

# SOCIAL STORY AND RESOURCE GUIDE

A tool for travel at Norfolk International Airport (ORF)



Version 1: SEPT. 2026



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## Introduction: ORF's Social Story and Resource Guide

### A tool for travel at Norfolk International Airport (ORF)

Flying can be exciting, but it can also feel new or unfamiliar-especially if it's your first time or you like to plan ahead.

ORF's *Social Story and Resource Guide* was created to help guests of all ages, including those with hidden disabilities, are on the autism spectrum or anyone who benefits from extra preparation. ORF wants you to know what to expect before and during your trip.

Inside, you will find:

- **Step-by-step Social Story** with photos and easy-to-read language showing what it's like to travel through ORF.
- **Sensory tips** for each step so you know what sights, sounds, smells and feelings might happen along the way.
- **Helpful resources** including, assistance programs, therapy dogs and contact information for additional support.

Every journey is unique, and it's okay to have questions or need extra help. Our goal is to make your airport experience more predictable, comfortable, and welcoming to ensure you can focus on the adventure ahead.

We hope this Social Story and Resource Guide helps you feel more prepared, confident, and comfortable when traveling through Norfolk International Airport.

Every journey is unique, and it's okay to take your time, ask for help, and use the resources that work best for you.

Our team is here to make your travel experience as smooth and welcoming as possible, so you can focus on the adventure ahead. Safe travels!

- *The ORF Customer Care Team*



## Resources for a more comfortable journey



### Hidden Disabilities Sunflower Lanyard

- Pick up free at the Airport Information Desk.
- Shows trained staff you may need extra time, patience or help.
- Does not give faster service, it's a discreet support signal.



### TSA Cares

- Free help for travelers with disabilities, medical needs or special circumstances.
- Call 1-855-787-2227 at least 72 hours before your flight.
- A Passenger Support Specialist will meet you at security to guide you through screening.



### Therapy Dogs

- Friendly, trained dogs visit the airport to help guests feel calm.
- You might see them walking in the terminal with their handlers.



### Airport Information Desk

- Located in the main terminal.
- Staff can give directions, resources and immediate help.



## Traveling Resources

### I Am Feeling

I can point to the face that I am feeling so others can help understand how I feel.



Angry



Worried



Content



Happy



Excited

### Visual Supports/Sensory Environment Icons

Use the icons to support each step in your travel journey and to prepare for what's next.

|                                                                                                    |                                                                                                 |                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                    |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <br>Loud Noises | <br>Home     | <br>Bathroom     | <br>Food + Drink              |
| <br>Smelly      | <br>Airplane | <br>Train        | <br>Car                       |
| <br>Bus         | <br>Crowded  | <br>Escalators   | <br>Flashing Lights           |
| <br>Waiting     | <br>Music    | <br>Touch        | <br>Noise-Canceling Headphone |
| <br>Walking     | <br>Elevator | <br>Construction | <br>Loud Announcements        |



## Airport Ambassadors - We're here to help!



*Who we are, where to find us, how we can help.*

At Norfolk International Airport, there are friendly people called the Airport Ambassadors.

- ✓ We are here to answer questions, give directions, or help if something feels confusing.
- ✓ You can find us at the Airport Information Desk in the main terminal, or walking through the airport.
- ✓ We wear navy blue uniforms so you can spot us easily.
- ✓ If you need help, you can come to us or wave and say hello. We are happy to help you!

 **Sensory Note:** The desk may be near busy areas with voices and announcements. If it feels noisy, you can tell us and we'll help you find a quieter spot to talk.



## Getting Ready at Home



Before I arrive at the airport: packing, documents and what to bring

I get ready for my trip by packing my suitcase. I help pack a bag with clothes, my ID or ticket and things I might want on the plane like snacks, headphones, or a favorite toy. I know how I'm getting there and I'm excited for my journey to start.

- ✓ I will pack my bags with everything I need.
- ✓ I can take my favorite things to the airport and on the plane.
- ✓ If I have an ID, I will make sure to have it with me when I go to the airport.
- ✓ I will have my boarding pass ready (printed or on your phone).

