

Who qualifies —  
and who doesn't

Set it up in  
5 minutes

Free vs. \$120  
Global Entry

Why interviews  
can take months

When Global Entry  
is still worth it



# SKIP THE CUSTOMS LINE

*The Free App That Beats the Airport Line —  
No Application, No Interview*

# Two Ways to Skip the Customs Line

When you land back in the U.S. after an international trip, there are two official ways to move faster through passport control. One is free and instant. One costs money and takes planning.

	Mobile Passport Control (MPC)	Global Entry (GE)
<b>Cost</b>	Free, always	\$120 for 5 years
<b>Application</b>	None	Full application + background check
<b>Interview</b>	None	Required, in person
<b>Ready when?</b>	The day you travel	Weeks to months later
<b>Speeds up</b>	U.S. customs on arrival	U.S. customs on arrival
<b>Also includes</b>	Nothing extra	TSA PreCheck for domestic flights

Here's the simple truth this guide clears up: **if you fly internationally once in a while and never got around to Global Entry, Mobile Passport Control is all you need.** If you fly a lot — especially inside the U.S. — Global Entry's PreCheck benefit is what makes the \$120 worth it.

# Who Qualifies — MPC vs. Global Entry

## Mobile Passport Control — the easy one

No application, no background check. You just need to be eligible and have a smartphone. You can use MPC if you are:

- A U.S. citizen
- A U.S. lawful permanent resident (green card holder)
- A Canadian visitor here for business or tourism
- A returning Visa Waiver Program traveler with an approved ESTA

That covers most people flying home. But MPC is **not** open to everyone — many travelers on other visa types aren't eligible, so confirm in the app before you count on it. You can add up to **12 people from the same household** to one profile, so a family travels through on a single phone.

## Global Entry — asks for more, gives more back

To enroll you'll:

- Create an account on the Trusted Traveler Programs website
- Complete a full application and pay the \$120 fee
- Pass a CBP background check
- Attend an in-person interview (fingerprints taken)

**Every traveler needs their own membership — including children.** Kids can't ride on a parent's account for re-entry; each needs their own approval and interview (the fee for minors is different — see the cost section). Once approved, you keep that status for **five years** and clear customs with a quick face scan.

# Set Up Mobile Passport Control in 5 Minutes

You can do this today — even while waiting at your departure gate. That's the whole advantage over Global Entry: no planning months ahead.

1	2	3
<p><b>Download the Official App</b></p> <p>Download the official <b>CBP MPC</b> app from the Apple App Store or Google Play. The publisher must be <b>U.S. Customs and Border Protection</b> — it's been the only official app since February 2022.</p>	<p><b>Build Your Profile</b></p> <p>Open it and build a profile with your passport details. This takes just a couple of minutes.</p>	<p><b>Add Household Members</b></p> <p>Add household members (up to 12) if you're traveling together. One phone handles the whole family.</p>

That's it. You do nothing else until you land.



**⚠ Watch out:** If an app charges you a fee to file your passport information, it is **not** the government's app. The official CBP MPC app is free. Back out and download the right one.

# Using MPC When You Land

The moment your plane touches down, open the app and follow the flow:

01

## Open the app

Once you've landed, open the CBP MPC app.

02

## Pick your airport and terminal

Select from the list of participating locations.

03

## Take a quick selfie

For identity verification — the app guides you through it.

04

## Answer customs questions

The same ones on the paper form, now on your phone.

05

## Get your QR code receipt

Your digital pass for the MPC lane.

06

## Walk to the MPC line

Look for the line marked "Mobile Passport Control."

