mini-van
- Sports utility vehicle (SUV)

Using a Web-Based Travel Service

As already touched upon, there are many online booking services that can be used to organise all aspects of the trip in one place. A few examples of which include Priceline, Orbitz, Travelocity and Expedia.com. From flights to transfers to hotel reservations and more, all essential aspects of the trip can be reserved online, without having to contact the relevant service providers directly.

With these kinds of services, there is also the option of creating a profile for the traveller in question. This means that when future bookings are made, their personal preferences regarding accommodation, airline seats, car rentals and so on will be stored and remembered. As a result, all future bookings can be accelerated and simplified significantly.

Using a Travel Agency

Of course, there's always the option of working with a travel agency. This remains the preferred approach for many businesses, for which the convenience of outsourcing all responsibilities is the primary point of appeal. As above, working with a travel agent means having a profile created on behalf of your boss and/or your business. This means that when future bookings need to be made, the travel agent only needs the very basic information regarding where the traveller is going and when. They can then use their past experience and the details on the traveller's profile to ensure all their requirements and preferences are met.

Contrary to popular belief, working with a travel agent doesn't necessarily have to incur an additional expense. The overwhelming majority of travel agents make money by way of commissions from the hotels and airlines themselves - not the individuals using their services. What's more, it's also not uncommon for travel agents to be provided with access to exclusive deals and discounts not available directly to customers. The experience and expertise of a travel agent can also come in handy, should anything untoward happen before or during the trip.

Using a travel agency should therefore not be discounted as a viable option. It's simply a case of determining whether it makes more sense for your boss and your business to handle the reservations process alone.

Finding a Reputable Agent

To find a reputable travel agent, ask administrative assistants in other companies or your own company for a recommendation, or obtain a list of agencies from the Association of British Travel Agents:

ABTA Ltd
30 Park Street
London SE1 9EQ
TEL: 020 3117 0599
www.abta.com

Several high-quality agents do not belong to this society, so do not discount a recommended agency simply because it's not a member. If you need further sources of agencies, consult the web for more information and listings. If you wish, ask if the agency can give you the name of one or more business clients as references.

If possible, it's a good idea to ensure you consult with the same person each time you contact the travel agency. The more familiar this individual becomes with your requirements and the preferences of your boss, the quicker and easier it becomes to make future travel plans. Far more effective than dealing with a different person every time and having to start again from scratch.

Making the Arrangements

If you choose to go ahead and make the arrangements through a travel agent, you need to ensure that you, your boss and the travel agency are all on the same page. This means not only establishing the requirements and preferences of your boss, but also having all the information and documentation you need to go ahead and book the trip.

Consult with your boss as necessary and use the information/knowledge you already have to collate the following information, prior to speaking with the travel agent:

- Your name and the full name of the traveller
- Complete details of the traveller's business, including its address and telephone number
- Departure date and return date, along with preferred travel times
- Additional personal preferences, which may include specific seats on the plane, smoking or non-smoking rooms, train travel instead of coach travel, business class reservations, airport transfers and so on
- A direct telephone number for contacting the traveller, should the agent need to speak to them directly
- Your e-mail address and your boss's e-mail address, which will be used to send and receive important travel information, documents and electronic tickets
- Loyalty scheme information and frequent flyer numbers where appropriate

Once your travel agent has all of the above information to work with, they will be able to make travel plans on behalf of your boss with ease. Again, it's simply a case of ensuring you present them with all the information they need in a clear, concise and complete manner.

Before-the-Trip Checklist

Prior to any business trip going ahead, it is essential that you confirm the following on behalf of your boss:

- Airline tickets and valid identification
- Hotel reservation numbers, directions and a contact telephone number
- Car rental information and confirmation where relevant
- Detailed airport transfer information and travel tickets
- The traveller's driving licence and international driving permit where required
- A complete printed itinerary of the trip
- Names, addresses and telephone numbers of all contacts to be met
- All business documents needed for the trip - speeches, promotional materials etc.
- International SIM card where required
- Detailed information about the destination (if unfamiliar to the traveller)
- Comprehensive travel insurance documentation and emergency contact details

On that note, it may also be your responsibility to organise adequate travel insurance on behalf of your boss. They may also ask you to establish whether or not immunizations or vaccinations are required, which we'll be discussing a little later.

International Travel

Organising international trips on behalf of an employer can be more challenging than making domestic travel arrangements. This can be particularly true in the case of destinations that are not yet familiar to the traveller. As an administrative assistant, you must acknowledge the fact that there are often very specific conditions imposed on business travellers, which may be very different to those imposed on leisure travellers.

For example, there are certain visas that can be obtained relatively easily and at no specific charge, but expressly forbid the respective holder from conducting any business activities during their stay. In addition, the very nature of the business activities your boss intends to undertake could be governed by specific rules and regulations.

As a result, you may be expected to research the destination on their behalf, in order to ensure their compliance with applicable local immigration policy.

For assistance in arranging an international business trip, you can access the UK's Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) travel advice service at www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice.

Visas and Passports

Almost all British citizens need a passport to leave the United Kingdom and to re-enter it. A passport is required by law for international travel as there is currently no other accepted form of ID for UK travellers. All travellers should always carry personal identification, such as a driver's license or a government-issued photo ID, for the duration of their trip, as it may be required at any time. In some countries, it's possible to be handed an on-the-spot fine for failing to present a valid form of photographic ID upon request, which could happen at any time and for no specific reason.

In addition to a passport, many countries require a visa to enter. Usually, the visa must be obtained in advance and can't be purchased at the border or point of entry. Visas are issued by the individual embassies and consulates of various countries. Some countries charge a small fee, while other countries issue visas for free. Since the requirements can and do change often, even if you have obtained a visa in advance of a trip, double-check before the trip begins to make sure the visa is still valid.

To find out more about passports and visas, head over to the UK's Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) travel advice service at www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice.

Required Immunizations and Vaccinations

Anyone traveling to a foreign country must have up-to-date information concerning required immunizations. The NHS has information on required immunizations for travellers at its official Travel Vaccinations website - www.nhs.uk/conditions/travel-vaccinations.

Customs

The United Kingdom has some of the world's strictest customs policies, which dictate what an individual can and cannot bring back into the United Kingdom from a foreign country, without paying additional tax (or duty).

When your boss returns to the United Kingdom from overseas, he or she will be subject to various restrictions and allowances, in accordance with the items and commodities they attempt to bring into the UK.

Important note: under no circumstances should any traveller attempt to misrepresent the nature or understate the value of an article being brought into the UK. Doing so could result in confiscation of the item, heavy penalties and in extreme cases criminal prosecution.

Complete and detailed information concerning customs regulations are available by visiting <https://www.gov.uk/duty-free-goods/arrivals-from-eu-countries>.

Further Reading: