

# TSA PreCheck vs Global Entry 2026

Which One Is Right for You?



VS



**COMPARE • DECIDE • APPLY**

## What this guide covers:

- Side-by-side comparison of both programs
- Full cost breakdown including renewal and children
- Credit cards that reimburse the fee
- Application overview for each program
- 5 mistakes to avoid
- How to make your final decision

*Already have TSA PreCheck and considering Global Entry?  
Skip to Card 4 for costs and Card 9 for your decision checklist.*

**+ FREE DECISION CHECKLIST**





## Side-by-Side: What Each Program Does

Both programs are part of the Department of Homeland Security's Trusted Traveler network – but they solve different problems.

	TSA PreCheck	Global Entry
<b>What it speeds up</b>	Domestic airport security	International customs + domestic security
<b>Run by</b>	TSA	CBP (Customs & Border Protection)
<b>How it works at security</b>	Dedicated PreCheck lane – shoes on, belt on, laptop stays packed	Same PreCheck lane benefits
<b>How it works at customs</b>	No benefit	Global Entry Mobile App – skip the standard customs line
<b>Includes the other?</b>	No	Yes – Global Entry includes PreCheck
<b>Membership length</b>	5 years	5 years
<b>Application process</b>	Online + 10-minute enrollment appointment	Online + background check + in-person interview
<b>Processing time</b>	3–5 days typical	2 weeks to several months

**❏ The key fact most people miss:** Global Entry automatically includes TSA PreCheck. You do not need to pay for both.

# Who Can Apply

Eligibility is the same for both programs.

## You can apply if you are:

- A U.S. citizen
- A U.S. national
- A lawful permanent resident (green card holder)

## Both programs require:

- A completed online application
- A background check (more thorough for Global Entry)
- In-person biometric collection (fingerprints and photo)
- No disqualifying criminal history

**Not a U.S. citizen or LPR?** Some countries have reciprocal agreements. Citizens of select countries (including Canada, Germany, Netherlands, South Korea, and others) may qualify for Global Entry under bilateral trusted traveler arrangements. Check [ttp.dhs.gov](http://dhs.gov) for current eligible nationalities.

## Children

**TSA PreCheck:** Children 12 and under can use the PreCheck lane with an enrolled parent – no membership needed. Children 13–17 may use the lane depending on airline policy.

**Global Entry:** Children under 18 enroll free when a parent holds Global Entry or applies at the same time. Each child still needs their own application and interview.



# The Cost Breakdown

Category	TSA PreCheck	Global Entry
New enrollment	\$78–\$85 (varies by provider: IDEMIA, CLEAR, or Telos)	\$120
Renewal	\$59–\$80 (online renewals are generally cheaper)	\$120
Children	12 and under: Free (use parent's lane) 13–17: Free with enrolled parent (airline-dependent)	Under 18 with enrolled parent: Free

**The math:** Global Entry costs \$35–\$42 more than PreCheck – but you get customs benefits on top of everything PreCheck offers. If you travel internationally even once, you'll likely recover that difference the first time you skip a customs line.

- ❑ **Important note on renewals:** You can renew both programs up to 12 months before expiration. Your current membership does not lapse while your renewal is processing. Do not wait until it expires.

# Credit Cards That Cover the Fee

Many premium travel credit cards reimburse the TSA PreCheck or Global Entry application fee as a statement credit – meaning you effectively pay nothing out of pocket.

**Cards that commonly offer this benefit (verify current terms with your issuer):**

## American Express Platinum

Up to \$100 every 4.5 years (covers Global Entry)

## American Express Gold

TSA PreCheck reimbursement

## Chase Sapphire Reserve

Up to \$100 every 4 years (covers Global Entry)

## Capital One Venture X

Up to \$100 (covers Global Entry)

## Citi Prestige

Up to \$100 (covers Global Entry)

## Airline & Hotel Co-Branded Cards

Many offer this – check your card's travel benefits

**How it works:** Pay the application fee with your eligible card. The credit typically posts within 1–2 billing cycles. You do not need to do anything extra – no claim form, no upload.

