

Tuning up for airport security

Boarding an airplane with a precious musical instrument can be a worrying experience, but it doesn't have to be. And while some musicians are frequent fliers, others may never have taken an instrument in the air before.

CATSA knows that instruments can be rare and fragile, and wants to work with you to make sure you, and your instrument, arrive safely at your destination. Here's what you need to know, and the steps you can take, to make the security-screening process harmonious.



Passengers *do* have some choices about how to go through security.

Carry-on or checked?

You can choose between checking your instrument with the airline or bringing it into the cabin as carry-on luggage.

Consult your airline ahead of time to determine if your instrument qualifies as a carry-on (depending on its size, it may have to be checked).

- Remember that most airlines limit the number of carry-on items you may bring.
- The airline may give you the option of purchasing a separate ticket for your instrument.
- If you opt for carry-on, you must comply with the rules for permitted items.

Whether carry-on or checked, it is up to you to ensure that fragile items are packed properly and safely.

X-ray or manual search?

If you opt to bring your instrument as carry-on, or purchase a separate ticket, you'll bring it with you through the security screening checkpoint. You have a choice here as well: you can allow your instrument case to be scanned with the X-ray machine or you may request a manual search.

Sending your instrument through the X-ray

If the instrument case is small enough to go through the X-ray machine safely, place it in a bin – don't hesitate to ask for assistance if you're not sure, and mention if the item is fragile.

Choosing a manual search

If the case is too large for the X-ray machine, or if you prefer to bypass the machine, your case and instrument will be manually searched by a screening officer.

- The screening officer will be careful with your instrument, however you should mention to the officer that the item is valuable, and if it is fragile.
- You may ask the officer to explain each step of the process before taking the action, so you can provide any special handling instructions.
- The officer will need to remove the instrument from its case in order to conduct a visual inspection of the instrument and a manual inspection of the case, including an explosive trace detection swab.
- Afterwards, the officer will offer to repack the case or let you repack it yourself.

Screening officers handle all passengers' belongings with care, but please let the officers know how important your instrument is to you and provide special handling information as early as possible during the screening process.

Be ready for automated screening lanes — at home and abroad

New CATSA Plus security lines have been installed at some airports in Canada, and there are similar automated lines in other countries. The new lines allow several passengers to divest their belongings at once, all sending bins to the X-ray machine. This makes the process more efficient, but travellers should be aware that it also means their bins may be interspersed with those of other passengers, and they may lose sight of their bins momentarily as they travel along the conveyor belt and through the X-ray.



At CATSA Plus lines, remember:

- You control how your items are divested and can choose to put your instrument case in your final bin so you can watch for it exiting the X-ray.
- As with regular screening lines, you may request a manual search so your instrument case does not need to be placed on the conveyor belt.