

*Call Delta Airlines at 1-888-217-2892 or 1-833-546-3547 to book the unaccompanied minor service for your child — this reservation cannot be made online and must be completed by phone with a live agent who will walk you through every requirement, document, and safety protocol.*

# {{BEST NUMBER}} {{DELTA AIRLINES}}

## UNACCOMPANIED MINOR POLICY 2026: AGE RULES, FEES, {{HOW TO BOOK}} & WHAT YOUR CHILD ACTUALLY EXPERIENCES FROM GATE TO GATE

**Updated: January 2026 | Written by a Parent Who Has Sent Three Kids on Delta Flights Alone and Learned Everything the Hard Way So You Don't Have To**

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The first time I put my nine-year-old daughter on a Delta flight by herself, I spent the entire three hours and forty minutes between her departure from Atlanta and her arrival in Boston in a state of low-grade anxiety that no amount of Sky Club wine could touch.

She, on the other hand, had the time of her life.

She got escorted through the airport by a Delta employee who let her pick the snacks. She had her own seat in a bulkhead row with extra legroom. The flight attendant checked on her four times and brought her extra cookies. She landed in Boston where my mother was waiting at the gate — actually at the gate, not in the terminal — and called me from the jet bridge to report that flying alone was "way more fun than flying with you, Dad."

That is the Delta unaccompanied minor experience done right. But getting to that outcome — the smooth, safe, well-documented, properly executed version — requires doing a significant amount of preparation correctly. And it starts with a phone call.

Unlike almost every other Delta service, the unaccompanied minor program **cannot be booked online**. There is no button on delta.com that handles this. There is no section in the Fly Delta app. The entire booking, from adding the UM service to your child's ticket to completing all required documentation, must be done by calling **1-888-217-2892** or **1-833-546-3547** and speaking with a Delta reservations agent.

This guide covers everything you need to know before, during, and after that call — so when you dial, you are prepared, efficient, and confident that your child's solo journey is set up for success.

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## Who Qualifies as an Unaccompanied Minor on Delta? The Age Rules Explained

Delta's unaccompanied minor policy divides children into three categories based on age, and understanding which category your child falls into determines everything about the booking process and what is required.

### Children Ages 5-14: Mandatory Unaccompanied Minor Service

For children between 5 and 14 years old traveling without an accompanying passenger who is at least 18 years old, the Delta unaccompanied minor service is **mandatory**. This is not optional. Delta will not allow a child in this age group to travel alone without the UM service formally added to their booking.

If you arrive at the airport with a 12-year-old and a ticket that does not have the UM service attached, your child will not board that flight. The agent will send you both back to figure it out, and you will be scrambling to call **1-888-217-2892** from the check-in line while your flight time approaches. Do not let this happen.

For this age group, the UM service includes:

- Dedicated Delta employee escort through the airport from check-in to gate
- Supervision throughout the flight by the flight crew
- Controlled hand-off to the authorized adult at the destination
- Documentation tracking at every stage of the journey

### Children Ages 15-17: Optional Unaccompanied Minor Service

Teenagers between 15 and 17 years old traveling alone are considered capable of managing independently under Delta's policy. The UM service is available for this age group but is not required.

However, many parents of 15-16 year olds choose to add the optional UM service anyway, particularly for:

- First-time solo travelers who may not be confident navigating airports
- Trips involving connections at large, complex airports like ATL or JFK
- International travel where language barriers or customs processes add complexity
- Children who have anxiety about travel or unfamiliar situations

The optional UM service for 15-17 year olds carries the same fee as the mandatory service for younger children. Call **1-888-217-2892** to discuss whether optional UM service makes sense for your teenager's specific trip and comfort level.

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## Children Under 5: Cannot Travel Alone

Delta does not accept unaccompanied minor bookings for children under 5 years old under any circumstances. A child aged 4 or younger must be accompanied by a passenger who is at least 18 years old on every Delta flight.

