

Being Tired or Being Fatigued? Know the Difference



Know the difference. Stay safe.

After a long duty or night shift, everybody has felt tired.

But fatigue is different — it can affect focus, reaction time, and safety.
Knowing the right word can help you communicate clearly in reports and briefings...



Key Vocabulary - Fatigue & Sleep (Aviation)

Keyword	Definition	Example
Tired	General physical or mental weariness, reversible with rest.	“Pilots reported being tired after several consecutive flights.”
Fatigue	Extreme tiredness that affects performance, not always solved by rest.	“Being fatigued can reduce attention during communication with ATC.”
Sleep debt (deprivation)	Accumulated sleep your body still needs because of previous sleep loss.	“Controllers reported sleep debt during night shifts.”
Sleep deprivation	Condition of not getting enough sleep to perform normally.	“Being sleep deprived can delay pilots’ reaction times.”
Jet lag	Temporary disruption of the sleep-wake cycle caused by crossing multiple time zones in a short period.	“Pilots reported being jet-lagged after long-haul flights.” ✈️ Not common for ATC, but frequent for pilots and cabin crew.
Circadian disruption	Alteration of natural body rhythms due to irregular schedules or night duty.	“Both pilots and controllers reported being affected by circadian disruption.”

Mini Quiz – Test Yourself

Choose the correct option 📌

- 1.- After 14 hours of duty, the pilot was (tired / being tired / fatigued).
- 2.- Working night shifts, ATC often experience (circadian disruption / autopilot mode / coffee break).
- 3.- If you don't sleep enough all week, you build up (sleep debt / flight debt / fatigue mode).

(Respuestas: 1. fatigued 2. circadian disruption 3. sleep debt)

✈️ We know the schedule can be tough.

Long nights, early mornings — they all take a toll.
Keep learning, stay sharp, and take care of yourself.

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