



## Airline Frequent Flyer Programs

It's been forty years since I earned my first airline "mile". These industry programs became almost universal over a few years and were pretty simple to understand. Fly a mile and earn a mile and after accumulating a specific number of miles get a free ticket. There were a number of subtle variations like if you didn't earn any miles over two years your mileage would be forfeit. Some allowed you to use small amounts to upgrade to first class on a paid ticket and many started programs with affiliated airlines.

Some added shopping and restaurant programs to encourage you to accumulate more miles and most started awarding bonus miles for getting and using their branded credit cards. Years ago business travelers like me benefitted the most because we were logging constant miles and while our employers paid for the tickets we got to use the free ticket awards.

Well things always change. Our first realization came about six years ago when a roundtrip flight to Australia only earned 5,000 miles instead of the 20,000 that we flew. It seemed we had bought a discount ticket and the seat code had a Z in it (American Airlines).

Isn't it surprising how one company makes a change and all the rest follow. Between one and two years ago miles stopped being miles traveled but became a calculation based on the price of the ticket (that partial award based on the seat code also can still apply, please refer to the fine print).

Today we find it very difficult to calculate the actual miles we will be awarded with the award being fare based with additional reductions at times based on the ticket class or the writing agency.

Because most of these frequent flyer programs have evolved into complex

constructs bringing together a number of businesses, the airlines have to be very specific regarding the rules of their award programs. Now the fine print covering the earning of miles looks more like an insurance policy than a marketing promotion.

Still if we are going to fly and regardless if you're a frequent flier or even a not-so-frequent flier, not signing up for airline award programs is like leaving money on the tray table.

To provide information on some of these programs the following descriptions have been copied from the program web sites of each airline:

### Delta



For Delta-marketed (flight numbers that include the "DL" airline code) or Delta-ticketed (featuring a ticket number beginning with "006") flights, SkyMiles Members will earn miles based on ticket price, at the

rate of 5 miles per U.S. Dollar (USD) spent, including base fare and carrier-imposed surcharges, but excluding government-imposed taxes and fees.

Earn miles in the air with 20+ partner airlines including Virgin Atlantic, Air France, KLM and Aeromexico. Earn miles on the ground with hotel, accommodation, car, ride sharing, shopping and dining partners.

With the Delta SkyMiles Credit Card from American Express, you earn miles on every eligible purchase on the Card.

## United

MileagePlus is much more than a frequent flyer program — you can earn miles with your daily activities and use them on trips, experiences, dining and more. Even better? Now those miles you earned will never expire.

Download United MileagePlus X our new app that allows you to earn miles on the go. After you log in with your MileagePlus account. Your account information, including any payment cards stored in your profile, will sync up and be ready to go for purchases to get you on your way to earning more award miles.

United MileagePlus members will earn MileagePlus award miles based on the fare at 5 miles per dollar value. Flights operated by United and United Express, and Flights operated by a Star Alliance™ or MileagePlus partner airline for tickets issued by United (ticket number starting with "016")

Tickets containing Basic Economy (N) fares are eligible to receive award miles based on fare at 5 miles per fare dollar and MileagePlus status, but will not receive any Premier qualifying credit.



## American

As a member of the AAdvantage® program, you'll earn miles when you fly on American, oneworld® and other participating airlines, as well as our partners. There are over 1,000 ways to earn miles with our partners – from car rentals and hotel stays, to dining out and using credit cards. Then, you can use your miles for:

- Flights to nearly 1,000 destinations worldwide
- Upgrades
- Vacations, car rentals and hotels
- Other retail products



American Award miles are awarded based on ticket price (includes base fare plus carrier-imposed fees, but excludes government-imposed taxes and fees). The more you spend, and the higher your elite status level, the more you earn.

- AAdvantage® member – 5 miles/U.S. dollar
- Gold member – 7 miles/U.S. dollar (40% bonus)
- Platinum member – 8 miles/U.S. dollar (60% bonus)
- Platinum Pro member – 9 miles/U.S. dollar (80% bonus)
- Executive Platinum member – 11 miles/U.S. dollar (120% bonus)

## Southwest

As a Rapid Rewards® Member, you earn points by flying or spending with our partners and can use them how and when you want. Plus, if you're short on points, you can always purchase more to get that reward you've been eyeing. Booking a vacation without worrying about blackout dates. That's Transferency.®

**Southwest Earn When You Fly** The amount and type of fare you choose determines how many points you earn. Now you have another reason to go for that Business Select® Fare.

- Business Select® 12 Points Earned per dollar
- Anytime 10 Pts Per Dollar
- Wanna Get Away® 6 Pts Per Dollar



## JetBlue

JetBlue TrueBlue Program. No blackout dates on JetBlue operated flights. Use points for any seat, any time. Earn at least 6 points per eligible dollar when you book on jetblue.com. Points don't expire. Earn and share points together with Family Pooling.

There was a time we made choices to stay with the major airlines based on what the points were worth to us and what we would save in dollars flying with a discount airline. Because now they've heavily discounted the number of award points we get, we find we are flying discount airlines much more often. Cash in pocket beats points almost every time

Still we keep up with our memberships in those frequent flyer programs because there is no reason to not earn points when our only option is to fly those majors.