07

## Show passport and QR code

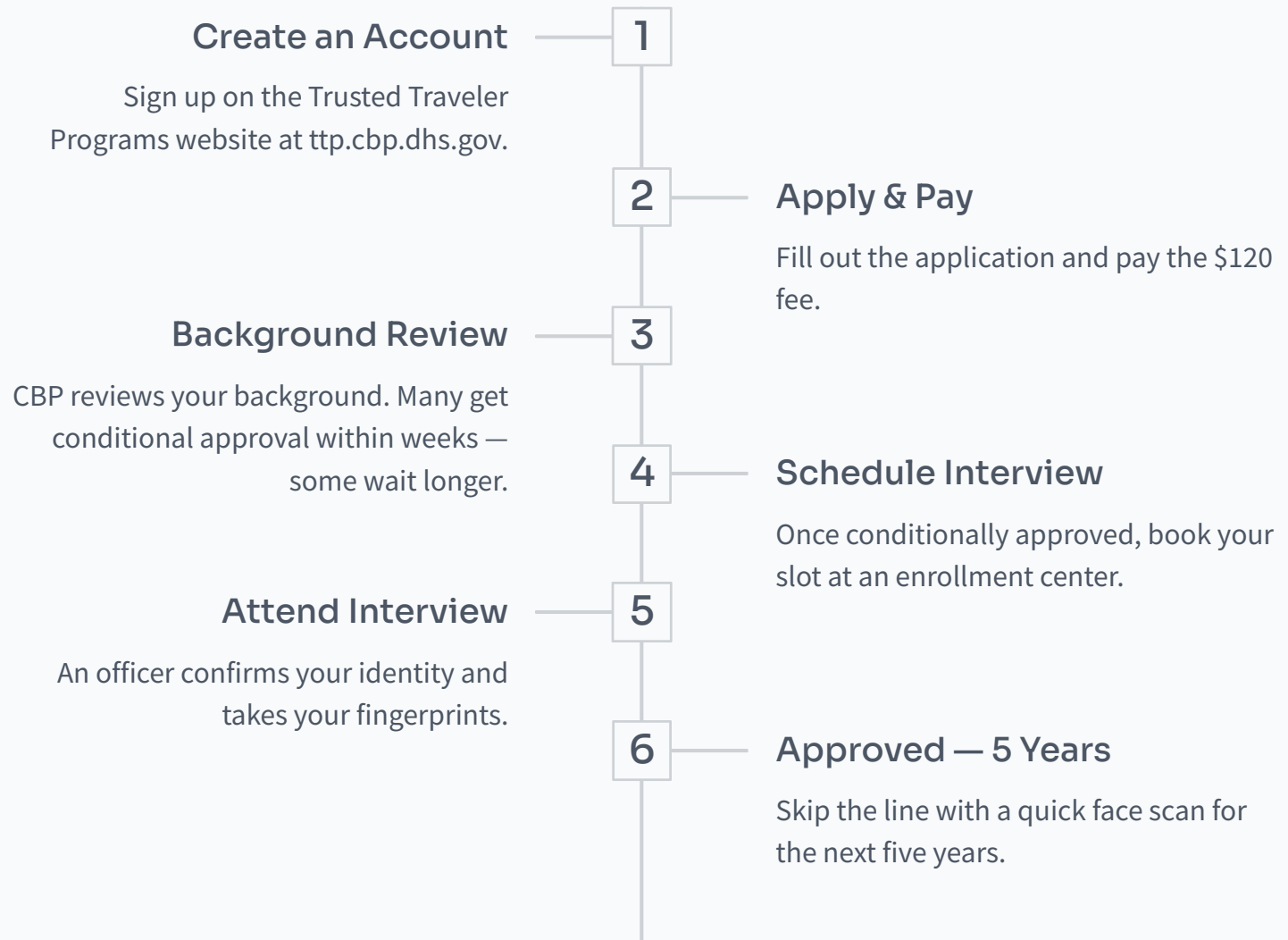
Hand both to the officer — and you're through.

- ☐ **Mind the clock:** Your QR receipt is only valid for a **limited window** after you submit — about **4 hours at airports** and **8 hours at land crossings**. Submit it after you land, not hours early.

