

Useful guide to get started

American Express Gold Rewards Card



Flytrippers Valuation of \approx \$915

Rewards: \approx \$1065

Fees: \$150 net (\$250 minus \$100 travel credit that can be cashed out)

Rewards obtained with the welcome bonus

71,000 American Express Membership Rewards points

(limited-time increased offer that ended September 20, 2022)

Welcome

Here's the complete guide on **how to get started** with your new American Express Gold Card (officially, the American Express® Gold *Rewards* Card).

Another guide on **how to maximize** your Amex points (and plenty more pro tips) will follow, so stay subscribed to this free newsletter.

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3 things to know before getting started

Before getting into your card's details, here are a few things you need to know first.

1. Warning for the future

First of all, congratulations: You've taken advantage of one of the best welcome bonuses in Canada. You'll definitely grow fond of great welcome bonuses, but having gotten such a great one comes with a risk.

The risk is thinking that all other bonuses will be as high as this one!

It's easy to get a lot of travel rewards every year when you know how to do it, but typically, a welcome bonus worth \approx \$300 is very good. So **don't take this amazing deal for granted** too much and make sure to unlock the full bonus (and to use it well after if you want to maximize its value).

2. Important reminder regarding bonus details for all cards

Many people have been writing to us saying they can't find **the welcome bonus offer details anywhere**. Indeed, for any card (from any issuer), the welcome offer details are never included in the documents you get in the mail (or anywhere else).

That's the way it is. Always.

It's important to write down the details when you apply for a card. It's perfectly normal that you don't know this when you're first starting out, which is why we've created [a free checklist](#) to use every time you apply for a new card (and why we're creating a page with the checklist and all card links on our website).

This guide will of course include the welcome bonus details to make your life easier. But for all your next cards, following the 8 checklist items will help you remember important things like taking a screenshot of the specific offer you're getting. Because offers are constantly changing (that's why we do [a monthly ranking](#), so you can get the right card at the right time).

You can [download the checklist](#) for free right now. There are other equally important notes in it (like a reminder not to cancel your old cards — this has nothing to do with the card you just got: we're talking about the OLD cards you already had).

3. Last general piece of advice

Being well organized will definitely make your life easier throughout your travel rewards journey, so you can also [download our free card tracking template](#).

There are also some useful tools in there (in the 2nd tab in the file).

Details of your welcome bonus offer

First, welcome bonuses usually have a much simpler structure. But because the bonus is so big this time, it actually has several components this time.

The components are **completely independent and separate from one another**. But it's by combining all of them that it gets very rewarding, if you want.

Of course, you always have to look at both sides of the equation, meaning the rewards and the fees.

Here's a summary of your Amex Gold Card welcome bonus (and we'll cover some tips and rules after).

1. REWARDS

You can get **71,000 Amex points** (Flytrippers Valuation of \approx \$1065)

1.1 STANDARD WELCOME BONUS

Spend \$3,000 in 3 months = Get 50,000 points

1.2 SPECIAL RATE AS PART OF THE WELCOME BONUS

Spend \$2,000 of those \$3,000 at grocery stores or at restaurants at a special bonus rate of 10 pts/\$ = Earn 20,000 points

1.3 EARNINGS ON OTHER MINIMUM SPEND

Spend the remaining \$1,000 of those \$3,000 at the base rate of 1 pt/\$ =
Earn 1000 points

2. FEES

You have to pay **\$150 in net fees** (\$250 minus \$100) for this offer

2.1 CARD FEE

Fee of \$250

2.2 \$200 YEARLY TRAVEL CREDIT (CAN BE CASHED OUT)

\$100 travel credit that can be cashed out of the 1st day

3. TOTAL WELCOME BONUS

Rewards: ≈ \$1065 (71,000 Amex points)

Fees: \$150 net (\$250 minus \$100)

Flytrippers Valuation of ≈ **\$915**

Net return rate of **31%** on \$3,000 (minimum spend required)

1. Rewards

Here are the details.

1.1 Standard welcome bonus

(Spend \$3,000 in 3 months = Get 50,000 points)

Just with your regular expenses (including groceries for the 2nd part of the welcome bonus), the \$3,000 in 3 months should still be pretty easy to achieve. It's the equivalent of only **\$231 per week**.

To be clear: for this part of the reward, you don't technically need to make purchases anywhere in particular.

It's just that in order to get the maximum points for the least amount of spending (that's what travel rewards are all about and why welcome bonuses are key), we recommend that you spend \$2,000 of the required \$3,000 at grocery stores (the 2nd part of the bonus).