**Pro tip:** If your card covers Global Entry (\$120), use it for Global Entry – not PreCheck. You get more for the same reimbursement.

Check your card's current terms at the issuer's website before applying. Benefits and caps change.





# TSA PreCheck: Application at a Glance

The PreCheck process is straightforward and fast.

## 1 Apply online

Go to [tsa.gov/precheck](https://tsa.gov/precheck) and choose one of the three TSA-authorized enrollment providers: IDEMIA, CLEAR, or Telos. Complete the online application (about 5 minutes).

## 2 Schedule your enrollment appointment

Book a 10-minute in-person appointment at an enrollment location near you. Locations are available at many airports, shopping centers, and UPS stores.

## 3 Bring your documents

You need: a valid passport OR a REAL ID-compliant driver's license PLUS a second form of ID (such as a credit card or birth certificate). Check the provider's specific requirements before your appointment.

## 4 Complete biometrics

At the appointment, staff verify your documents, scan your fingerprints, and take your photo. The appointment takes about 10 minutes.

## 5 Receive your KTN

Most applicants receive their Known Traveler Number (KTN) within 3–5 days. Add it to your airline profiles — PreCheck only appears on your boarding pass if your KTN is on file.

Want the complete TSA PreCheck deep-dive? Watch our full TSA PreCheck guide here: [youtube.com/watch?v=Rmoxx8ajh94](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rmoxx8ajh94)

# Global Entry: Application at a Glance

Global Entry has a longer but clearly defined process.



## Create account & apply

Apply at [ttp.dhs.gov](http://ttp.dhs.gov) and pay \$120.



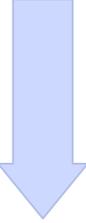
## Wait for conditional approval

CBP reviews your background (2 weeks to several months).



## Schedule interview

Book at a Global Entry Enrollment Center via [ttp.dhs.gov](http://ttp.dhs.gov).



## Attend interview

Fingerprints, photo, and questions. Most approved on the spot.

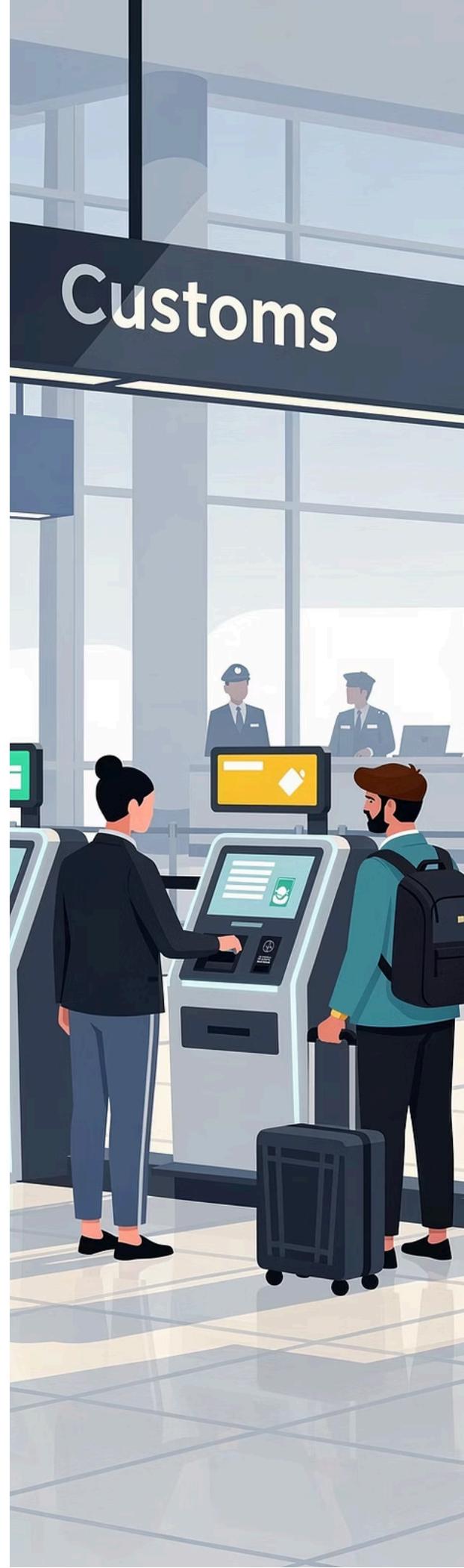


## Use your membership

Download the Global Entry app and breeze through customs.