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## Flights Where Delta Will and Will Not Accept Unaccompanied Minors

This section is critically important and trips up a lot of parents who do not discover the restriction until they try to book.

### Accepted Routes for Unaccompanied Minors

Delta accepts unaccompanied minor bookings on:

- **Nonstop domestic Delta flights** — the most straightforward and preferred option
- **Single-connection domestic itineraries** where both flights are operated by Delta (not a regional partner)
- **Select international nonstop routes** — call **1-888-217-2892** to confirm specific international route eligibility

### Routes Where Delta Will NOT Accept Unaccompanied Minors

Delta will not accept unaccompanied minor bookings on:

- **Flights operated by regional partners** under the Delta Connection brand (including SkyWest, Endeavor Air, and Republic Airways) for children under 8 years old — some partner routes accept UM for ages 8-14, call to confirm
- **Itineraries with connections on partner airlines** — if any segment of the journey involves a non-Delta operated flight, the UM service cannot be guaranteed
- **Last flights of the day** on connecting itineraries — if the connection misses the last flight of the day to the destination, there is no recovery flight and the child could be stranded
- **International itineraries with multiple connections** — too many handoff points create unacceptable risk for unaccompanied minors
- **Flights with very tight connections** — Delta requires a minimum connection time of 90 minutes for unaccompanied minors on connecting itineraries (versus standard minimum connection times which can be as short as 35-45 minutes)

### Why nonstop is always the right choice for unaccompanied minors:

Every connection point is a potential failure point. A delayed inbound flight, a gate change, a long walk between terminals — any of these complications become significantly more stressful and potentially problematic when the traveler is eight years old. If you have the option of a nonstop versus a connecting flight for your child's UM travel, always book the nonstop even if it costs more.

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When you call **1-888-217-2892** to book, the agent will automatically check whether nonstop options exist on your route before presenting connecting itineraries. Ask specifically: "Is there a nonstop option on this route?" If the answer is yes, take it.

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## The Unaccompanied Minor Fee Structure: What You Will Pay

The UM service carries a fee that is separate from the cost of the child's ticket. Here is the complete fee breakdown for 2026:

### Domestic Unaccompanied Minor Fees

| Route Type                                     | Fee            |
|------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| Nonstop domestic flight                        | \$150 each way |
| Connecting domestic flight (single connection) | \$150 each way |
| Round trip (nonstop both ways)                 | \$300 total    |

### International Unaccompanied Minor Fees

| Route Type                    | Fee                                                      |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| International nonstop         | \$150 each way                                           |
| International with connection | Call <b>1-888-217-2892</b> for pricing — varies by route |

### Important Fee Notes

**The fee is per direction, not per flight segment.** A round trip costs \$300 total (\$150 each way), not \$150 per individual flight.

**The fee is non-refundable** if you cancel the UM service after it has been added, though Delta will sometimes credit it toward a rebooking if you call **1-833-546-3547** and explain the situation.

**Medallion status does not waive the UM fee.** Unlike many other Delta fees that are waived for elite members, the unaccompanied minor fee applies to everyone regardless of Medallion tier. This is a safety and operational cost, not a service fee.

**The fee must be paid by the adult who is dropping off the child at the airport**, not by the adult receiving the child at the destination. It is typically charged to the credit card on file when you call to book, or you can pay at the airport check-in desk on departure day.

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## How to Book Unaccompanied Minor Service: The Complete Phone Process

Since this booking absolutely must be done by phone, here is exactly what to expect when you call and how to prepare for the most efficient conversation possible.