If you can't reach the \$3,000 organically, here are our [5 tips to reach it more easily](#).

With those tips, most people will be able to not miss out on this welcome bonus.

1.2 Bonus on grocery and restaurant spending

(Spend \$2,000 of the \$3,000 at grocery stores or at restaurants at a special bonus rate of 10 pts/\$ = Earn 20,000 points)

This special bonus rate applies only for 3 months and on a maximum of \$2,000 in spending for 20,000 easy bonus points.

You can check out the full [list of grocery stores that accept Amex cards in Canada](#), but the main ones are Sobeys, Metro, Whole Foods, No Frills, Super C, etc. Finally, Giant Tiger and Circle K/Mac's/Couche-Tard are coded as grocery stores too.

In terms of restaurants, almost all chains accept Amex cards (and many independent restaurants do too). You can see [the complete map](#) of the hundreds of thousands of businesses that accept Amex card.

Of course, **you can buy more than just groceries**: you just have to buy gift cards at one of the merchants that code as a grocery store and then use them somewhere else.

For example, Petro-Canada is not a grocery store... but you can simply buy a Petro-Canada gift card at your grocery store, you can get the 5X bonus. Walmart does not code as a grocery store... but by buying a gift card, you can get the 10X bonus on your Walmart spending (they don't usually have Walmart gift cards in grocery stores so you need to get that one in your convenience store that codes as grocery store). And so on.

There are dozens and dozens of retailers like this if you look at the gift card displays at your local merchant that codes as a grocery store. You can see a [very exhaustive list with pictures](#).

Gift cards are completely free by the way. No fees. However, if you like to take advantage of the purchase insurance and extended warranties that your card offers, use the gift cards only for items for which you do not want these protections.

There are also prepaid credit cards, which are not free: there is an activation fee. However, it may be worth it to pay the fee given the incredible 10X earn rate (to get 10X the points at Costco, for example).

Ideally, you should find a \$500 prepaid Mastercard that has a \$7.95 activation fee in some convenience stores that code as grocery stores.

Choosing the prepaid cards with the higher amounts on them will reduce the fee, because \$7.95 on \$500... that's just a 1.59% fee (you're racking up \approx 15% with the 10X promo, so a net of \approx 13.41% anywhere). If you buy a prepaid card with just \$100 on it... the \$7.95 fee is almost an 8% fee. That's not as profitable.

Doing the math is very important in the world of travel rewards!

We recommend keeping your prepaid cards after they have been used, in case you want to get a refund on something you paid for with them.

1.3 Earnings on other minimum spending

(Spend \$1,000 at the 1X base rate = Earn 1,000 points)

Spending the remaining \$1,000 will give you **a minimum of 1,000 points** at the base rate of 1 point per dollar.

But you can earn even more for this portion if you spend it in a category with a 2X multiplier rate like travel, pharmacies, gas or grocery store expenses (once you've reached the \$2,000 from the 2nd part of the bonus), as explained in the section on earn rates below.

2. Fees

Here are the details.

2.1 Fee

Again, doing the math is important, because even though it says \$250 in fees, it's really just \$150 net thanks to the \$100 annual travel credit that can be cashed out (and thus becomes a statement credit that brings the fees down to \$150 net).

Then, as mentioned in [the free checklist for when you get a new card](#), you should always re-evaluate each card after the 1st year to determine if the benefits of that card are worth it to you: every traveler is different.

2.2 Annual travel credit

This annual travel credit is actually a benefit of the card. To be clear, it has nothing to do with the welcome bonus: every year, having the Amex Gold Card entitles you to this free \$100 to offset the fee.

In theory, the credit is supposed to be used only to pay for travel booked on the Amex Travel portal (unlike points, which can, among other things, give you a "credit" applicable to any expense, no matter where you book).

But it's possible to easily cash it out thanks to the refundable hotel trick if you prefer, so from the 1st month, it becomes a credit on your statement that just lowers the annual fee.

It's a simple trick, but one you can't guess if you don't know about it! That's why it's important to follow the pros to maximize the wonderful world of travel rewards.

3 basic reminders to unlock a welcome bonus

Here are **some very important reminders** about minimum spend requirements.

(These are all in [the free checklist](#) so you can easily remember them).

1. When the countdown starts

Your countdown to reach the minimum begins the day your application is approved (NOT when you receive your card and NOT when you activate it).

2. What counts as an expense

Be careful not to count your card fee in the amount in case it appears on your statement and therefore in your total balance due.

