

GROUNDDED

A comic sketch

Characters: Passenger – a conventionally-dressed white, middle-aged male (non-speaking)

Airline announcer – crisp, official, humourless (off stage)

Setting: An airport departure lounge
Three seats in a row

Properties: A carry-on suitcase
A carrier bag of duty-free spirits
Mobile
Passport
Boarding-pass
Snack
Bottle of pills

Sound effects: Background airport noises
Two-note pre-announcement signal

Notes: Much of the humour will depend on Passenger's reactions to the different announcements which are likely to range from complacent boredom through irritation, frustration, puzzlement panic and finally resignation.

If possible, the announcer's accent should change by slow stages from affected / 'cut glass' at the start to unrefined 'estuary English' at the finish.

Three empty seats are set in a row

SFX: Muffled background airport noises

Passenger enters with his suitcase and duty-free carrier bag. He sits on the centre seat, placing the carry-on suitcase on the seat to his right and the duty-free carrier bag on the seat to his left.

Brief pause before ...

SFX Two-note pre-announcement signal

Announcer Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to Flight FFS-101 to San Bernardino. We will be boarding very shortly. In the meantime, may we ask you to kindly remain seated until you're called.

Passenger extends his legs in front of him and prepares to wait ...

Brief pause before ...

SFX Two-note pre-announcement signal

Announcer Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to Flight FFS-101 to San Bernardino. Can I extend a very special welcome to our Golden Pelican Frequent Flyers and our First and Business Class passengers. At your convenience, may we invite you to come forward to the desk for priority boarding, champagne and caviar canapes. Thank you again for choosing to fly with us this afternoon. We know you have other choices and we are sincerely grateful for your custom. Will all other passengers please remain seated until you're called.

Passenger takes out his mobile and checks his messages ...

Announcer Good afternoon again, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to Flight FFS-101. Can I now invite any passengers in need of special assistance, those with babies, young children, troublesome teenagers and grouchy grandparents to step forward. Please have your boarding-passes and passports ready for inspection. Will all other passengers please remain seated.

Passenger sits upright, returns his mobile to his pocket and takes out his passport and boarding-pass ...

Brief pause before ...

SFX Two-note pre-announcement signal

Announcer Thank you for waiting, ladies and gentlemen. Will those with special dietary requirements, restrictions or intolerances, vegetarians, vegans, pescatarians, pollotarians, or anyone else likely, or highly likely, to refuse all, or most, of our specially-prepared in-flight gourmet options, please come to the desk with their passports and boarding-passes. All other passengers, please remain seated.

Passenger takes out a snack from his pocket and begins chewing ...

Brief pause before ...

SFX Two-note pre-announcement signal

Announcer This is a call for passengers suffering from dyslexia, dyspraxia, hyposmia, anosmia, partial or total colour blindness or other visual or hearing impairment ... (*loud*) please listen carefully if you're stone deaf ... Also, anyone identifying as underprivileged or disadvantaged in any way, politically or ideologically unsafe or unsound, socially or sexually deviant, mildly daft, noticeably eccentric or unarguably deranged, please join the back of the queue with your passports and boarding-passes ready for inspection. All other passengers, remain seated.

Passenger takes out a bottle of pills and swallows a handful ...

Brief pause before ...

SFX Two-note pre-announcement signal

Announcer This is a special announcement for passengers en route to stag parties or hen parties, habitual pushers and shovers, unapologetic queue-jumpers, anyone given to shouting screaming, swearing, blaspheming, uncalled-for abuse or bouts of disturbing tears, please now make your way to the desk. Also anyone carrying excess duty-free or strictly-prohibited items such as lithium batteries, aerosols, Class A drugs and firearms. Please have your passports and boarding-passes ready for inspection. Everyone else, stay seated..

Passenger swallows another, larger handful of pills ...

Brief pause before ...

SFX Two-note pre-announcement signal

Announcer Thank you again for your patience, ladies and gentlemen. We're now inviting remaining passengers seated in Rows 1 to 16 and 18 to 32 to board at this time. Please have your boarding-passes ready for inspection and, for our convenience, please ensure that your passport is open at the correct page. Any other passengers, just wait.

Passenger checks his boarding-card and sees that he is seated in Row 17 ...!

Longer pause than before ...

SFX Two-note pre-announcement signal

Announcer This is the final call for Flight FFS-101 to San Bernardino.

Passenger stands ...

Announcer (*with little or no pause*) Flight FFS-101 is now closed.

Passenger looks around and sees that he's alone. He studies his passport and boarding card. He is about to go to the desk but sees that it is unmanned. What can he do? He picks up his suitcase and duty-free and exits.

THE END