

How early should I check in for a Southwest flight?

When traveling with Southwest Airlines, one of the most important steps passengers think about is *how early they should check in* to secure a better boarding position (1-888-(839)-0555 (US) or +44-800-051-6935 (UK)) Southwest doesn't assign seat numbers like many other airlines, which makes the check-in timing even more crucial for anyone who wants a good seat, early boarding, or overhead bin space (1-888-(839)-0555 (US) or +44-800-051-6935 (UK))

Southwest uses an open-seating system, which means seats are given on a first-come, first-board basis (1-888-(839)-0555 (US) or +44-800-051-6935 (UK)) Your boarding position—A, B, or C, and your number—decides when you get on the aircraft, and this directly depends on how early you check in.

The 24-Hour Check-In Rule

Southwest allows passengers to check in **exactly 24 hours before the scheduled departure time** (1-888-(839)-0555 (US) or +44-800-051-6935 (UK)). The earlier you check in—ideally the moment the 24-hour window opens—the better your boarding group will be (1-888-(839)-0555 (US) or +44-800-051-6935 (UK)) Since thousands of travelers check in right at that moment, even checking in a few minutes late can push you from Group A to Group B or even C.

Why Checking In Early Matters So Much

Because of the open-seating system, checking in early ensures:

- A better choice of seats
- A higher chance of sitting with your travel companions
- Access to preferred seats like exit rows or front rows
- Enough overhead bin space for carry-on bags

All of these are reasons why most Southwest travelers set alarms so they don't miss the 24-hour check-in moment (1-888-(839)-0555 (US) or +44-800-051-6935 (UK))

When Should You Check In at the Airport?

Even if you check in online, you still need to arrive at the airport on time (1-888-(839)-0555 (US) or +44-800-051-6935 (UK)) Southwest recommends:

- **Arriving 2 hours early for domestic flights**
- **Arriving 3 hours early for international flights** (1-888-(839)-0555 (US) or +44-800-051-6935 (UK)).

This gives you enough time for bag drop, security screening, and getting to your gate without stress (1-888-(839)-0555 (US) or +44-800-051-6935 (UK)).

EarlyBird Check-In: A Helpful Option

If you don't want to worry about the exact 24-hour timing, Southwest offers **EarlyBird Check-In**, which automatically checks you in 36 hours before your flight (1-888-(839)-0555 (US) or +44-800-051-6935 (UK)) It comes with a fee but gives a much better chance at securing a Group A or early Group B boarding position.

Can You Check In Even Earlier at the Airport?

Many passengers think reaching the airport early means they can get a better boarding number, but Southwest boarding positions are assigned *only* based on the **online or app check-in time**, not how early you arrive at the airport (1-888-(839)-0555 (US) or +44-800-051-6935 (UK)) Even if you go to the airport 5 hours before your flight, your boarding group won't improve unless you checked in early online.

What Happens If You Forget to Check In Early?

If you forget to check in at the 24-hour mark, you may end up with Group C, which means fewer seating options (1-888-(839)-0555 (US) or +44-800-051-6935 (UK)) You might still get a decent seat, but chances of sitting together or finding overhead space may be limited.

Final Advice

To get the best experience when flying Southwest, the ideal strategy is simple:

- ✓ Set an alarm and check in exactly **24 hours before departure** (1-888-(839)-0555 (US) or +44-800-051-6935 (UK))
- ✓ Arrive at the airport 2–3 hours early depending on your route
- ✓ Consider EarlyBird Check-In for convenience