

# Aircraft Boarding Comparison

Summary of Mythbusters episode, screened 17 September 2012

## Parameters

- Simulated aircraft - single aisle, 174 seats: Business, 3 rows 2+2; Economy, 27 rows 3+3 = 174 total
- 173 volunteer passengers
- 5 % of passengers were 'Wild Cards' mandated to cause disruptive/delaying behaviour – carrying babes-in-arms, visit toilet & return against the 'tide', wrong seat, meticulous coat folders
- Satisfaction Score - aggregate of passenger votes, cast after each boarding trial: Great (+1), Okay (0), or Terrible (-1)

Method	Time	Satisfaction Score
NB. In all Methods Business Class and parents with children were asked to board first		
1 Back to Front 3 equal blocks, Rear, Middle, Front	24:29	19
2 Random, assigned seats	17:15	12
3 WILMA straight Window, Middle, Aisle	14:55	102
4 WILMA block 10 groups – 2 Business, then 4 Window/ 4 Middle/Aisle alternating from rear	15:07	105
5 Random, no assigned seats	14:07	- 5
6 Reverse Pyramid 6 zones, zone & seat number printed on ticket	15:10	113

## Comments by Mythbusters

1. Slowest by far was Back to Front, the most common Method used by airlines. It also scored poorly on Satisfaction. "Myth CONFIRMED".
2. Fastest was Random/no assigned seats, but it was also least popular. Passengers didn't need to find assigned seats – "they took the first they came across, tending to fill from the front". Passengers "hated it" and it was "overwhelmingly voted Terrible".
3. The most orderly Methods (WILMA, Reverse Pyramid) were almost as fast as Random/no assigned seats but scored manyfold better on Satisfaction.
4. Mythbusters expressed surprise that the fastest Method (Random/no assigned seats) was so disliked and observed that this result revealed "An interesting window into human psychology. Humans like structure, we want to know there's structure even if it takes us longer. It appeals to our sense of justice that things are happening for a reason."

5. Mythbusters added that “Despite surveys indicating that waiting and queuing is the single biggest complaint from frequent flyers, it seems a sense of order and structure is just as important.”
6. The take-home message directed towards airlines was that they should lift their game.