 **Sensory Note:** Packing might feel exciting or stressful. Clothes should feel soft and comfortable.



## Getting to the Airport



When I arrive at the airport, I might see lots of cars, buses and people. It can feel busy, but that's normal. I'll follow the signs that say "Departures" to get to my airline. I might hear engines, talking or even construction sounds. I can hold onto my bag and keep moving toward the entrance.

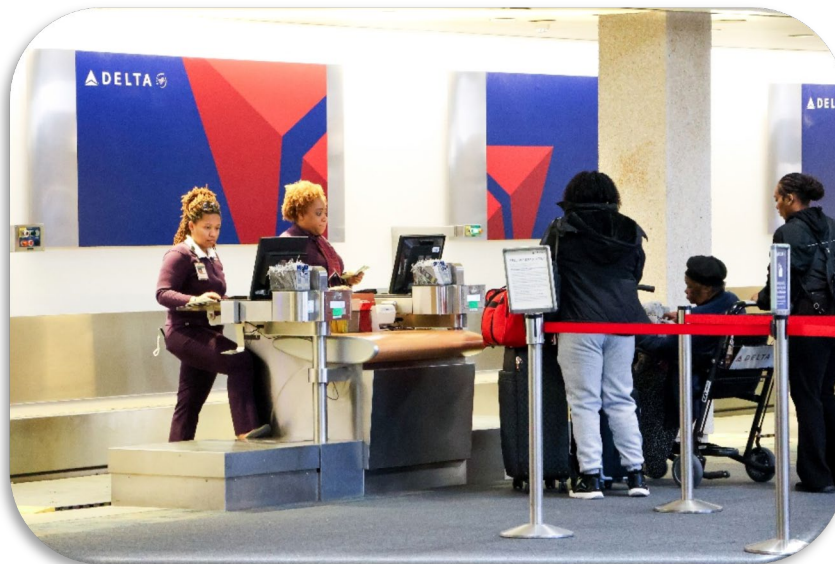
- ✓ There are many ways to get to the airport.
- ✓ When I get to ORF, I will take my bags with me from my ride.
- ✓ There is a lot of construction happening at the airport. I can follow signs .and ask for help from others to get there I need to go.

 **Sensory Note:** Sounds of cars, voices, luggage rolling, possible construction noises

|                |                                                                                     |                                                                                     |                                                                                       |
|----------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Sensory</b> |  |  |  |
|                | Loud Noises                                                                         | Construction                                                                        | Car                                                                                   |



## Ticketing and Check-In



- ✓ Walk through the main doors into the terminal.
- ✓ Inside, it may feel big and bright.
- ✓ Look for signs showing where each airline checks in.
- ✓ Go to your airline's check-in counter.
- ✓ Give your ID and ticket to the airline agent.
- ✓ If checking bags, place them on the scale.
- ✓ Airline staff help me get my boarding pass and tag my suitcase. I smile and say thank you when I'm done.

 Sensory Note: Beeping sounds, suitcase wheels, possible waits in line.

|                |                                                                                     |                                                                                     |                                                                                     |                                                                                       |                                                                                       |
|----------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Sensory</b> |  |  |  |  |  |
|                | Announcements                                                                       | Elevators                                                                           | Escalators                                                                          | Crowded                                                                               | Waiting                                                                               |