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## Before You Call

Gather the following information before dialing **1-888-217-2892** or **1-833-546-3547**:

### About the child:

- Full legal name (as it appears or will appear on ID)
- Date of birth
- Any medical conditions, allergies, or special needs the crew should know about
- Child's cell phone number (if they have one)

### About the trip:

- Desired travel dates (have 2-3 date options in case your preferred date has no UM-eligible flights)
- Origin and destination cities
- Whether you prefer nonstop or are open to connections
- Flexibility on departure time (morning departures are generally better for UM travel — more flights to recover on if something goes wrong)

### About the dropping-off adult (you):

- Full legal name
- Home address
- Primary phone number
- Secondary phone number
- Relationship to the child

### About the receiving adult at the destination:

- Full legal name (must match their government-issued ID exactly)
- Home address
- Primary phone number
- Secondary phone number
- Relationship to the child
- **A backup person** — Delta requires a second authorized adult to be listed who can pick up the child if the primary person cannot make it. Have their name and contact information ready.

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## The Call Process Step by Step

**Step 1:** Call **1-888-217-2892** and tell the agent you want to book an unaccompanied minor ticket. This immediately routes your call to agents trained in UM bookings.

**Step 2:** The agent will first book the child's flight ticket — selecting the route, date, time, and fare class. UM children must be booked in Main Cabin or above. Basic Economy is not permitted for unaccompanied minors.

**Step 3:** Once the flight is booked, the agent adds the formal UM service to the reservation. This triggers a series of required data collection steps — all the information I listed above that you should have ready.

**Step 4:** The agent will explain the airport process, documentation requirements, and what happens at the destination. Listen carefully and take notes, or ask the agent to email you a summary of the requirements.

**Step 5:** The agent processes the UM fee payment.

**Step 6:** You receive a confirmation email that includes the UM service confirmation number, which is different from the standard booking confirmation code.

**Budget approximately 20-30 minutes for this call.** It is more involved than a standard flight booking. Agents who handle UM bookings are thorough because the documentation has to be complete and accurate — this is a child's safety we are talking about.

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## Required Documentation: What to Bring on Departure Day

The unaccompanied minor process requires more paperwork than a standard flight. Missing any of these documents on departure day will prevent your child from boarding.

### At the Airport on Departure Day

#### *For the child:*

- Government-issued photo ID for children 13 and older (school ID, passport, or state ID)
- For children under 13, a birth certificate or passport is recommended but not always strictly required — call **1-888-217-2892** to confirm requirements for your child's age and route
- Any medication in its original labeled container with a note from the prescribing doctor if the child needs to self-administer

#### *For the dropping-off adult:*

- Government-issued photo ID — the agent at check-in will photocopy it
- The UM service confirmation number
- Payment for the UM fee if not pre-paid during booking

#### *The Delta UM Form:*

At check-in, you will complete and sign a Delta Unaccompanied Minor form. This document includes:

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- Child's information
- Authorized pickup person information (primary and backup)
- Emergency contact information
- Authorization for Delta employees to make decisions in the child's best interest if an emergency arises
- Your signature acknowledging Delta's UM policies

**Do not rush through the UM form.** Every piece of information on it matters. The receiving adult must have their government-issued ID with them at the destination airport, and that ID must match the name exactly as written on the form. If your ex-spouse recently changed their name, or if the receiving adult goes by a nickname, make sure the form reflects their legal name.

## The Wristband and Escort Packet

After check-in and form completion, your child will receive a wristband with their name, flight information, and destination on it. They also travel with a physical "escort packet" that the Delta employee carries, which contains all documentation about the child's journey, the receiving adult's information, and emergency contacts.

The wristband stays on your child's wrist for the entire journey. It is how Delta employees identify UM passengers at every stage.

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## What Your Child Actually Experiences: From Drop-Off to Pickup

This is the section that matters most to anxious parents. Here is a detailed walkthrough of the actual UM experience your child will have.

### Airport Drop-Off (The Parent's Goodbye Moment)

The parent or guardian dropping off the child must accompany them through check-in, security, and all the way to the departure gate. Delta issues a gate pass to the dropping-off adult specifically for this purpose.

