

## Budget airlines

The results of a new poll reveal the best airlines ... and the worst. How far should consumers and the airline industry trust the findings of such surveys?

1 Which is your favourite airline? Why? You may wish to use some of the words and phrases below.

punctuality	customer service	in-flight entertainment	catering
comfort	convenience	loyalty scheme	cost

2 Match the headings (a–d) to the correct paragraphs (1–4) in the article.

(a) A greener future? .... (b) Survey findings .... (c) Tight budgets .... (d) Customer complaints ....

### Airlines: travel survey results

[1] TripAdvisor, the online travel service, has polled 4,000 of its users across the world. The company asked people a range of questions about travel, including which airlines they liked and disliked, and why. British Airways was voted the best airline for the second year running, which is fitting given that the company's famous slogan is: "the world's favourite airline". For US travellers, America Airlines comes out on top, due to punctuality and staff friendliness.

[2] How far can consumers trust such surveys? One well-known low-cost carrier, EasyJet, did poorly in the poll. The airline voted as the 'least liked' was RyanAir. Many reasons were given: lack of comfort - not enough legroom - unfriendly staff and delays. Yet RyanAir is set to carry no fewer than 42 million people this year. If these low-cost airlines are so poorly rated, why are they so popular? Can it simply be the low cost of flights? RyanAir itself disputes the data from the TripAdvisor survey. It claims to have few delays, and a high level of customer satisfaction.

[3] Budget airlines have revolutionised air travel, making flying affordable for many. To achieve low costs, these airlines make savings elsewhere, charging for food and drinks on board for instance. RyanAir's plans for the future include offering online gambling on board planes. Some companies have introduced luggage fees – a cost payable before flying to send luggage in the aircraft hold. This is an unpopular measure with many travellers, especially as terrorist scares this year resulted in restrictions in carry-on luggage across many airports. Terrorism, according to the survey, is the travellers' greatest fear when it comes to taking to the skies.

[4] These are troubled times for the airline industry. Budget airlines are currently under attack due to fears about global warming. Many blame the low-cost carriers for pushing up the volume of air travel, and therefore the volume of carbon emissions. They argue for imposing taxes. RyanAir's controversial CEO, Michael O'Leary, is strongly opposed to such taxation. How damaging will further increases in flights be? What will the future hold for air travel?

3 Read the whole article. What were the survey findings? What are the problems faced by the airline industry?

4 Decide if these words from the article are nouns, verbs or if they can be both. Mark them N, V or N/V.

poll ....	trust ....	generate ....	delay ....	rate ....	survey ....	staff ....
fee ....	gambling ...	budget ....	cover....	blame ....	vote ....	luggage ...
result ....	claim ....	fear ....	attack ....	dispute...	measure ....	scare ....

5 Discuss the following questions in small groups. Be ready to report back on your ideas to the class.

- How effective are customer satisfaction surveys? Give reasons for your answer.
- Do you agree with paying extra for on-board catering and sending luggage?
- Should budget airlines be taxed for their carbon emissions? Why / why not?
- What do you think will happen in the future of the airline industry?