

# Out of State Visitation: What To Know When Your Kids Fly Alone

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## Don't Clip Their Wings: Letting Kids Fly Solo After Divorce

The fateful words to end “forever” vows have been spoken. The belongings have been divided. The papers have been signed. You are officially divorced. ***But your child hasn't divorced your spouse and must see them.*** But what do you do if your ex-spouse now lives hundreds or thousands of miles away? Children riding alone on airplanes isn't necessarily a new concept but can be a scary one for parents, but this guide will help you get through this hurdle.

## Put It In Writing

***The most important thing that must be done is for all of the details of custody, visitation and travel to be put in writing legally using lawyers.*** The more specifics that are included in your custody agreement, the easier it is to follow because there is less wiggle room for misinterpretation. The attorneys at Wall & Wall Attorneys at Law have extensive experience in family law and even provide ***free 30-minute consultations*** to help you create a plan.

**Days to consider planning for in visitation agreements are:**

- Religious and school holidays
- School vacations
- Summer and/or winter breaks from school
- Birthdays
- Father's Day and Mother's Day

**It is also beneficial to include in the legal custody agreement items like:**

- What types of vacations or activities are and are not allowed
- Details about traveling outside of the country with the child
- Specifications of the child flying alone

## When Can Kids Fly Alone?

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Though the US Department of Transportation doesn't have rules about this, specific airlines do, so before ***make sure to check each airline*** about this. According to the USDOT, ***most*** airlines allow children ***as young as 5 to fly unaccompanied***, however ***some do not allow this until age 11 or even 14, especially for international flights***. Some airlines will allow a 5-year-old to fly "alone" as long as they are accompanied by someone 12 or older, some restrict young passengers to nonstop flights or US flights only, and some charge additional fees for a child to fly alone. Despite all of the differences, however, all airlines agree that no one under 5 years old can fly alone, the US DOT says.

## How Do I Arrange This?

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Because there are different rules with different airlines, it is best to book a child's flight on the phone with the airline. Things you can ask for are ***electronic tickets*** so the child doesn't have to worry about carrying a physical boarding pass, ***reserving a "gate pass" so you as their parent can help them through security and wait at the gate with them***. The ***child may also have to wear a badge*** during the entire process until they are picked up.

## How Do I Keep Them Safe?

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***Letting your child fly alone, regardless if they are 5 or 50, can be scary for any parent but there are things you can do to help ease your fears.***

- Make sure you bring a copy of the child's birth certificate to the airport for identification and the other parent also has a copy
- If the airport won't allow a "gate pass," arrange for an airline employee to stay with your child through the whole process
- Sign up for airline updates that will automatically text you any flight delays, unexpected landings and when the flight does land
- Do not give your child a carry-on with their name embroidered onto it – that makes it easier for a stranger to call the child's name and for the child to assume they know them
- Know what they were wearing when they boarded and put identification tags on their luggage

Work with your ex-spouse and children to make sure everyone understands the plan for flying alone and it will have far less turbulence than the flight itself. Be sure to stay organized and your best to stay calm until the flight lands! Save travels!

## How Wall & Wall Attorneys at Law in Salt Lake City, Utah Can Help

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Having an experienced attorney guide you through the divorce process and paperwork is in your best interests. For any questions on divorce, child custody and more, contact our experienced Salt Lake City, Utah attorneys at Wall & Wall attorneys at Law. Give us a call today at **801-758-8204** to schedule a ***free consultation***.