## Sunflower Lanyards

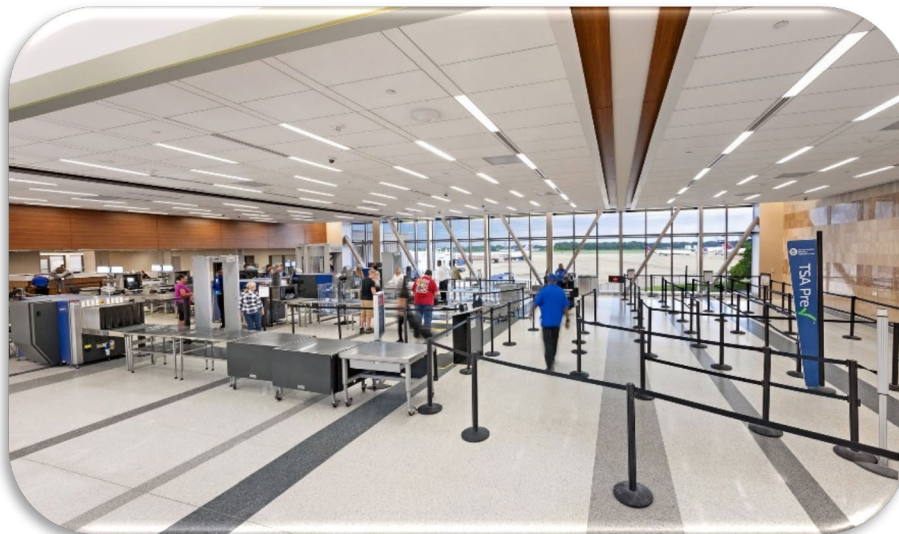


Sunflower Lanyards lets airport workers know that I might need extra time and help.

- ✓ I can get a Sunflower Lanyard from the Customer Service worker at the Information Desk.



## Going Through Security with TSA



- ✓ Security makes sure everyone is safe.
- ✓ I will follow the signs to the TSA security checkpoint.
- ✓ If I need it, I can request a TSA Passenger Support Specialist to get extra help.
- ✓ When it is my turn, I will show my ID to TSA so they can scan it.
- ✓ I'll be prepared to put my things in a bin including tablets and bags but they will come back to me soon!
- ✓ Then I will go through the x-ray machine.
- ✓ I can show TSA my medical card if I have one or tell them my concerns and needs. If I need a pat down, people may touch me.
- ✓ Once I'm done, I will get my things from the bins and get ready to go to my gate.

 **Sensory Note:** Beeping scanners, conveyor belts, instructions from TSA officers, taking shoes off, walking through metal detector or scanner.

### Sensory



Announcements



Crowded



Flashing Lights



Waiting



## Finding my Gate



- ✓ After security, I will look at the gate number on the flight screens or my boarding pass to know where to go for my flight.
- ✓ Signs and maps or an airport worker can help me get to where I need to go.
- ✓ There are restrooms, restaurants and shops for me.
- ✓ Once I find my gate I can relax until its time to board my flight.

 Sensory Note: Smells from food, footsteps, announcements, bright lighting, construction.

**Sensory**



Construction



Walking



## While I'm at the Airport



- ✓ Once I've found my gate, I can walk throughout the gate terminal.
- ✓ The airport has lots of restaurants with different kinds of foods. I can bring some of my own favorite snacks with me.
- ✓ There are lots of different shops at ORF with many items to look at. Some stores have snacks, gifts, and coloring books or magazines for my flight.
- ✓ If I need the restroom, I can find one close by.
- ✓ When I'm ready I can relax until its time to board my flight.

 Sensory Note: Smells from food, footsteps, announcements, bright lighting, construction.

### Sensory



Loud Noises



Construction



Walking



Food + Drink



## Boarding My Flight



- ✓ When it's almost time to depart, I will sit near my gate.
- ✓ My ticket will usually have a seat number that has numbers and letters.
- ✓ When it is time to board my flight, the airline worker will call up different groups and numbers to let me know when it's my turn.
- ✓ When it's my turn, they will scan my boarding pass, and I can walk down to the plane.
- ✓ I will go to my assigned seat which could be by the window, in the middle or on the aisle.
- ✓ Once I find my spot, I can put my bags under the seat in front of me or in the overhead bins above me.
- ✓ I can take my seat and buckle up until it's time for takeoff.
- ✓ I will listen to the flight attendant's safety messages and follow their instructions to help make my trip safe.

 **Sensory Note:** Crowds of people, airplane and equipment, rolling suitcases, voices over the intercom, jet bridge air changes, waiting.

