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How to Earn Southwest A-List, A-List Preferred, and Companion Pass Status

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Travel can be transformative. Whether you dream of visiting Walt Disney World with your kids, scuba diving in Cozumel or watching a Broadway show in New York, the trip of a lifetime could be one plane ride away.

Unfortunately, travel isn't always as affordable, convenient or comfortable as it is alluring. That is, unless you have airline status.

When you have achieved a certain status level on your preferred airline, travel becomes instantly more accessible and infinitely more agreeable. This is especially true when your preferred airline is Southwest Airlines, which is known for its low fares and excellent service — but also for its no-frills flights. However, when you earn status as part of the airline's Rapid Rewards® loyalty program, the frills start flowing.

Specifically, Southwest has three status tiers that afford you extra benefits when you fly: A-List, A-List Preferred and Companion Pass.

A-List and A-List Preferred give you priority over other passengers when you fly, because Southwest has open instead of assigned seating, that means you can not only board faster, but also snag better seats. Companion Pass, on the other hand, is a lucrative offer that lets a designated travel companion fly with you for free on all your qualifying Southwest flights for a full calendar year.

Of course, before you can enjoy status on Southwest, you have to earn it. Here's what you need to know about how to get there.

In this article:

- What are qualifying points for Southwest status?
- When do points counts for status?
  - How do you earn A-List status?
  - How do you earn A-List Preferred Status?
  - How do you earn Companion Pass Status?
- What activity counts toward A-List and A-List Preferred status?
- What activity counts toward Companion Pass status?
- Which credit cards help you earn A-List and Companion Pass status?
- Does Southwest match status?

What are qualifying points for Southwest status?

Southwest uses two different kinds of point balances to track whether you qualify for A-List, A-List Preferred or Companion Pass status:

- **A-List "True Qualifying Points"**
- **Companion Pass "Companion Qualifying Points"**

Keep in mind these are just balances for tracking purposes. They have nothing to do with the number of Rapid Rewards points you have available for booking award flights. And you can earn both kinds of qualifying points at the same time.

When do points count for status?

Your points begin counting toward status each year on Jan. 1, and can accumulate until Dec. 31 before the tally resets again in January. Once you reach your goal, you'll enjoy status for the remainder of the year and for all of the following year. If you qualify really early in the year, that means you can enjoy status for nearly two years.

How do you earn A-List status?

Earn 35,000 Tier Qualifying Points OR fly 25 one-way flights (paid flights, not award tickets or flights where you're a free companion).

How do you earn A-List Preferred status?

Earn 70,000 Tier Qualifying Points OR fly 50 one-way flights (paid flights, not award tickets or flights where you're a free companion).

How do you earn Companion Pass status?

Earn 125,000 Companion Qualifying Points OR fly 100 one-way flights (paid flights, not award tickets or flights where you're a free companion).

Learn more: Southwest Companion Pass basics: How to earn and enjoy the pass

Note: Earning Companion Pass status won't earn you A-List status unless you also earn enough A-List Tier Qualifying Points. If you earn Companion Pass status without much flying, that means you probably won't get A-List status. If you earn it mostly through flying, however, you'll likely end up with both A-List and Companion Pass status.

What activity counts toward A-List and A-List Preferred Status?

- **Revenue flights:** Revenue flights are flights that are paid for using travel funds, including vouchers.
- **Southwest Rapid Rewards® Premier Credit Card points:** You can earn 1,500 Tier Qualifying Points per $10,000 you spend on the card, up to a maximum of 15,000 Tier Qualifying Points each year. These points are separate from the Rapid Rewards® points you earn and use for award flights. Only the Premier and Priority level credit cards can earn these points, not the lower-cost Plus card.

What activity does NOT count toward A-list and A-List Preferred Status?

- **Points transferred** into your Southwest account
- **Gifted points**
- **Introductory bonuses** on your Southwest Premier card
- **Points earned from Southwest Rapid Rewards partners**
- **Special promotional flight bonuses**
- **Points you buy**
- **Companion Pass travel**

Note: Points earned from the Southwest Rapid Rewards® Premier Credit Card hit your account after your statement has closed, not when you make a purchase. So if it's close to the end of the year, there's a risk your points will hit the account after Dec. 31, in which case they will not count toward qualifying in the current year.

What activity counts toward Companion Pass status?

- **Revenue flights:** Revenue flights are flights that are paid for using travel funds, including vouchers.
- **Southwest Rapid Rewards Partners:** Base points you earn from Rapid Rewards partners — including hotels, car rentals, Rapid Rewards Shopping and Rapid Rewards Dining — count toward Companion Pass status.
- **Southwest Rapid Rewards Credit Card points**: Points you earn from any Southwest Rapid Rewards Credit Card — the Southwest Rapid Rewards® Plus Credit Card, Southwest Rapid Rewards® Premier Credit Card or Southwest Rapid Rewards® Priority Credit Card — count toward Companion Pass status. This includes introductory bonuses.

What activity does NOT count toward Companion Pass status?

