

Comprehensive Guide to Indian Railways Rules and Regulations 2025

This document serves as a detailed reference covering the most important rules, regulations, and services of Indian Railways. It is designed to address the various situations passengers may encounter before, during, and after train travel.

Introduction to Indian Railways Regulatory Framework

The Indian Railways operates under a comprehensive set of regulations that govern all aspects of train travel. The General Rules for Open Lines of the Railways were framed under Section 198 of the Railways Act 1989 by the Government of India^[1]. These rules are binding on every Railway Servant as per Section 175 of the Railways Act 1989 and are periodically updated to address changing needs and improve passenger experience^[1].

The regulatory framework consists of:

- General Rules (GR): Framed by the Government of India
- Subsidiary Rules (SR): Framed by authorized railway officials
- Special Instructions: Issued for specific scenarios or stations

Railway staff and passengers alike are expected to adhere to these regulations to ensure safe, efficient, and comfortable travel experiences across India's extensive rail network^[1].

Ticket Booking Rules and Regulations

General Booking Guidelines

1. **Reservation Process:** Tickets can be booked up to 120 days in advance (excluding date of journey)
2. **Identity Verification:** Passengers must carry a valid photo ID during travel (Aadhaar Card, Voter ID, Passport, Driving License, etc.)
3. **Ticket Transfer:** Transfer and resale of tickets is prohibited and punishable under Section 142 of the Indian Railways Act^[2]
4. **Booking Limitations:** Booking of 'benami' tickets or blocking accommodation using fictitious names is strictly prohibited and considered a criminal offense^[2]

IRCTC Online Booking Rules

1. **Account Requirements:** Valid registration on the IRCTC website (irctc.co.in) is mandatory for online bookings
2. **Payment Options:** Various payment methods accepted including net banking, credit/debit cards, UPI, and e-wallets
3. **Booking Window:** Online bookings open at 8:00 AM for general reservations
4. **E-Ticket Validity:** E-tickets must be accompanied by the mentioned ID proof during the journey
5. **Modification Restrictions:** Tampering with Electronic Reservation Slip (ERS) is prohibited and punishable under Section 420 of the Indian Penal Code^[2]

Tatkal Reservation System

Tatkal booking is designed for passengers who need to travel at short notice^[3].

Booking Timings:

- AC Classes (1A, 2A, 3A, EC, CC): Opens at 10:00 AM, one day before the journey date (excluding the day of journey)^[4] ^[3]
- Non-AC Classes (SL, FC, 2S): Opens at 11:00 AM, one day before the journey date (excluding the day of journey)^[4] ^[3]

Tatkal Charges:

Class of Travel	Minimum Tatkal Charges (INR)	Maximum Tatkal Charges (INR)	
Second Seating	₹ 10	₹ 15	
Sleeper	₹ 100	₹ 200	
AC Chair Car	₹ 125	₹ 225	
AC 3 Tier	₹ 300	₹ 400	
AC 2 Tier	₹ 400	₹ 500	
Executive	₹ 400	₹ 500	^[3]

Important Tatkal Rules:

1. Maximum 4 passengers can be booked per PNR under Tatkal quota^[3] ^[4]
2. First AC class is excluded from Tatkal booking scheme^[3]
3. Tatkal tickets cannot be canceled for refund except in case of train cancellation or delays exceeding 3 hours^[5]
4. The fare is calculated at 30% of base fare for AC classes and 10% for second class, subject to minimum and maximum limits^[4]
5. Tatkal tickets are issued for actual distance of travel, subject to train distance restrictions^[4]

Quota Systems

Senior Citizen Quota:

- Eligible for male passengers aged 60 years and above and female passengers aged 58 years and above^[6]
- Two senior citizens can travel with the same PNR number under this quota^[6]
- Also applicable for female passengers aged 45 and above traveling alone^[6]
- Offers increased chances of ticket confirmation and preferential allocation of lower berths^[6]
- Senior Citizens wishing to avail of concession should give it in writing on the Reservation requisition form and carry proof of age during journey^[7]

Emergency Quota:

