

# What is Spirit Airlines elite status worth in 2023?

(Courtesy of Sarah Hostetler, The Points Guy)

[Spirit Airlines](#) — the most notorious ultra-low-cost U.S. carrier — revamped its elite status program in early 2021. And despite what you might think, it actually packs some powerful features (think: free bags, free seat selection, waived overweight checked bag fees, exit-row seat assignment and much more).

The way you quantify the value of these perks is crucial to consider whether you should earn elite status with Spirit in 2023.

In this article, we'll look at how much Spirit elite status is really worth by breaking down the benefits of each status tier and assigning each a set cash value.

## Methodology

Here's a quick reminder that our valuations represent one way to identify what elite status is worth to a potential traveler. You should always adjust our assumptions of your travel habits to fit how you actually travel. For example, if you never check a bag, you won't find any value in that benefit.

Here are the underlying assumptions we're making: We've assumed a set amount of flying and a corresponding amount of spending. Spirit awards elite status differently than more traditional carriers; instead of earning status by miles flown, you'll earn Status Qualifying Points. You earn them in the following ways:

- 1 SQP for every dollar you spend with Spirit Airlines (flights, baggage, seat assignment, etc.).
- 1 SQP per \$10 spent on the [Free Spirit® Travel More World Elite Mastercard®](#).

*The information for the Free Spirit Travel More Mastercard has been collected independently by The Points Guy. The card details on this page have not been reviewed or provided by the card issuer.*

This analysis ignores the credit card route. You could theoretically reach Spirit elite status through spending alone, but if you're not flying Spirit, you're not likely to get value from Spirit elite status.

Our numbers are based on four (somewhat arbitrary) assumptions. Again, tweak the numbers to match your lifestyle:

- You earn 20% more SQPs than the minimum required for the given level.
- 80% of your SQPs are earned on Spirit flight purchases.
- 20% of your SQPs are earned with auxiliary purchases like Big Front Seat selection and additional baggage.
- Each flight costs an average of \$100 before taxes, earning 100 SQPs.

Two final pieces of information before we start: First, we'll [use our valuation](#) of 1.1 cents each when valuing bonus points earned for each status tier. Second, we'll round all benefit values to the nearest \$5.

## Spirit elite status tiers

Spirit Airlines offers two tiers of elite status. Here's a quick rundown of what you'll get for pledging loyalty to Spirit.

Benefits	Silver elite status	Gold elite status
<b>Qualification</b>	2,000 SQPs on flights operated by Spirit Airlines or by spending on the Free Spirit Travel More World Elite Mastercard.	5,000 SQPs on flights operated by Spirit Airlines or by spending on the Free Spirit Travel More World Elite Mastercard.
<b>Mileage earning on Spirit flights</b>	8 points per dollar.	10 points per dollar.
<b>Points earned on À La Smarte options (extras)</b>	16 points per dollar.	20 points per dollar.
<b>Host points pool for group</b>	✓	✓
<b>Exit-row seat assignment</b>	180 minutes from departure.	Confirmed at booking.
<b>Seat selection</b>	You can choose your seat at check-in.	You can choose your seat at the time of booking, but you can't choose the Big Front Seat (Spirit's version of first class).
<b>Shortcut boarding</b>	✓	✓
<b>Shortcut security</b>	✓	✓

Benefits	Silver elite status	Gold elite status
Dedicated guest care	✓	✓
Same-day standby	✓	✓
Overweight checked bag fee waived	✓	✓
Redemption fee waived	✓	✓
Flight flex		✓
Free nonalcoholic drink and snack on board		✓
First checked bag		✓
Carry-on bag		✓

**So how much are these benefits worth realistically for a frequent flyer?**

Maximize your spending, earn rewards faster, and easily track all of your points and all of your miles all in one place.

## Free Spirit Silver: \$805

Spirit Silver is the airline's entry-level status tier. It includes a handful of interesting benefits that make the Spirit experience easier and more seamless, and it requires 2,000 SQPs to earn. For this valuation, we're assuming you'll earn 2,400 SQPs. This means you'd spend \$2,400 with Spirit in a given year to earn and maintain your status level:

- 80% on flights. You'd have to take 19 flights based on our assumption of 100 SQPs per flight (for 1,900 SQPs).
- 20% on extras, for a total of \$500 in spending.