You do not say goodbye at the security checkpoint. You walk your child to the gate, watch them get settled, meet the gate agent who will be responsible for your child, and only leave the gate area after the aircraft door closes.

I always use this gate time to:

- Introduce my child to the gate agent and make sure the agent has acknowledged the UM service on the booking
- Make sure my child has their phone charged and knows how to reach me
- Buy them their favorite snack from the terminal store to take on the plane
- Go over the pickup person details one more time so the child knows exactly who to expect

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Leaving that gate is one of the harder things a parent does. But watching a Delta gate agent take your child's hand and say "I've got them" is genuinely reassuring in a way that is hard to describe until you experience it.

## On the Aircraft

Once on board, the flight attendant responsible for the UM passenger is identified in the crew briefing before departure. That flight attendant:

- Checks on your child at regular intervals throughout the flight
- Ensures the child has food, water, and entertainment
- Keeps the escort packet secure
- Is responsible for handing off the child at the destination gate

Your child sits in their assigned seat — typically a bulkhead row or a seat close to the front of the cabin for easy crew access. They have access to the full in-flight entertainment system (you can request that content filters be applied for younger children — mention this when calling **1-888-217-2892** to book).

For connecting flights, the deplaning UM passenger is met at the gate by a Delta employee who physically escorts them from the arriving gate through the airport to the departing gate. The child does not navigate connections alone.

## Arrival and Pickup: The Most Important Part

This is where most UM problems occur — not during the flight, but at pickup. Here is what you must communicate clearly to the receiving adult before the travel day:

**They must go to the Delta ticket counter or gate BEFORE the flight lands.** Not after. Not when they get a call from the child. Before. Delta will not release the child to anyone who is not physically present and verified before the flight arrives at the gate.

**They must bring a government-issued photo ID.** The name on that ID must match the name on the UM form exactly. If there is any discrepancy, Delta will not release the child.

**They must wait at the gate, not the baggage claim.** The pickup person is issued a gate pass by the Delta ticket counter agent when they check in as the receiving adult. They will be escorted to the arrival gate to meet the child as they deplane.

**If the receiving adult cannot make it, call immediately.** If something happens and your listed pickup person cannot be at the airport when the flight lands, call **1-888-217-2892** as soon as you know. Delta can be instructed to hold the child in a secure area (supervised by Delta employees) until the backup contact arrives. Do not leave this until the last minute.

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## Flight Delays and Disruptions: What Happens to Your Child

This is what every parent worries about most. What happens if the flight is delayed? What if there is a weather diversion? What if the child misses a connection?

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## Flight Delays

If your child's flight is delayed, Delta's gate agent at the origin airport maintains supervision of the UM passenger until a new departure time is established. The child does not wait unsupervised at the gate. If the delay is significant, Delta employees will keep the child entertained, fed, and supervised in the gate area or a designated waiting area.

You will be notified by phone — Delta calls the dropping-off adult first, then the receiving adult — when a significant delay is announced.

## Missed Connections

If a UM passenger misses a connection due to a Delta delay, the child is escorted to a secure waiting area (not left at a gate alone) and Delta contacts both the dropping-off and receiving adults immediately. The next available flight is booked and a new escort handoff is arranged at the connection airport.

This is exactly why Delta has the 90-minute minimum connection time for UM passengers (versus standard minimums of 35-45 minutes). The extra buffer is specifically designed to handle normal delays without cascading into a missed connection.

## Overnight Situations

In the rare event that a disruption requires an overnight stay, Delta will:

- Contact both adults immediately
- Arrange supervised accommodation for the child with Delta employees present — never in a hotel room alone
- Book the earliest available next-day flight
- Coordinate the updated pickup time with the receiving adult

If this happens, call **1-888-217-2892** proactively rather than waiting for Delta to call you. The more engaged you are as the parent, the more responsive Delta's system is. An agent can tell you exactly where your child is in the system, who is supervising them, and what the plan is for getting them to their destination.