- Limited berths/seats earmarked for urgent travel requirements of High Official Requisition (HOR) holders^[8]
- Primarily for Central Government Ministers, Judges of Supreme Court/High Courts, and Members of Parliament^[8]
- Released according to priority as per warrant of precedence^[8]

Other Common Quotas:

- Ladies Quota: Reserved for women traveling alone or with children under 12 years
- Physically Handicapped Quota: For differently-abled passengers
- Foreign Tourist Quota: Reserved for foreign nationals
- Duty Pass Quota: For railway employees on duty

New Railway Travel Rules 2025

Waiting List Passenger Regulations

Effective May 1, 2025:

- Waiting list passengers will be strictly prohibited from boarding trains in both Sleeper and Air-Conditioned (AC) classes^[9]
- This rule is part of efforts to reduce overcrowding, improve safety, and ensure reserved passengers get their rightful seats^[9]
- Platform and onboard TTEs will strictly enforce this regulation^[9]
- Penalties or removal may apply to violators^[9]

Effective March 1, 2025:

- Stricter regulations for waiting list passengers, limiting travel to general coaches only^[10]
- Passengers caught in AC compartments with waiting list tickets will face a penalty of up to Rs 440, plus the fare from the train's origin to the next station^[10]

- Those found in sleeper compartments with waiting list tickets will incur a fine of up to Rs 250, plus applicable fare to the next stop^[10]

Classes Affected by New Rules:

Travel Class	Previously Allowed (Waiting)	Now Allowed (Post-May 2025)	Notes	
Sleeper (SL)	Yes	No	Most affected category	
AC 3 Tier (3A)	Yes	No	Frequently overbooked	
AC 2 Tier (2A)	Yes	No	Premium travelers included	
First AC (1A)	Yes	No	Rare but included	
General (GS)	Yes (no reservation needed)	Yes	Not affected	
Second Sitting (2S)	Yes	Yes	May still allow waiting tickets	
Chair Car (CC)	Yes	May vary	Check train-specific rules	
Unreserved	Not applicable	Not applicable	Remains unchanged	^[9]

Cancellation and Refund Rules

For Normal Tickets

Untravelled Reserved Tickets:

- More than 24 hours before departure: Minimal cancellation charges apply
- Within 24 hours and up to 4 hours before departure: Higher cancellation charges apply
- Less than 4 hours before departure: Significant cancellation charges, sometimes no refund^[5]

For Untravelled Unreserved Tickets:

- Within 3 hours of the actual departure of the train: Rs. 10/- cancellation charge per passenger
- For tickets valid for the day of issue, within 3 hours of the actual departure of the last train of the day: Rs. 10/- cancellation charge^[5]

For Waitlisted Tickets

1. If a waitlisted ticket is cancelled online, the refund of fare shall be made after deducting the cancellation charge of ₹20/- + GST per passenger, if the ticket is cancelled up to four hours before the scheduled departure of the train^[11]
2. If all passengers on a ticket remain on waiting list after first charting, the user need not cancel such tickets as they will be cancelled automatically by the system, and a full refund

will be credited back without deducting any cancellation charges^[11]

For Tatkal Tickets

No refund shall be granted on cancellation of confirmed Tatkal tickets except in exceptional cases like disruption of Railway Services^[5]. The specific IRCTC Tatkal trains have their own cancellation policy as follows:

For Confirmed Tickets:

- Cancelled more than 48 hours in advance: Flat cancellation charges (Executive Class: ₹240/- + GST, AC Chair Car: ₹180/- + GST)^[11]
- Cancelled between 48 and 12 hours before departure: 25% of fare subject to minimum cancellation charge + GST^[11]
- Cancelled within 12 hours and up to 4 hours before departure: 50% of fare subject to minimum cancellation charge + GST^[11]
- No refund if not cancelled online or TDR not filed online up to 4 hours before departure^[11]

Luggage Rules and Regulations

Free Luggage Allowance

Class	Free Allowance	Marginal Allowance	Maximum Limit	
AC 1-Tier	70kg	15 kg	150 kg	
AC-2 tier	50kg	10kg	100kg	
AC 3 tier/ AC Chair Car	40kg	10kg	40kg	
Sleeper class:	40kg	10kg	80 kg	
Second Class	35kg	10kg	70 kg	^[12]

Excess Luggage Charges

During the journey, Indian Railways allows luggage within specific weight limits. If the weight exceeds the free allowance, passengers will be levied extra charges^[12]. Passengers found en route or at the destination with unbooked or partially booked luggage that weighs more than the free allowance/maximum limit will be penalized as per the rules^[12].