### Sensory



Loud Noises



Announcements



Airplane



Crowded



Waiting

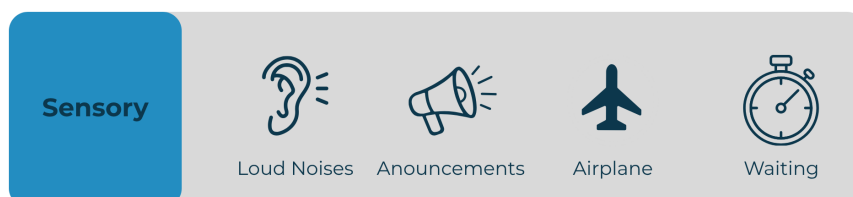


## During My Flight



- ✓ Once I'm on the plane, I will go to my assigned seat which could be by the window, in the middle or on the aisle.
- ✓ Once I find my spot, I can put my bags under the seat in front of me or in the overhead bins above me.
- ✓ I can take my seat and buckle up until it's time for takeoff.
- ✓ I will listen to the flight attendant's safety messages and follow their instructions to help make my trip safe.
- ✓ When the plane takes off it may be loud and there might be some shaking, I will make sure my seat belt is on.
- ✓ If I need anything, I can call the flight attendants by pushing the button above my head for help.
- ✓ The flight attendant might come by and ask me if I want something to drink or eat, or I can have my own drinks and snacks.
- ✓ I can watch movies, color, take a nap and other things while on the plane.
- ✓ I can see a lot of cool things outside the airplane window, like trees, mountains, clouds cities and the Chesapeake Bay.

 Sensory Note: Engine noises, safety announcements, air vents, close seating, waiting.





## Preparing for Landing and Deplaning



- ✓ About 20–30 minutes before landing, the pilot will make an announcement.
- ✓ Flight attendants will ask you to:
  - Buckle your seatbelt
  - Put your seat upright
  - Put away electronics or trays
- ✓ You might hear the engines change sound and feel the plane descend.
- ✓ There may be some small bumps during landing.
- ✓ Once the plane stops at the gate, everyone will stand and get their bags from the overhead bins.
- ✓ I made it! I will follow the line and exit the plane into the airport.

 **Sensory Note:** You might hear loud engine noises, clapping or lots of voices as passengers leave, and waiting.

**Sensory**

  
Loud Noises

  
Announcements

  
Airplane

  
Waiting



## Getting My Bags



If I only have carry-on bags, I can skip this step and head to the next part of my trip.

- ✓ If I checked big bags with the airline, I will go to Bag Claim after I get off the plane.
- ✓ I follow the signs that say Bag Claim.
- ✓ I find the carousel (moving belt) with my flight number on the screen.
- ✓ Bags might take some time to come out and that's okay.
- ✓ When I see my bag, I carefully take it from the carousel.

 **Sensory Note:** The baggage area can be noisy with machines, voices, and announcements, I will wait patiently.





## Leaving the Airport



- ✓ Leaving the airport is the last part of my trip through the building.
- ✓ There are many ways I can travel from the airport.
- ✓ I can meet people picking me up or head to my next travel step.
- ✓ Airport workers can help direct us where we need to go when leaving the airport.
- ✓ If I come to the airport by car, I will travel back to the parking garage and find the car.

 Sensory Note: There may be construction cars, buses and lots of people outside.

