

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

by Angela deFreitas

Many people love to travel but who would do it to earn a living? Many people - the young in particular - long for the perceived excitement and glamour which go with the thought of working as a flight attendant and because of these perceptions there are many who choose flight attendant as their first option for a career.

WHO IS A FLIGHT ATTENDANT?

A flight attendant is employed by an airline and is responsible for the comfort and safety of passengers on a flight.



WHAT THE WORK INVOLVES

At some time during the work day a flight attendant will:

- Attend and participate in a pre-flight briefing with other flight personnel to discuss all details relating to the up-coming flight
- Review, check and test emergency equipment on board an aircraft

- Direct passengers as to what to do in an emergency such as a fire on board, how to evacuate the aircraft and use safety and emergency equipment
- Ensure that passengers have their seatbelts securely fastened when required and that all other safety requirements are observed
- Serve, and sometimes sell, beverages, meals or snacks
- Take care of all passengers and those with special needs, including administering emergency medical care if needed
- Keep passengers calm and reassured if the plane encounters turbulence or any other danger
- Greet and see off passengers boarding and deplaning

Flight attendants are expected to work odd hours including nights, weekends and on public holidays. A lot of time may have to be spent away from home and family. Most flight attendants find jobs with regular scheduled airlines, with small private carriers or charter flight companies.

WHO IS THIS CAREER FOR?

Flight attendants need to have a calm, reassuring and confident personality. They must be pleasant, not easily ruffled and be willing to offer excellent customer service in all circumstances and even when dealing with difficult customers. Communication skills also need to be well-developed as flight attendants must answer questions and give information clearly and precisely.

Physical stamina and energy are very important as much of the workday is spent on one's feet

WHAT CAN I EARN?

In addition to a medium range salary, the perks and benefits of free or low-cost travel and time off between flights are very attractive to some.

HOW DO I QUALIFY?

A good sound secondary education and even a college degree will give you a good start. At the secondary level, maths, english language, a foreign language and geography are all good subjects to include in your stash.

Applicants usually need to be at least 18 years old, have a valid passport and pass a medical test. They may need to conform to height and weight requirements.

Work experience in areas such as customer service, positions in restaurants, hotels or holiday resorts are good background for moving on to becoming a flight attendant.

WHO OFFERS TRAINING IN JAMAICA?

Training is usually offered by an airline to selected candidates. You can also speak to The Caribbean Aviation & Training Centre and The Caribbean Aerospace College, both at Tinson Pen in Kingston on their training offerings.

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