You need purchases: not ATM withdrawals, not cash advances, not balance transfers. Not anything else: only actual purchases.

Be careful not to make returns/refunds that might make your drop below the required minimum spend amount.

3. Why it's important to be organized

There's no flexibility on the timing for the minimum spend. None!

Even if you miss the deadline by just one day and by just one dollar, there's absolutely no way to get the welcome bonus points back if you don't meet the requirements. Those are the rules.

So make sure you reach the required amount. We suggest you set up regular reminders to monitor your progress.

Logistics of creating your accounts to get started

The detailed guides on points will have more details, but here are the basics.

You can obviously easily pay the balance of your Amex Gold Card from any bank account by simply adding it as a bill payment.

But to manage your account and rewards, you need to create a free online account.

You need to create **an Amex account AND an Aeroplan account** (or Avios, or Flying Blue, etc.) if you want to eventually transfer your points that way to maximize their value.

These are separate rewards programs, so you need separate accounts.

For Amex, if you don't already have other Amex cards, create an Amex account online on the Amex website (blue button at the top right). They also have a handy app.

Then, for Aeroplan, create an online account on Air Canada's website because in most cases, transferring Amex points to Aeroplan is by far the best use to increase the value of the points by $\approx 50\%$!

Pro tip: the 2-player mode is obviously twice as fast to earn more points, so to make it easier to combine Amex points when your travel companion is going to get their own welcome bonus, you can create an Aeroplan account right away and then set up "Aeroplan Family Sharing."

It allows you to combine all your Aeroplan points together and you can do that with any traveler, they don't really have to be in your family. You can do it with anyone you want. It's easier with this combined account, although of course you can always use your points to buy a ticket for anyone else regardless.

We recommend never transferring points speculatively (without a specific use in mind) but you can at least start looking at your future point uses.

And we rarely recommend transferring to Marriott, because transfers to airline programs give much more potential value (Aeroplan; but also Avios).

If you're ready to use your Amex points this way and don't want to wait for our guide on how to use them, you can [read this article to see the simple steps to transfer your Amex points to Aeroplan or Avios or Marriott \(it's the same easy process for any transfer partner\).](#)

Your card's rewards earn rate

Here are the earn rates for your Amex Gold Card (excluding the promo rates of the first 3 months):

- **2 points per dollar** ($\approx 3\%$) on travel, gas, pharmacies, restaurants, food delivery services, groceries, and gift cards purchased at the grocery store
- **1 point per dollar** ($\approx 1,5\%$) on all other purchases

Of course, it's not with your regular purchases that you'll earn points quickly, but rather with welcome bonuses (which you probably figured out given the size of this welcome bonus).

But it's good to know your card earn rates so you can use the right card at the right place depending on which ones you have.

This is useful for times in the year when your expenses won't be used to unlock extremely lucrative welcome bonuses, which you should get regularly.

With earn rates, there are always 2 important things to pay attention to:

- The base earn rates
- The multiplier rates on specific categories

The base rate on your Amex Gold Card is pretty standard and there's a decent multiplier rate on several interesting categories.

But if you really want to maximize that, consider the "best" card in Canada for your next one: the American Express Cobalt Card which earns 5X Amex

points on restaurants AND groceries at all times, an outstanding rate to be honest.

(It has a nice welcome bonus that's sometimes increased, but it's pretty much the only card in Canada worth considering just for its excessively high earn rate, since 5X the points is very, very lucrative!)

Keep in mind that your Amex Gold Card's earn rates obviously also may be worth even more, since Amex points are variable-value rewards that have the potential to have an outsized value and an unlimited value. The base rate can easily be 2% instead of 1.5% if you use your points well.

Your card benefits

In addition to travel rewards you get with your welcome bonus, you now enjoy other valuable benefits with your Amex Gold Card.

Here's how each one works.

4 access passes to Plaza Premium airport lounges in Canada

Airport lounges are really great. With your card, you get free access, but with many restrictions:

- You only get 4 free access passes per calendar year
- It's only valid in the 13 Plaza Premium lounges in Canada

Just to be clear: this is definitely one of the most limited accesses among the Canadian cards that include free airport lounge access. It's definitely not like the American Express Platinum Card, for example.

But it's a nice addition to an already great card. Having 4 access passes is really great. And **it's actually 8 access passes**.

You get 4 access passes *per calendar year* according to the card's official terms and conditions (not *per card membership year*); that's an important distinction.

So, if you want to maximize this, you can get 8 access passes in your 1st year. You get 4 in 2022 and 4 in 2023.