The minimum penalty for carrying luggage beyond the permissible limit is Rs. 30, and additional charges may apply based on the excess weight and distance traveled^[12].

Passenger Rights and Responsibilities

Key Passenger Rights

1. **Right to compensation for train delays:** If a train is delayed by more than 3 hours and you decide not to travel, you are entitled to a full refund of your ticket fare^[13]
2. **Right to a full refund on cancelled tickets:** Passengers can claim a 100% refund on their ticket fare if they cancel their ticket within the prescribed time limits. In cases where the train is cancelled or rescheduled by more than 3 hours, a full refund is granted without any cancellation charges^[13]
3. **Right to a clean and hygienic journey:** Under the 'Clean My Coach' initiative, passengers can request cleaning services by sending an SMS with their PNR number to 139 or using the Railways' official mobile app^[13]
4. **Right to quality food and water:** Passengers on trains with catering facilities have the right to hygienic food and clean drinking water. If the food served is of poor quality, they can file a complaint via the 'Rail Madad App', 139 helpline, or X (@IRCTCofficial)^[13]
5. **Right to emergency medical assistance:** Indian Railways provides medical aid on board. Passengers can request immediate help by contacting the train staff, station authorities, or dialling 139^[13]
6. **Right to security and women's safety:** Passengers can seek help from the Railway Protection Force (RPF) for security concerns. Women passengers travelling alone or in distress can reach out to the RPF helpline (182) for immediate assistance^[13]
7. **Right to lodge complaints and claim lost items:** Passengers can file complaints about theft, harassment, lost belongings, or poor services via the Rail Madad App, 139 helpline, or by lodging an FIR at the next railway station^[13]

Passenger Responsibilities

1. Carry valid identity proof that matches the details provided during ticket booking
2. Adhere to luggage limitations and pay for excess baggage when applicable
3. Maintain cleanliness and hygiene in trains and on railway premises
4. Report suspicious activities or unattended items to railway authorities
5. Cooperate with railway staff during ticket checking and security procedures
6. Respect co-passengers and avoid causing disturbance during the journey
7. Use emergency pull chains only in genuine emergency situations

Emergency Services and Helpline Numbers

Important Railway Helplines

1. **GENERAL ENQUIRY** (Single Number for all Railways query): **139**^[14]
2. **TOLL FREE NUMBER (ENQUIRY)**: **1800-111-139**^[14]
3. **GENERAL COMPLAINT** (Grievances): **138**^[14]
4. **ACCIDENTS AND SAFETY**: **1072**^[14]
5. **RAILWAY POLICE**: **1800 11 1322**^[14]
6. **CATERING COMPLAINT OR SUGGESTION**: **1800 11 1321**^[14]
7. **IRCTC HELPLINE** (for internet ticketing, tatkal bookings, and refund-related matters): **14646**^[14]
8. **HELPLINE FOR CHILDREN AND WOMEN**: **182**^[14]
9. **STATE ZONAL WISE RAILWAY POLICE**: **1512**^[14]
10. **LOST/MISSING CHILD HELP**: **1098**^[14]
11. **E-CATERING**: **1323**^[14]

Emergency Procedures

1. **Medical Emergencies**: Contact the Train Superintendent/TTE immediately or call 139
2. **Security Concerns**: Alert the on-board RPF personnel or call 182
3. **Train Accidents**: Follow instructions from railway staff, use emergency exits when advised
4. **Lost Baggage**: Report to the TTE on the train or at the destination station's lost property office
5. **Unattended Items**: Do not touch or move suspicious items; inform railway staff or security personnel

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Ticket Booking and Reservations

Q: How far in advance can I book a train ticket?