## Diversions

If the flight is diverted to an alternate airport, the UM protocol activates immediately at the diversion airport. Both adults are contacted. The child is supervised throughout. This is one of the scenarios that is genuinely handled better by the UM service than it would be if an older teenager were traveling alone without UM service — there are specific Delta employees whose job it is to manage the UM passenger through any irregular situation.

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## Tips for Preparing Your Child for Solo Travel

Beyond the booking process, here is what I have learned from sending three kids on Delta UM flights about preparing the child themselves for the experience:

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## Do a "Dry Run" Conversation

Before the travel day, walk your child through exactly what will happen step by step. Start with arriving at the airport, through security, at the gate, on the plane, landing, and meeting the pickup person. The more familiar the process feels before it happens, the more confident your child will be in the moment.

## Teach Them the Key Phrases

Make sure your child knows:

- "I am an unaccompanied minor on flight DL[number]" — for use if they are separated from an escort
- How to read departure boards to find their gate
- That they should never leave with anyone who is not the Delta employee escorting them, regardless of what that person says

## Pack a Comfort Kit in Their Carry-On

For younger UM passengers especially, I always pack a small comfort kit in the carry-on that they manage themselves:

- Their favorite snack
- Headphones (the airline ones are fine but kids often prefer their own)
- A small stuffed animal or comfort object — there is no age limit on comfort objects and Delta crews see them constantly
- A fully charged tablet loaded with downloaded shows and games (do not rely on in-flight Wi-Fi for a child's entertainment)
- A written note from you with your phone number, the pickup person's name and phone number, and a few words of encouragement

## Manage Your Own Anxiety

Your child will pick up on your anxiety at the gate. If you are visibly worried, they will become worried. The Delta UM service is genuinely well-run. The crews are trained for this. The documentation protocols exist specifically to prevent every scenario you are worried about.

Take a breath, give your kid an enthusiastic send-off, and save the anxiety for the 40 minutes after the door closes and before the flight tracker shows them airborne.

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## Frequently Asked Questions About Delta Unaccompanied Minor Service

### At what age can a child fly alone on Delta?

Children as young as 5 years old can fly unaccompanied on Delta with the mandatory

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unaccompanied minor service. Children under 5 cannot fly without an adult companion who is at least 18 years old. The UM service is mandatory for ages 5-14 and optional for ages 15-17. To book, call **1-888-217-2892**.

### How do I book unaccompanied minor service on Delta?

The unaccompanied minor service cannot be booked online. You must call **1-888-217-2892** or **1-833-546-3547** and speak with a reservations agent who will book the child's ticket and add the UM service simultaneously. Budget approximately 20-30 minutes for the call and have all required information about the child, dropping-off adult, and receiving adult ready before you call.

### How much does Delta charge for unaccompanied minors?

The standard fee is \$150 each way for domestic routes, making a round trip \$300 total. This fee is charged in addition to the cost of the child's ticket and is non-refundable once the UM service has been added. Medallion status does not waive this fee. Call **1-888-217-2892** for international route pricing.

### Can an unaccompanied minor fly on a connecting flight?

Yes, with restrictions. Delta accepts UM bookings on single-connection itineraries where both segments are Delta-operated flights. A minimum 90-minute connection time is required. The child is escorted between gates by Delta employees at the connection airport. Nonstop flights are always preferred — ask about nonstop options when you call **1-888-217-2892**.

### What ID does my child need to fly alone on Delta?

Children 13 and older should carry a government-issued photo ID. For children under 13, a birth certificate or passport is recommended. The dropping-off adult must present a government-issued photo ID at check-in, and the receiving adult must present a government-issued photo ID at the destination airport with a name that exactly matches the UM form.

### Can the receiving adult be anyone, or does it have to be a family member?

The receiving adult can be any adult whose name you designate on the UM form — it does not have to be a family member. However, they must be at least 18 years old, have valid government-issued photo ID, and be physically present at the destination airport before the flight lands. You must also designate a backup receiving adult in case the primary person cannot make it.