- ☐ If appointments are scarce, use **Enrollment on Arrival** for a walk-in interview after an international flight; check [ttp.dhs.gov](http://ttp.dhs.gov) for locations.

**Learn more:** Watch our Global Entry guide [youtube.com/watch?v=z0WXP54qSsA](https://youtube.com/watch?v=z0WXP54qSsA) or our Interview prep [youtube.com/watch?v=z4yZdmCTHkk](https://youtube.com/watch?v=z4yZdmCTHkk).



# 5 Mistakes to Avoid

These are the most common and costly errors people make with both programs.



1

## **Paying for both TSA PreCheck and Global Entry**

Global Entry already includes PreCheck – don't pay twice.

2

## **Forgetting to add your KTN to airline reservations**

Add your Known Traveler Number to every airline profile manually.

3

## **Choosing PreCheck when you travel internationally**

If you travel abroad even once a year, Global Entry is the better value.

4

## **Not checking your credit card benefits first**

Many cards reimburse the \$120 fee automatically – check before you pay.

5

## **Waiting too long to apply for Global Entry**

Apply 3–6 months ahead – background checks and interviews take time.

# Make Your Decision

Answer these two questions:

## Do you travel internationally?

→ **Yes, at least once a year** → Get **Global Entry**. You get customs benefits AND TSA PreCheck for one fee. The \$35–\$42 premium over PreCheck pays for itself quickly.

→ **No, domestic travel only** → Get **TSA PreCheck**. Faster application, lower cost, and it does exactly what you need at the security checkpoint.

## Already have TSA PreCheck?

→ **Yes** → Consider upgrading to Global Entry. You cannot transfer your existing PreCheck membership – you apply for Global Entry separately. But once approved, your Global Entry KTN replaces your PreCheck KTN and your new 5-year clock starts from Global Entry approval.

## Your action checklist:

- **Decide: PreCheck or Global Entry**  
Based on your travel habits
- **Check your credit card for fee reimbursement before paying**
- **Apply at [tsa.gov/precheck](https://tsa.gov/precheck) (PreCheck) or [ttp.dhs.gov](https://ttp.dhs.gov) (Global Entry)**
- **Schedule your appointment or interview**
- **Add your KTN to every airline profile after approval**



# Official Resources

Everything you need – no third-party sites, no guesswork.



**TSA PreCheck**

[tsa.gov/precheck](https://tsa.gov/precheck)



**Global Entry Portal**

[ttp.dhs.gov](https://ttp.dhs.gov)



**CBP Global Entry**

[cbp.gov/travel/trusted-traveler-programs/global-entry](https://cbp.gov/travel/trusted-traveler-programs/global-entry)



**Enrollment on Arrival**

[cbp.gov/travel/trusted-traveler-programs/global-entry/enrollment-arrival](https://cbp.gov/travel/trusted-traveler-programs/global-entry/enrollment-arrival)



**TSA Help**

[tsa.gov/contact/ask-tsa](https://tsa.gov/contact/ask-tsa)



**CBP INFO Center**

[help.cbp.gov](https://help.cbp.gov)

## Other GovClarity Guides on This Topic



**TSA PreCheck  
Complete Guide**

[youtube.com/watch?  
v=Rmoxx8ajh94](https://youtube.com/watch?v=Rmoxx8ajh94)



**Global Entry 2026  
Complete Guide**

[youtube.com/watch?  
v=z0WXP54qSsA](https://youtube.com/watch?v=z0WXP54qSsA)



**Global Entry Interview  
Prep**

[youtube.com/watch?  
v=z4yZdmCTHkk](https://youtube.com/watch?v=z4yZdmCTHkk)

*Details as of early 2026. Verify at official government sites before applying.*