•	Benefit details	Value
<b>Mileage earning on Spirit flights</b>	You'll earn 8 points per dollar for your actual Spirit Airlines fare. This is 2 points more than you'll earn as a regular member. With \$1,920 in spending on flights, this equals 3,840 bonus points.	\$40.
<b>Points earned for extras</b>	You'll earn 16 points per dollar for extras such as checked or carry-on bags, seat selection, shortcut boarding, etc. This is 4 points more than you'll earn as a regular member, for 2,000 bonus points.	\$20.
<b>Host points pool for group</b>	Free Spirit Silver elite members can host a points pool that lets the elite member and their family members pool their points together. It's hard to put a number on this, but it certainly is handy to combine points for awards. As a member, you can only pool points with someone who has elite status.	\$20.
<b>Exit-row seat assignment</b>	You can choose exit rows for free three hours before departure. These seats are usually more expensive than standard seats, but you may not always clear your seat upgrades at the last minute. Let's assume a 30% success rate with an average value of \$20 per seat assignment.	\$115.
<b>Seat selection</b>	You can choose your seats at check-in, but you won't be able to select preferred seats. Still, this is huge, as Spirit can charge up to \$200 per flight for this "luxury," though it's often much less.	\$190.

•	Benefit details	Value
<b>Shortcut boarding</b>	Free Spirit Silver elite members are eligible for priority boarding on all flights, which costs a minimum of \$5.99 per flight.	\$50.
<b>Shortcut security</b>	This perk lets you skip the regular Transportation Security Administration line and enter an expedited security screening. Not all airports participate in this, but it can save quite a bit of time if traveling during a busy time. This perk otherwise costs up to \$15.	\$75.
<b>Dedicated guest care</b>	A priority phone line can be a lifesaver during large-scale weather events, but it's not the most valuable perk.	\$25.
<b>Same-day standby</b>	Free Spirit Silver members can standby for free on an earlier flight, which costs general members \$99 per flight. Let's assume you use this once per year.	\$100.
<b>Overweight checked bag fee waived</b>	If your checked bag weighs more than 40 pounds, you'll be charged \$69-plus at the check-in desk. This fee is waived for elite members, though note that Spirit won't accept bags weighing more than 100 pounds. Let's assume you use this benefit once per year.	\$70.
<b>Redemption fee waived</b>	General Free Spirit members pay a \$50 redemption fee for award flights booked within 28 days of departure. This is waived for elite members and cobranded credit card members. Let's assume you use this twice per year.	\$100.
<b>Total value</b>		<b>\$805.</b>

#### Free Spirit Gold: \$4,485

Top-tier Spirit Gold status requires 5,000 SQPs to achieve. Again, we'll assume you earned 6,000 SQPs for this valuation. This means you'd spend \$6,000 in a given year to earn and maintain your status level split as follows:

- 80% on flights. That's 48 flights based on our assumption of 100 SQPs per flight (for 4,800 SQPs).
- 20% on extras, equaling \$1,200 in spending.

•	Benefit details	Value
<b>Mileage earning on Spirit flights</b>	You'll earn 10 points per dollar for your actual Spirit Airlines fare. This is 4 points more than you'll earn as a regular member, for a total of 19,200 bonus points earned.	\$210.
<b>Points earned for extras</b>	You'll earn 20 points per dollar for extras such as checked or carry-on bags, seat selection, shortcut boarding, etc. This is 8 points more than you'll earn as a regular member, giving you 9,600 bonus miles.	\$105.
<b>Host points pool for group</b>	Same benefit, with more frequent utilization.	\$35.
<b>Exit-row seat assignment</b>	You can opt for an exit row at the time of booking. This leaves very little up to chance, as with Silver members, you're only guaranteed an exit row 180 minutes prior to departure. We'll assume a 30% success rate with an average value of \$20 per seat assignment.	\$290.
<b>Seat selection</b>	You can select a free seat at booking. Unfortunately, you can't select Big Front Seats.	\$305.
<b>Shortcut boarding</b>	Same benefit, with more frequent utilization.	\$80.
<b>Shortcut security</b>	Same benefit, with more frequent utilization.	\$120.
<b>Dedicated guest care</b>	Same benefit, with more frequent utilization.	\$40.
<b>Same-day standby</b>	Same benefit but assuming you use the benefit twice per year.	\$200.