**Check your airport first:** MPC only works at **participating** airports, seaports, preclearance, and land crossings. As of 2026 it's live at **60-plus ports** and expanding (including new land pedestrian crossings). Confirm your arrival airport is on CBP's current list before you rely on it — see Official Resources for the link.

# Global Entry: How It Works, Start to Finish

Global Entry starts long before your trip.



## Skip the kiosk entirely

Once you're approved, there's a free **Global Entry mobile app** and touchless facial-recognition portals at many airports, so you may not even need the kiosk.

## It's not permanent

Global Entry can be **revoked** for serious customs or immigration violations. It's a privilege, not a lifetime guarantee.

# Why Interviews Can Take Months

This is the single biggest reason travelers reach for the free app instead.

The background check is usually the fast part. **The real holdup is the in-person interview.**

## Busy Hubs (JFK, LAX)

At major airports like **New York's JFK** or **Los Angeles**, the next appointment can be **several months away** — **sometimes close to a year.**

## Quieter Centers

Smaller enrollment centers sometimes have openings **within days.** Where you interview matters more than almost anything else.

## Be Flexible

If you're flexible, a drive to a less-crowded center can save you **months** of waiting.

## The Shortcut — Enrollment on Arrival (EOA)

If the interview wait is brutal, many airports let you **finish the interview when you land** from an international trip. No separate appointment needed.

For an EOA interview, bring:

- Your valid passport
- Proof of residency
- Your green card, if you're a lawful permanent resident

# The Real Cost: Free vs. \$120

## \$0

### Mobile Passport Control

Free, always. No fee ever — and you can be ready before you leave for the airport.

## \$120

### Global Entry

Five-year membership. The fee rose from \$100 on October 1, 2024.

## \$0

### Kids Under 18

Since October 1, 2024, applicants under 18 pay \$0 — as long as a parent or guardian is a member or applying at the same time.

## \$240

### Family of Four

Two parents + two kids = **\$240**, not \$480. Kids still need their own account and interview, but not the fee.

✔ **Your credit card may cover it:** Many premium travel cards reimburse the \$120 as a statement credit every 4–5 years — cards like the Amex Platinum, Capital One Venture X, and Chase Sapphire Reserve, among others. **Check your card's benefits before paying out of pocket.**

# What Global Entry Gives You That MPC Doesn't

If both just speed up customs on arrival, why pay? Because Global Entry does more:

## TSA PreCheck for Domestic Flights

This is the big one. Global Entry includes PreCheck, the faster security line for your regular flights inside the U.S. MPC does nothing for domestic security.

## Land and Sea Ports

Global Entry benefits extend to land border and seaport crossings, and some reciprocal benefits in partner countries.

## Five Years of Hands-Off Speed

Once you're in, you're in — no per-trip app steps. Just show up and clear customs with a face scan.

⊗ **The mistake to avoid:** Don't assume MPC and Global Entry do the same thing. **MPC only helps you get back into the country. Global Entry does that *and* speeds up your domestic security screening.** If you fly within the U.S. often, that PreCheck benefit is the whole reason to pay.

# TSA PreCheck: Details Most People Miss



## Add Your Known Traveler Number

**Your Global Entry card alone won't put PreCheck on your boarding pass.** You have to add your **Known Traveler Number (KTN / PASS ID)** to each airline reservation. Miss that step and you won't get the PreCheck lane, even though you paid for it.



## PreCheck Isn't Guaranteed Every Trip

Now and then, TSA still routes anyone through standard screening. Most of the time you'll get the faster lane — but it's not a lock.



## Kids and PreCheck

Children **17 and under** can use the PreCheck lane with an eligible adult who has it on their boarding pass — even without their own membership. (This is the departure/security side only. For re-entry with Global Entry, each person still needs their own membership.)