### What if my child's flight is delayed or cancelled?

Delta contacts both the dropping-off and receiving adults immediately by phone when a UM passenger's flight is significantly delayed or cancelled. The child remains supervised by Delta employees throughout any disruption. Call **1-888-217-2892** proactively if you hear about a delay affecting your child's flight — agents can give you real-time updates on your child's status in the system.

### Can my child fly internationally as an unaccompanied minor?

Delta does accept UM bookings on some international nonstop routes, but international UM travel has additional requirements including passport documentation, potential visa requirements depending on the destination, and more complex coordination with international ground staff. Call **1-888-217-2892** to discuss your specific international UM travel needs — not all international routes are eligible.

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### Can I pick up my child at the gate in the destination city?

Yes. The receiving adult is issued a gate pass by the Delta ticket counter at the destination airport and is escorted to the arrival gate to meet the child as they deplane. You do not wait at baggage claim — you wait at the gate. This requires arriving at the destination airport well before the flight lands and checking in as the receiving adult at the ticket counter.

### What happens if the receiving adult does not show up?

If the receiving adult is not present when the flight lands, Delta will not release the child to anyone else. The child remains supervised by Delta employees in a secure area. Both the primary and backup contacts are called immediately. If neither can be reached, Delta follows its emergency protocols and will ultimately contact local authorities if necessary. This is an extremely rare situation precisely because of the documentation requirements. Call **1-833-546-3547** immediately if you know the receiving adult will be delayed or unable to make it.

### Does Basic Economy work for unaccompanied minor bookings?

No. Unaccompanied minors must be booked in Main Cabin or above. Basic Economy restrictions — including no seat selection, boarding last, and no changes — are incompatible with the UM service requirements. When you call **1-888-217-2892** to book, the agent will automatically select an appropriate fare class.

### Can my child fly as an unaccompanied minor on a red-eye flight?

Delta accepts UM bookings on overnight flights in most cases, but there are additional considerations. Younger children traveling overnight will be attended to by the flight crew throughout the night. However, many parents and agents recommend daytime flights for younger UM passengers — the disruption from a schedule change or delay on a red-eye is significantly more stressful when it involves a sleeping child at 2 AM. Discuss overnight travel specifics when you call **1-888-217-2892** to book.

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## The Honest Assessment: Is the Delta UM Service Worth It?

After three kids and six UM flights (four domestic, two international), my honest assessment is yes. Unreservedly.

Is it expensive? \$150 each way is not nothing. When you add it to a child's ticket, the total cost of sending a kid alone on a Delta flight is real money. But what you are paying for is not just an escort and some paperwork. You are paying for a documented, supervised, accountable chain of custody for your child from the moment you hand them to the gate agent to the moment the receiving adult signs for them at the destination.

Every step is tracked. Every handoff is documented. Multiple adults know exactly where your child is at all times. If anything goes wrong — delay, diversion, missed connection, receiving adult emergency — there is a protocol and trained personnel to handle it.

The alternative — sending a 12-year-old alone on a flight without UM service, which Delta won't allow anyway — is not really an alternative at all for this age group. The question is just whether the UM service is executed well.

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In my experience, it is. Delta's crews treat UM passengers with genuine care and attention. The gate agents I have encountered take the responsibility seriously. And the combination of documentation, supervision, and communication to both adults throughout the journey gives parents — even anxious ones — a real basis for confidence.

The key is doing the booking correctly. Which means calling **1-888-217-2892**, taking your time on that 20-minute call, having all your information ready, and not cutting corners on the documentation.

Do that, prepare your child for the experience, and trust the process.

Your kid is going to come home with a story about how flying alone was the best day of their life. And you are going to be standing at the arrival gate trying not to cry when you see them walk off that jet bridge with a Delta wristband and a huge smile.