

Travel Desk Guidelines

1. **Mandatory purchase of Air Tickets through Authorized Travel Agents (ATAs):** (Ref: MoF, DoE OM No. 1G024/03/2021-E.IV) dated June 16, 2022.
 - I. Similar to LTC, all air tickets for official travel must be booked exclusively through any one of the three authorized travel agents only:
 - a. M/s. Balmer Lawrie & Company Limited (BLCL)
 - b. M/s. Ashok Travels & Tours (ATT)
 - c. M/s. Indian Railways Catering and Tourism Corporation Ltd. (IRCTC)
 - II. Booking through unauthorized agents or directly from airline websites is generally **not permitted** unless under exceptional circumstances, with proper justification and approval from the Competent Authority.
 - III. Employees are encouraged to utilize the online portals/self-booking tools provided by these ATAs and register their official government email IDs for efficient booking.
2. **Adherence to the Entitled Class of Travel:** (Ref: MoF, DoE OM No. 1G030/1/2017-E.IV) dtd July 10, 2017:

Employees must travel in the class of accommodation they are entitled to based on their pay level in the 7th Central Pay Commission pay matrix. The entitlements are as follows:

 - I. Pay Level 14 and above: Business or Club class
 - II. Pay Level 6 to 13A: Economy class
 - III. Pay Level 5 and below: Not entitled to air travel (unless specific approval is granted or for travel to areas with poor connectivity)
3. **Selection of the Best Available Fare:** (Ref: MoF, DoE OM No. 1G024/03/2021-E.IV) dated June 16, 2022:

The guiding principle is to always choose the "**Best Available Fare**" within the entitled class. This means selecting the **cheapest fare available**, preferably for a **non-stop flight** in a given slot at the time of booking:

 - I. On the day of travel in the desired three-hour slot of the following time band: 00:00 to 03:00, 03:00 to 06:00, 06:00 to 09:00, 09:00 to 12:00, 12:00 to 15:00, 15:00 to 18:00, 18:00 to 21:00, 21:00 to 24:00.
 - II. A flexibility of choosing a flight with a fare up to 10% higher than the cheapest available fare is permissible for convenience or operational reasons, but the justification for this should be recorded.
4. **Single Ticket Booking:** Generally, only **one ticket should be booked for each leg** of the journey. Holding multiple tickets for the same travel leg (except in rare, justified cases like standby arrangements for critical travel) is discouraged.
5. **No Accrual of Mileage Points:** Mileage points earned during official travel on a government account should not be retained by the individual employee. Guidelines exist for departments to utilize these points for future official travel.
6. **Digital Booking and Official Email:** Employees are encouraged to utilize the online booking platforms of the authorized travel agents and register their official government email IDs for all official travel bookings. This promotes transparency and ease of tracking.

7. **Approval for Air Travel (for Non-Entitled Employees):** Government employees in Pay Level 5 and below are generally not entitled to air travel for official purposes. Air travel for these employees may be permitted only in exceptional circumstances with the specific approval of the competent authority, considering factors like the exigency of work, lack of suitable rail/road connectivity, or significant time savings.
8. **Guidelines for Booking of Air Tickets through Travel Desk:-**
- I. Booking air tickets through the Institute Travel Desk requires approval from the Competent Authority with a complete itinerary.
 - II. For booking of air tickets for invited guests/external experts etc., the host or his/her office must submit the approval copy along with complete itinerary of the guest to the Travel Desk during office hours as and well in advance from the date of journey.
 - III. The Travel Desk will book tickets through M/S Balmer Lawrie & Co. Ltd (an authorized agent) only as per the MoU with the agency.
 - IV. The advance amount for ticket bookings will be credited to the name of the individual or the concerned department/office until the TA claim for the invited guest is settled. It is the responsibility of the Individual or the department/office to settle the bills immediately after completion of the tour but not later than 15 day. Travel Desk can be contacted for any guidance for submission of TA claims.
 - V. Booking air tickets well in advance, preferably 21 days before the date of travel, is strongly recommended to secure lower fares and optimize travel costs for the government.
 - VI. If bookings are made within 72 hours of the intended travel for official duty, a self-declaration providing the reasons for the late booking is usually required to be submitted along with the travel claim.
 - VII. If a cancellation is unavoidable, the reasons should be documented in the format (attached) with the approval from the competent authority.
 - VIII. When submitting claims for official air travel reimbursement, employees must include the original tickets, boarding passes, and a printout of the fare details from the authorized travel agent's website at the time of booking, demonstrating that the "Best Available Fare" within the entitled class was selected. The travel desk plays no role in the settling of bills.
 - IX. However, all the above guidelines are illustrative and not exhaustive. The Govt. of India instruction on this matter as amended from time to time will regulate the booking of tickets and reimbursement of TA, DA etc.