A: Regular tickets can be booked up to 120 days in advance, excluding the date of journey. Tatkal tickets can be booked one day in advance, excluding the journey date.

Q: What is the procedure for booking Tatkal tickets?

A: Tatkal booking opens at 10:00 AM for AC classes and 11:00 AM for non-AC classes, one day before the journey date (excluding the journey date). You can book through the IRCTC website, mobile app, or reservation counters, with a maximum of 4 passengers per PNR^[3] ^[4].

Q: Can I transfer my confirmed ticket to someone else?

A: No, transfer of tickets is not allowed except in specific cases (blood relations, government officials, or students of same educational institution) and requires proper documentation and authorization from railway authorities^[2].

Cancellation and Refunds

Q: How do I cancel my train ticket and get a refund?

A: E-tickets can be cancelled online through the IRCTC website or app. Counter tickets need to be submitted at the reservation counter with a cancellation form. Refunds are processed based on how far in advance you cancel and the ticket status.

Q: Can I get a refund for a Tatkal ticket?

A: Generally, no refund is granted on cancellation of confirmed Tatkal tickets except in cases of train cancellation, delay exceeding 3 hours, or if the Railways are unable to provide accommodation^[5] ^[11].

Q: What happens if I miss my train?

A: You can apply for a Ticket Deposit Receipt (TDR) within specified time limits. Refund amount varies based on the circumstances and how quickly you file the TDR after train departure.

Travel Rules

Q: Can I travel with a waiting list ticket?

A: Starting May 1, 2025, passengers with waiting list tickets will not be allowed to board trains in Sleeper and AC classes. Such passengers may only travel in general compartments^[9] ^[10].

Q: How much luggage can I carry on the train?

A: The free luggage allowance varies by class: AC 1-Tier (70kg), AC-2 tier (50kg), AC 3 tier/AC Chair Car (40kg), Sleeper class (40kg), and Second Class (35kg). Additional charges apply for excess luggage^[12].

Q: What ID proofs are valid for train travel?

A: Valid photo IDs include Aadhaar Card, Voter ID, Passport, Driving License, PAN Card, and government-issued photo ID cards.

Special Categories and Situations

Q: What facilities are available for senior citizens?

A: Senior citizens (men aged 60+ and women aged 58+) get priority in lower berth allocation, have a special quota for reservations, and can avail of concessions on ticket fares. They should carry proof of age during the journey^[7] ^[6].

Q: What should I do if I face harassment or security issues during my journey?

A: Contact the on-board TTE or RPF personnel immediately. Women passengers can call the dedicated helpline 182 for assistance. You can also lodge complaints through the Rail Madad App or by calling 139^[13] ^[14].

Q: How can I get medical assistance during my journey?

A: Inform the TTE or train staff about the medical emergency. You can also call 139 for assistance. Major stations have medical facilities and first aid is available on most trains^[13].

Conclusion

The Indian Railways continues to evolve its rules and regulations to enhance passenger experience, safety, and operational efficiency. The most significant upcoming change in 2025 is the restriction on waiting list passengers boarding Sleeper and AC class coaches, which aims to reduce overcrowding and ensure confirmed passengers receive their entitled accommodations^[9] ^[10].

Understanding these comprehensive guidelines will help passengers plan their journeys better, avoid penalties, and ensure a smooth, comfortable travel experience. Always check the official Indian Railways or IRCTC websites for the most current rules before traveling, as regulations may be updated periodically.

For any assistance during your journey, the universal helpline number 139 serves as a one-stop solution for most railway-related queries and emergencies. Additionally, specialized helplines are available for specific issues such as security concerns, catering complaints, and women's safety^[14].

Remember that adhering to these regulations not only helps you avoid inconvenience and penalties but also contributes to a better travel experience for all passengers across India's vast railway network.

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1. [https://iricen.gov.in/iricen/other_manual/SCR G&SR UPDATED AS16 HR.pdf](https://iricen.gov.in/iricen/other_manual/SCR_G&SR_UPDATED_AS16_HR.pdf)
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14. <https://indianhelpline.com/indian-railways>