BASICS ON **BUYING AN** AIRLINE TICKET

The comedians are right when they say that the best way to fly is in an airplane. But buying a ticket and flying from here to there can be confusing not only to the occasional airline passenger but also to the seasoned traveler.

A smooth domestic trip starts with buying an airline ticket, the Better Business Bureau points out, and this seemingly simple procedure can be confusing. Here is a basic guide to help you through the maze of airlines, fares, luggage, change-overs, and stopovers,

 If you are not sure which airline flies to your destination, phone one of the major airlines. If they don't fly where you want to go, they will tell you which airline does. Always ask for the closest airport to your destination. Some cities are served by several airports, yet these different facilities are lumped under one city heading. For example: Chicago can be O'Hare, Midway, or Milwaukee; Washington, D.C., can be Dulles, Washington National, or Baltimore-Washington International: New York can be LaGuardia, Kennedy, or Newark.

 Write down the information given you. This way, you can refer to flight numbers, airports, fares, etc., when talking to the carrier you will use.

• Be prepared to tell the ticket agent when you will be traveling, how long you will be staying, whether you are traveling with children. your address at home and work, credit card numbers and/or checking account numbers, any disability that would require a wheelchair. and any diet restrictions.

If you are shopping for discount fares:

Tell the agent where YOU WANTON BOND IN HETOTIS • Tell the agent how long you plan to stay at the destination and how many people will be travelling in your party.

This may sound silly, but with this inforamtion the agent will be able to help you get the best discount fares available. If you can be flexible about the days of travel and the times of travel, let the agent know this. Sometimes a few hours difference in time can make a very big difference in the amount of the fare.

The agent may ask you if you would like to make a tentative reservation. The reason for this is that discounted fare seats sell out fast. If you are fairly certain of your plans, it's better to hold the seats. You can always change them if you must.

Buying The Ticket

You can buy an airline ticket at several places.

1. The Airport. Be prepared to know where you are going and the times you want to go. Also be prepared to stand in line.

2. Travel Agent. A travel agency will issue you a ticket at no extra cost to you. The travel agency will even issue you a ticket if you have already made reservations directly with the airline. By using a travel agent, you have more time to discuss travel plans including hotel stops, rental cars, interest points, etc. An airline agent usually doesn't have this time to spend with you.

3. By Mail. Most airlines will mail a ticket to you, if time permits. When you make reservations, the agent will want to know how you will pay for the ticket. Have your credit card number ready if you plan to charge the tickets.

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