# When to Use Which — Quick Decision Guide

Use this to decide in ten seconds:

## Choose Free Mobile Passport Control if:

- You fly internationally only once in a while
- You want to skip the customs line without paying or planning ahead
- You're flying into a participating airport

## Pay for Global Entry if:

- You fly often, especially domestically (that's where PreCheck earns its keep)
- You travel internationally several times a year
- Your credit card reimburses the \$120 anyway

📄 **Already have Global Entry?** Just use the **Global Entry lane** — that's what CBP recommends, and it's faster than the app. A Trusted Traveler member who uses the MPC line can actually be referred back to an officer. **You don't need MPC at all.**



# Common Mistakes to Avoid

## → Downloading a paid copycat app

The only official one is free, from U.S. Customs and Border Protection. If it charges a fee, back out.

## → Setting up MPC while standing in the customs hall

Build your profile before your trip. You don't want to be typing passport numbers while 300 tired travelers pile up behind you. (You *can* still do it on the spot — it just eats a few minutes.)

## → Assuming MPC works everywhere

It only works at participating locations. Check yours first.

## → Forgetting your Known Traveler Number

Add your KTN to every airline reservation, or PreCheck won't show on your boarding pass.

## → Thinking the two programs are interchangeable

MPC = re-entry only. Global Entry = re-entry + domestic PreCheck.

## → Letting your QR code expire

Submit it after you land, within the valid window.

# Official Resources & Contact Information

Always verify current details with the official government sources below. GovClarity is not a government agency.

## U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP)

- Mobile Passport Control info & participating locations:  
**[cbp.gov/travel/us-citizens/mobile-passport-control](https://cbp.gov/travel/us-citizens/mobile-passport-control)**
- Global Entry program:  
**[cbp.gov/travel/trusted-traveler-programs/global-entry](https://cbp.gov/travel/trusted-traveler-programs/global-entry)**
- CBP INFO Center: **1-877-227-5511** (from outside the U.S.: +1-202-325-8000)

## Trusted Traveler Programs (Global Entry Enrollment)

- Apply / schedule interview / Enrollment on Arrival: **[ttp.cbp.dhs.gov](https://ttp.cbp.dhs.gov)**

## Mobile Passport Control App

- Apple App Store / Google Play — search "**CBP MPC**" (publisher: U.S. Customs and Border Protection). Free.

## TSA PreCheck

- Program info & how to add your KTN:  
**[tsa.gov/precheck](https://tsa.gov/precheck)**
- TSA Contact Center: **1-866-289-9673**

# Your Next Steps

Pick your lane and set it up today:

**1** Flying international soon with no Global Entry?

Download the free CBP MPC app right now and build your profile — you'll be ready the moment you land.

**2** Fly a lot?

Start your Global Entry application at [ttp.cbp.dhs.gov](http://ttp.cbp.dhs.gov), and check whether your credit card reimburses the \$120.

**3** Confirm your arrival airport

Is on CBP's MPC participating list before your trip.

Get the full breakdown and more free guides at GovClarity:



**Visit [govclarity.net](http://govclarity.net)**

For this guide, our companion articles, and every free resource we publish — no email required.



**Watch on YouTube: @GovClarity**

We walk through Mobile Passport Control vs. Global Entry step by step in our full video guide.

# GovClarity — Simplifying Government Procedures

This guide is for informational purposes only and reflects rules current as of 2026. Programs, fees, and participating locations change — always verify with CBP at [cbp.gov](https://cbp.gov), the Trusted Traveler Programs site at [ttp.cbp.dhs.gov](https://ttp.cbp.dhs.gov), or the CBP INFO Center at 1-877-227-5511. GovClarity is not a government agency and is not affiliated with CBP, TSA, or DHS.

**Last Updated: July 2026**

[CBP.GOV](https://cbp.gov)

[TTP.CBP.DHS.GOV](https://ttp.cbp.dhs.gov)

[TSA.GOV/PRECHECK](https://tsa.gov/preccheck)

[GOVCLARITY.NET](https://govclarity.net)