



United Fare Codes and Buckets

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PDF Version of the webpage (maximum 10 pages)

United Airlines Fare Buckets

Fare Classes, Codes, and What They Really Mean

Airline referenced: United Airlines

1. What Fare Buckets Really Are

United does not sell seats—it sells fare classes, also called fare buckets.
Each bucket is identified by a single-letter code and represents:

A specific price level
A defined set of rules (refundability, changes, upgrades)
Priority in inventory control

Multiple passengers can sit next to each other on the same flight having paid very different prices because they booked from different fare buckets.

2. United Airlines Fare Class Hierarchy (Top to Bottom)

Below is the practical hierarchy, from most expensive / flexible to cheapest / most restrictive.

First & Polaris Business Class Buckets

J

Full-fare Business / Polaris
Fully refundable
Maximum flexibility
Highest priority for upgrades and changes
Rarely discounted

C

Discounted Business
Refundable or semi-flexible
Common for corporate travelers

D

Discounted Economy

United Fare Buckets

Time Before Departure	Buckets Typically Open	What This Means for Price
90–120 days	K, L, T, S, V, W, Q, H, U, M	Cheapest pricing window
60–90 days	L, T, S, V, W, Q, H, U, M	Lowest buckets begin closing
45–60 days	V, W, Q, H, U, M	First noticeable price increases
30–45 days	Q, H, U, M	Mid-tier fares dominate
21–30 days	H, U, M	Prices rise steadily
14–21 days	M, B	Major price jump risk
7–14 days	B, Y	Expensive economy only
0–7 days	Y only	Maximum pricing, even if empty

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United Fare Bucket Types and Codes

Class Type	Fare Codes	Price Level	Flexibility
Business	J, C, D	Very High	Very High
Premium Plus	O, A, R	High	Medium
Economy (High)	Y, B, M	High	Medium-High
Economy (Mid)	E, U, H, Q	Medium	Medium
Economy (Low)	V, W, S, T, L, K	Low	Low
Basic Economy	N	Lowest	Very Low

United Fare Buckets and how to Spot Price Jumps

Typical Closure Timeline and How to Spot Price Jumps Before They Happen

1. Typical United Fare Bucket Closure Chart

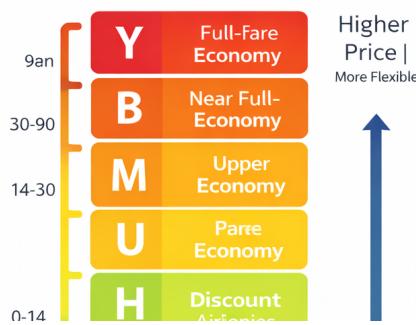
> Important: These are typical patterns, not guarantees. AI-driven revenue management can accelerate or delay closures, but this chart holds true on most domestic and many international routes.

Fare Bucket Closure Timeline (Relative to Departure)

Time Before Departure	Buckets Typically Open	What This Means for Price
90–120 days	K, L, T, S, V, W, Q, H, U, M	Cheapest pricing window
60–90 days	L, T, S, V, W, Q, H, U, M	Lowest buckets begin closing
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United Airlines Fare Bucket Ladder





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United Versus Delta Fare Buckets

Factor	United	Delta
Discount bucket longevity	Short	Longer
First major price jump	Early	Later
AI aggressiveness	High	Moderate
Empty seat tolerance	High	Lower
Last-minute shock pricing	Very High	Moderate

Behavior	United	Delta
Overnight price jumps	Common	Rare
Gradual daily increases	Limited	Common
Bucket-driven cliffs	Yes	Less often
Calendar volatility	High	Moderate

Time Before Departure	United	Typical Behavior	Delta	Typical Behavior
90-120 days	Deep discounts wide open (K, L, T, S)	Deep discounts open, often fewer seats		
60-90 days	Lowest buckets begin closing	Discounts remain but inventory tightens		
45-60 days	Q begins disappearing	Delta still selling lower fares		
30-45 days	Q/H close rapidly	Delta often holds mid discounts		
21-30 days	M becomes dominant	Delta still mixes H/M equivalents		
14-21 days	Sharp price jump	Gradual increases		
7-14 days	B/Y dominate	Some mid fares still appear		
0-7 days	Full fare economy only	High fares, but occasional softening		

Below is a publication-ready article written from a fare ticketing specialist and travel agent perspective, comparing United vs. Delta fare bucket timing—how quickly cheap fares disappear, when price jumps occur, and what that means for travelers.

Page Title

United vs Delta Fare Bucket Timing
How Two Major Airlines Close Discounts and Drive Price Jumps

Meta Description

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