•	Benefit details	Value
<b>Overweight checked bag fee waived</b>	Same benefit, with more frequent utilization.	\$140.
<b>Redemption fee waiver</b>	Same benefit but assuming you use the benefit three times per year.	\$150.
<b>Flight flex</b>	This benefit allows you to modify your itinerary once online, up to 24 hours before departure, with no fees. This can be a valuable perk if you want to move to an earlier or later flight. This otherwise costs \$35-plus per customer. Let's assume you use this 10% of the time.	\$170.
<b>Free nonalcoholic drink and snack on board</b>	You can get a free drink and snack on board. Generally, this will save you \$8 per flight, depending on what you choose to snack on. Note that this isn't necessarily "savings" if you wouldn't normally volunteer to pay for food on your flight.	\$385.
<b>First checked bag</b>	You'll receive your first checked bag for free on all flights. Baggage fees vary, but let's assume you'd otherwise pay \$30 per flight for 50% of your flights.	\$720.
<b>Carry-on bag</b>	You'll receive a free full-size carry-on bag on all Spirit flights. These bags cost roughly \$40 per flight. Let's assume you bring a carry-on for 80% of your flights.	\$1,535.
<b>Total value</b>		<b>\$4,485.</b>

#### What if I'm starting from scratch?

If you're starting from scratch, these calculations become a bit more complicated since you won't enjoy any benefits until you earn 2,000 SQPs and earn Free Spirit Silver status. So to help, I've taken the above valuations and converted them to a value per SQP, as follows:

- **Free Spirit Silver:**  $\$805 / 2,400 = \$0.33$  per SQP.

- **Free Spirit Gold:**  $\$4,485 / 6,000 = \$0.75$  per SQP.

For example, if you're able to achieve 6,500 SQPs, you'd get no benefits from the first 2,000 SQPs, then enjoy Silver elite benefits for the next 3,000 SQPs (at a rate of 33 cents per SQP) and then enjoy Gold elite benefits while earning the final 1,500 points (at a rate of 75 cents per SQP).

In other words, if you start from scratch and estimate that you'll earn 6,500 SQPs in 2023, you'd get \$2,115 worth of benefits from the Free Spirit program.

As always, feel free to adjust the numbers above for each tier based on your own personal valuation.

### **Is it worth pursuing elite status with Spirit Airlines?**

Like any analysis we undertake here at TPG, there isn't an easy answer to this — it depends entirely on your individual situation. However, given the fact that Spirit charges for everything from carry-on bags to seat selection, top-tier Gold elite status can be quite valuable, as you'll be immune to many of these fees.

**Here are a few overarching questions that can help you arrive at a decision that's right for you.**

#### **What's the incremental value of one tier over another?**

Many of you may wind up within striking distance of the next tier, so consider whether the benefits are worth pushing for it. There's no sense in going out of your way for perks that don't matter to you.

#### **How well does Spirit's route map match your typical travel patterns?**

There's really no point in pursuing elite status with an airline if you can't feasibly fly it regularly. Consider Spirit's service from your home airport(s) and how easy it is to get to your desired destination(s).

#### **How sensitive are you to price and convenience?**

There are many trade-offs in this hobby, and one of the most common is deciding whether to use your preferred airline or hotel chain when it's not the most convenient or cheapest. Would you book a one-stop Spirit flight if another airline had a cheaper nonstop option? If the answer is no, it may not be worth going out of your way to earn Spirit elite status.

### **Bottom line**

The Spirit Airlines business model (and that of [low-cost carriers](#) in general) isn't for everyone. The fares are cheap, but you must pay for perks like seat assignments, bags and beverages. Some don't mind these trade-offs, but others would rather hop on a Megabus before booking a Spirit ticket.

For those who love Spirit, Free Spirit elite status can be a way to make Spirit flights cheaper and more comfortable. So, if you're already planning on flying Spirit enough to earn elite status, you'll undoubtedly enjoy all the perks it includes.

That said, it's almost certainly not worth it to go out of your way to earn it with credit card spending if you're not flying enough to earn it organically. The perks don't outweigh the cost of moving all your flights to one airline (or flying more than you have to).