



Q: I'm a mature woman who travels regularly on business, and this just happened to me once too often. On my last flight, an annoying couple plopped down next to me, and immediately began to ask all kinds of questions about myself.

They had obviously been drinking heavily in the airport bar, and their breath and clothing reeked of old tobacco and booze. After take off, and I could leave my seat, I asked the flight attendant to move me. She said all seats were taken. I had a miserable flight, but what could I do?

A: If it was a short flight, you'd probably have to hold your breath and suffer through it. When an unpleasant seatmate tries to converse, just cut him off quickly by politely saying you have business papers to read or you need to nap. Then, with an obvious gesture, turn away.

If the unpleasantness happens on an overseas or cross-continent flight, you have the right to be moved to another seat. On all airline flights, there are seats in the back for flight crews to use. If you had explained that your experience was extremely unpleasant, the attendants should have allowed you to sit there. If the attendants don't cooperate, after your flight report them to the airline's consumer relations department.