### Sensory



Loud Noises



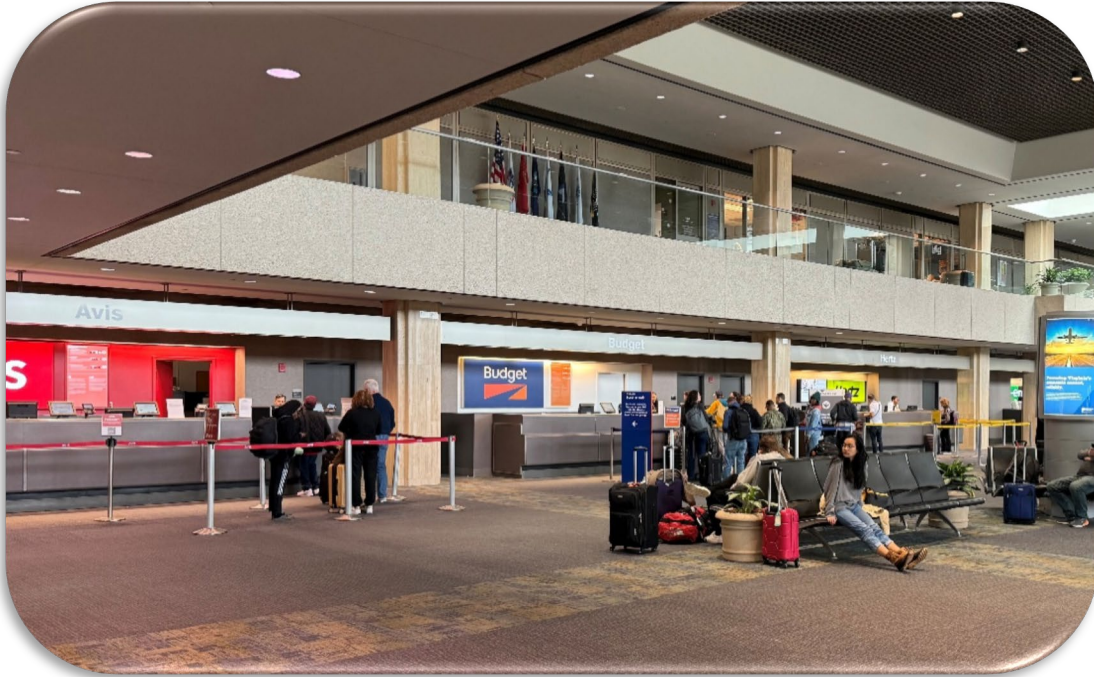
Construction



Car



## Getting a Rental Car



- ✓ If I need to rent a car, I'll follow signs to get to the check-in counter.
- ✓ I will wait in line at the company we are rental car company I am using.
- ✓ When it's our turn, we will get the keys to the rental car then travel by car to our next destination.

 Sensory Note: I will have to wait in line with many other people. There may be construction.

### Sensory



Loud Noises



Construction



Car



## Leaving the Airport by Taxi, Uber, or Lyft



If I'm using a taxi, Uber, or Lyft, I follow the signs to the pick-up area. I make sure I get into the right car by checking the details.

- ✓ If someone else is driving me, I will follow signs to Ground Transport and Uber/Lyft.
- ✓ Taxis wait in a taxi line.
- ✓ For Uber/Lyft, I request a ride using my phone.
- ✓ Once the driver arrives, I will check the app and make sure the driver and car match.
- ✓ I will put my luggage in the trunk then sit in the back seat and enjoy the ride.

 **Sensory Note:** You might hear traffic, car doors closing, construction noises, or conversations with the driver. You may see moving cars, construction equipment, headlights at night, or people walking nearby.

### Sensory



Loud Noises



Construction



Car



## You Did It! Your Journey Starts Here.

Traveling through an airport and flying on an airplane can bring many different feelings. You might feel excited, happy, nervous, curious, overwhelmed, or even a little unsure. All of these feelings are okay.

A trip through the airport is made up of many new experiences. From checking in and going through security to waiting at the gate, boarding the airplane, taking off, and arriving at your destination. Some sights, sounds, smells, and sensations may feel unfamiliar. Knowing what to expect can help make each step feel a little easier.

Remember, you can:

- Take your time
- Ask for help
- Take a break
- Use the tools that make you feel comfortable

There is no right or wrong way to experience your journey.

At Norfolk International Airport (ORF), we want every guest to feel welcomed, supported, and prepared to travel. We hope this Social Story and Resource Guide helps you know what to expect, feel more confident, and make your journey through ORF a positive experience.

Your journey may be new, but you don't have to navigate it alone.

We're here to help. Welcome to ORF. And safe travels!