



Airport security

There's been a lot of talk of airport security in the media lately, so I thought I'd add my two cents to the mix.

Thanksgiving had me once again traveling across the country from Massachusetts to Colorado and back again, in what has become a routine process. The days of being excited by the prospect of boarding a plane are in the distant past, but not so far that I don't remember what it felt like.

Looking back, I can still picture some of my earlier ventures through the airport. After crossing my fingers that my luggage would be under 50 pounds, I would hope with all my might that I would make it through security and find my gate on time.

Despite having nothing but pure intentions, I was always worried they would catch me in the security line. Horrifying scenarios would play out in my mind in which I was caught for some unintentional crime and carted off to jail.

With that unwarranted, yet totally constant fear in mind, airport security was quite a stressful place for me as a young traveler. I remember the first time I saw the new TSA security lanes, where travelers were allowed to choose the line best suited for themselves.

Expert travelers have a line, marked by a black diamond, specifically for those who consistently navigate security lines quickly and with ease. Casual travelers might be a little slower and have a blue square line of their own.

For families and those needing extra assistance, there is the ultra-patient green circle line. Faced with the choice between the three lines for the first time, I was overwhelmed by the

Drumroll Please

Written by Jes-c Brandt

gravity of my decision.

I most certainly was not an expert by any means. But did I even qualify as a casual traveler? To be completely honest, I could probably have used a little extra assistance.

Airport security has some pretty strict rules. Luggage must be a certain size and weight. All liquids are to be in three-ounce containers, placed in a one-quart ziplock bag.

Shoes, coats, scarves and belts must be removed, and laptops come out of the bag and onto the conveyer belt. Make sure your pockets are empty, but keep your boarding pass with you when you advance to your final test: the metal detector.

All those rules are a lot to remember when you're already worried about just making it to your plane on time. Based on the number of previous times I'd accidentally left my phone in my pocket or tried to take restricted liquids or gels in my bag, I was definitely thinking I should go in the slowest, most forgiving line possible.

So I joined the families in the green line and waited my turn. I carefully removed all the necessary items and double and triple checked for any metal that might set off the alarm. The last thing I wanted to do was get an uninvited pat down.

Standing in my own slow-moving line, I watched the expert travelers zip through security. Each had a perfectly packed, compact bag on wheels. I looked to my own bulging backpack in shame. As they effortlessly slid off shoes and belts, I thought about how long it would take me to dress myself again. I envied those travelers, and I longed to be just like them.

Not long after that first trip through the green line, I decided I was qualified for the blue line as a casual traveler. Each time I flew, I went to that line with confidence. Even if I wasn't an expert, I was starting to get the hang of TSA procedures, and each trip I looked less and less like a fool.

Drumroll Please

Written by Jes-c Brandt

I started to learn the tricks to traveling. Always wear slip on shoes and pants that don't require a belt. Don't wear extra layers, and if you must, jackets with zippers are best. As for the liquids, know your go-to containers that are less than three ounces. Better yet, travel without any liquids at all. When preparing to go to an airport, seriously evaluate which items are necessary. Going on a week-long trip? Maybe you could stand to leave the shampoo and conditioner behind and opt for a solid bar of soap.

As I got better and better at traveling, I continued to look to the expert travelers. Would I ever be good enough to join their line? Well last weekend, I decided I would give it a try. Returning to college after Thanksgiving, I carried only a backpack. It contained no laptop and no liquids. I wore my slip-on shoes and placed my phone and keys in my coat pocket. I was as ready as I'd ever be to try the expert line for my first time.

Before I even entered the airport I had made up my mind. Once there, I made a beeline for the black diamond. Joining the experts, I proudly stopped and looked around. That's when I noticed a problem. Why was I even stopped at all? That was my dream line that never stopped moving and speedily got travelers through security in record time. Or at least it was supposed to.

Of course, on the one day I decide to try the expert line, every casual traveler thought they were a pro. I looked to the side and saw the casual and family lines moving along, while my line was at an absolute standstill. All those months of waiting to join the elite travelers, and the moment was ruined by people who were getting ahead of themselves. Clearly they were not prepared to be in the expert line. How inconsiderate.

That was supposed to be the happiest day of my life as a traveler, but it was ruined by a few impatient casual travelers. I took the time to train and prepare for the occasion, and I only wish others had thought to do the same. Don't make the same mistake. Next time you travel by air, be honest with yourself about your airport abilities. Being an amateur is nothing to be ashamed of, unless you prematurely put your self in the black diamond lane, and then you're just asking for embarrassment.