- **Points transferred into your Southwest account**, including those transferred from credit card rewards programs, such as Chase Ultimate Rewards® points earned with either the Chase Sapphire Preferred® Card or the Chase Sapphire Reserve®
- **Gifted points**
- **Tier, flight, partner or promotion bonus points** (with the exception of the Rapid Rewards Credit Cards)
- **Points you buy**

Here's the official policy from Southwest Airlines:

"Purchased points, points transferred between members, points converted from hotel and car loyalty programs, and e-Rewards, e-Miles, Valued Opinions and Diners Club points earned from Rapid Rewards program enrollment, tier bonuses, flight bonuses and partner bonuses (excluding bonus points earned on Southwest Rapid Rewards Credit Cards from Chase) do not count toward Companion Pass."

Which credit cards can help you earn A-List and Companion Pass status?

As stated above, you can earn A-List and Companion Pass status either by booking a qualifying flight or by making purchases with a Southwest Rapid Rewards Credit Card. In case of the latter, you have a choice of five cards:

Southwest Rapid Rewards® Plus Credit Card

Southwest Rapid Rewards® Plus Credit Card

★★★★★ (0)

Apply Now

Expand Details +

Earn 40,000 points after you spend $1,000 on purchases in the first 3 months your account is open. Cardmembers earn 2 points per $1 spent on Southwest® purchases and Rapid Rewards® hotel and car rental partner purchases, 1 point per $1 spent on all other purchases. Additionally, cardmembers get 3,000 bonus points on their cardmember anniversary. The annual fee is $69.

Read our full review of the Southwest Rapid Rewards® Plus Credit Card.

Southwest Rapid Rewards® Priority Credit Card

Southwest Rapid Rewards® Priority Credit Card

★★★★★ (2)

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Earn 40,000 points after you spend $1,000 on purchases in the first 3 months your account is open. Cardmembers earn 2 points per $1 spent on Southwest® purchases and Rapid Rewards® hotel and car rental partner purchases, 1 point per $1 spent on all other purchases. Additionally, cardmembers get 7,500 bonus points on their cardmember anniversary, four upgraded boardings per year, up to a $75 Southwest annual travel credit, 25% cash back on all in-flight purchases, $0 foreign transaction fees and 1,500 Tier Qualifying Points per $10,000 in purchases toward A-List and A-List Preferred status. The annual fee is $149.

Read our full review of the Southwest Rapid Rewards® Priority Credit Card.

Southwest Rapid Rewards® Premier Credit Card

Southwest Rapid Rewards® Premier Credit Card

★★★★★ (8)

Apply Now

Expand Details +

Earn 40,000 points after you spend $1,000 on purchases in the first 3 months your account is open. Additionally, cardmembers earn 2 points per $1 spent on Southwest® purchases and Rapid Rewards® hotel and car rental partner purchases, 1 point per $1 spent on all other purchases. Also, 6,000 bonus points are awarded every year on their cardmember anniversary, $0 foreign transaction fees and 1,500 Tier Qualifying Points per $10,000 in purchases toward A-List and A-List Preferred status. The annual fee is $99.

Read our full review of the Southwest Rapid Rewards® Premier Credit Card.

Southwest Rapid Rewards® Premier Business Credit Card

Southwest Rapid Rewards® Premier Business Credit Card

★★★★★ (3)

Apply Now

Expand Details +

Earn 60,000 points after you spend $3,000 on purchases in the first 3 months your account is open. Cardmembers also earn 2 points per $1 spent on Southwest® purchases. Additionally, cardmembers get 6,000 bonus points on their cardmember anniversary, and 1,500 Tier Qualifying Points per $10,000 in purchases toward A-List and A-List Preferred status, $0 foreign transaction fees. The annual fee is $99.

Read our full review of the Southwest Rapid Rewards® Premier Business Credit Card.

Southwest Rapid Rewards® Performance Business Credit Card

Earn 70,000 points after you spend $5,000 on purchases in the first 3 months. Plus, earn an additional 30,000 points after you spend $25,000 on purchases in the first 6 months. Cardmembers also earn 3 points per $1 spent on Southwest® purchases, 2 points per $1 spent on social media and search engine advertising, Internet, cable and phone services, 1 point per $1 spent on all other purchases. Additionally, cardmembers get 9,000 bonus points on their cardmember anniversary, Global Entry or TSA Precheck application fee credit, four upgraded boardings per year, in-flight Wi-Fi credits, no foreign transaction fees and 1,500 Tier Qualifying Points per $10,000 in purchases toward A-List and A-List Preferred status. The annual fee is $199.

Read our full review of the Southwest Rapid Rewards® Performance Business Credit Card.

Does Southwest match status?

Southwest will match your status from another domestic airline. All you have to do is join the Rapid Rewards program, then send Southwest an email with your name, Rapid Rewards account number and proof of your current elite status with a domestic airline other than Southwest.

Learn more about the Rapid Rewards program with our Southwest Rapid Rewards Guide.

Once Southwest verifies your information, you'll be granted A-List status. Furthermore, Southwest will extend your A-List status for an additional 12 months if you fly three round trips (or six one-way) within 90 days of confirmation of your enrollment.

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