That's also what travel rewards are all about: knowing the pro tips to work around the rules a little to always maximize everything!

You don't need to do anything special to access the lounges: you show your Amex Gold Card to enter.

Perks that you can't put a price tag on like airport lounge access are never included in our Flytrippers Valuation, since the value varies too much.

But it can easily be worth \$25 per visit thanks to the free food and beverages. In total, you can easily get an added value of \$100 with the Amex Gold Card, which is in addition to the welcome bonus' ≈ \$915 net value!

You can read our introduction to airport lounges while you wait for our ultimate guide on that!

Free membership to Priority Pass airport lounge network

Note: many cards give you memberships to airport lounge networks like Priority Pass or DragonPass AND a number of free passes per year.

Your Amex Gold Card only gives you free Priority Pass membership, not free access to their lounges (only the 4 Plaza Premium passes above).

The free Priority Pass membership is worth US\$99 normally.

All it gives you is a discount for access (you'd pay US\$32 per access instead of ≈ US\$50 or often more), but **we don't recommend paying for that!**

If you want free access, just consider one of the many cards with free airport lounge access for your next one. Definitely don't pay when plenty of cards *pay you* with their welcome bonuses to give you free lounge access.

NEXUS credit

The Amex Gold Card comes with a \$50 NEXUS credit that will make your NEXUS card almost free.

It helps you avoid all the security lines at Canadian and US airports, the customs lines at Canadian and US airports, and the lines at the land border.

Having the NEXUS card is absolutely **one of the best travel pro tips**. And you have C\$50 to cover almost all the cost (US\$50).

It's less than the \$100 credit you can share with your travel buddies that comes with the 2 American Express premium cards, but it's better than \$0. Another nice benefit.

Again, our Flytrippers Valuation doesn't include that \$50 either, so the Amex Gold Card is even more valuable if you unfortunately don't have your NEXUS card yet.

Free additional card

You can get a free additional card (“joint” card) so that someone you trust can help you earn more points (and have them all in the same Amex account).

It doesn't count as a credit application for the additional cardholder and it doesn't prevent them from eventually getting their own card, which of course **your travel buddy should do** to get their own welcome bonus, because welcome bonuses are key.

With the Amex Gold Card, what's different is that you just get 1 free additional card. To be clear, the extra card is free, so it doesn't have airport lounge access, it's just for earning points in the same account.

You are entitled to 9 additional cards and the minimum age is 13 years old.

Metal card

The card is made **of metal** and weighs 13 grams, no matter which of the 2 available colors (Classic Gold or Rose Gold) you choose.

It's really just a bonus if you think it will impress people and you care about that.

(I know that's the case for many people, so if it is, you really should be getting the Amex Platinum Card instead: it's much more luxurious and almost 50% heavier — 18 grams — and besides, that one is actually recognized as a status symbol, which really isn't the case for a card that just costs \$150 net!)

Benefits at Hertz

You get a few perks on your Hertz rental cars.

The most interesting one is that you can add a **2nd driver at no charge**. You also get a 10% discount and a free upgrade to the next car category, but only on rentals of 5 days or more (and some countries are excluded).

Access to the Amex Offers program

As an Amex cardholder, you have access to the Amex Offers program, which offers **interesting discounts and freebies** on select purchases throughout the year (at the bottom of your online account or on the Amex app).

Access to the American Express The Hotel Collection program

You get access to The Hotel Collection program, which gives you privileges at high-end hotels (such as a US\$100 hotel credit and a free room upgrade) **if you like to pay for expensive hotels**.

Only stays of at least 2 nights are eligible. You must book through the Amex Travel website.

Access to American Express Experiences

You have access to American Express Experiences, including exclusive Amex Front of the Line invitations, which give you early access to event tickets, for example (via email).

Your card's insurance coverage

The free insurance coverage included is another great reason to take advantage of card deals on a regular basis (so you're always covered for free with welcome bonuses).

Here are the ones you get with your Amex Gold Card while you wait for our ultimate guide to insurance.

Medical travel insurance

First, medical travel insurance coverage provides 15 days of coverage for your trips (maximum \$5 million).

Unlike other types of credit card insurance coverage, medical travel insurance is valid whether or not you pay for the trip with your card.

This is always the case for this type of coverage, contrary to the very popular belief. In the world of travel rewards, it's really best to assume that what everyone thinks is just wrong!

So you can pay for your tickets and hotels with any card you want or with any points you want: at least you'll have the most important insurance.

Flight delay insurance

When you pay for your flights with your Amex Gold Card or with your Amex points, you will get a free flight delay insurance that will give you \$500 for a hotel and meals (minimum delay of 4 hours).

Airlines don't owe you anything when the delay is due to the weather and that's normal: they don't control the weather!

So this insurance is really useful. It's always good to take responsibility and not depend on anyone else.

And even when the cause for delay is under the airline's control, why go stand in line to maybe get a hotel that's probably lousy (or maybe get told that they won't pay anything). Take responsibility and use that insurance.

I have used this insurance 10 times and it's great. I never have to wonder what's causing the delay or fight to get anything... and I never have to pay anything.

I book the most expensive hotel possible as soon as my flight is delayed overnight and I don't waste my time in line or complain that the airline isn't giving me anything. I go straight to a nice hotel!

And I even collect a lot of points on the stay paid in cash (reimbursed by the insurer) to get free hotel nights in the future too, in addition to the free night during the delayed flight.

Trip cancelation and interruption insurance

You also have trip cancelation and interruption insurance (beware of the COVID-19 exclusions that are currently in place for those types of insurance, unlike others).

For all valid reasons other than COVID-19, coverage is available for trips paid for with your Amex Gold Card or with your Amex points.

Trip cancelation insurance reimburses you if you have to cancel a trip for one of the valid reasons covered (maximum \$1500 per person and \$3000 total).

Interruption insurance is similar, but if one of the valid reasons occurs while you are on your trip (maximum \$1500 per person and \$6000 total).

Hotel burglary insurance

You also have hotel burglary insurance (maximum \$1000) if you paid for the hotel with your Amex Gold Card or Amex points.

Car rental insurance

You'll be covered if you paid for your rental car with your Amex Gold Card or Amex points. You don't have to pay for the unnecessary insurance car rental companies offer, the one on your card is free.

Note that this applies to damage/loss/theft only; no card covers the liability insurance portion.

For that, your personal car insurance may cover you in some countries, and if not, liability insurance is often included by default with the basic price of car rentals in many countries. Be sure to check.

But at least, don't pay for the damage insurance part. Coverage does not apply to cars worth more than \$85,000 and pickup trucks (among others), which is standard.

Coverage does not apply to rentals longer than 48 days or to rentals from individuals.

Insurance for baggage and personal effects while traveling

You also have insurance for lost or damaged baggage during your trip (up to \$500) if you paid your flight with your Amex Gold Card or Amex points.

Baggage delay insurance

You also have insurance in case your baggage arrives late (maximum \$500 in combination with flight delay insurance) if you paid for your flight with your Amex Gold Card or Amex points.

Accident insurance

You are covered for up to \$500,000 if you die or are maimed while traveling if you pay for your plane, train, boat, or bus tickets with your Amex Gold Card or Amex points.

Purchase insurance

You have theft and damage protection for 90 days after most of your purchases (maximum \$1000 per instance), as with most cards.

Extended warranty insurance

Finally, you also have an extended warranty (double the original warranty; up to 1 year) on most of your purchases (maximum \$10,000 per item; \$25,000 per year), as with most cards.

Amex points expiry

We'll talk more about this in our guide to use the points, but we want to reconfirm that **there's no time limit to use your Amex points**.

Some people seem to think that means the points don't expire. It's not that they don't expire, it's that you have no time limit for using them. It's not quite the same thing.

Amex points don't expire as long as you have an Amex card that earns you points. If you cancel your card, you can also simply transfer them to programs like Aeroplan so you don't have to use them right away.

With Aeroplan points, there's no time limit to use them either. But that also doesn't mean they don't expire.

Aeroplan points expire if you have no activity for 18 consecutive months. But it's excessively easy to earn or use a single Aeroplan point in 18 months, even without a credit card, and thus push the expiration back literally forever.

If you travel once in 18 months, it's done. Otherwise, you just need to make an online purchase (at many of the retailers you already buy from) through the [Aeroplan online shopping portal](#) (and you'll get free bonus points as well).

So it's very, very simple to never have to worry about expiration with one easy task in 18 months.

How to use your Amex points

Stay subscribed to this free newsletter to receive the next part of this guide, which is how to use your Amex points (with **lots of other pro tips too**).

Conclusion and what's next

With this information, you'll be able to start your journey with Amex Gold Card and your Amex points.

Feel free to email us at points@flytrippers.com if you have any questions about your card.

We'll soon help you **maximize the value you get** with your points with the next part of this guide.

Thank you and talk soon,

Andrew & Kevin

Flytrippers co-founders

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Thank you!

