

HACK THE SYSTEM WITH MANEESH SETHI

How To Take Advantage Of The System: The Travel Hacking Report

<http://hackthesystem.com>

[Twitter: @maneeshsethi](https://twitter.com/maneeshsethi)

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There's a game being played around you.

Most people are blissfully unaware.

This guide has a simple purpose: Introduce you to the world of system-hacking

Hey there, my name is Maneesh Sethi. I'm a Stanford dropout who's been traveling the world and starting businesses since 2008. I've lived in Italy, Spain, Argentina, Brazil, India, Mexico, Colombia, Berlin, and more. I speak Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, German, and English.

You can read about my business I started while living in India, that was completely outsourced to the point that I was working 0 hours per week. My business was featured on the cover in India's biggest Tabloid. [See it here.](#)

The more I travel, the more holes in the system I find. When you move around a lot, you learn that there are many ways to approach a problem. Almost everyone who wants to achieve a goal follows the most common path: that's why it's the most common!

But if you look at individual goals, and attack goals with the most direct path, different methods emerge.

On my site, <http://maneeshsethi.com>, you'll learn about how I attacked different goals. How I became a '[Famous DJ](#)' in Berlin in just 90 days. How I got a [sandwich named after me in Florence, Italy](#). How I went on a date with the President of Argentina's personal secretary.

But in this guide, I'm going to explain two specific hacks that I utilize constantly.

1) Free Airplane Travel

2) Free Office Space



[How I Started A Digital Nomad Biz](#)

I recently bought a round trip ticket to Medellin, Colombia. My return flight is business class.

Total cost? \$77, for taxes and fees. For an INTERNATIONAL round trip business class ticket.

Getting free plane tickets for fun and profit

Over the last 18 months, I've increased my frequent flier mile balance from 0 – 600,000+. Below, you'll see my AwardWallet screenshot. (**NOTE:** If you want a free premium account at AwardWallet, leave a note in the comments and I'll send it to you).

Airlines		Status	Balance
Award Program -	Account		
+ American (Personal)			224,333
+ British Airways (Executive Club)		Blue	56,162 +129 ↑
+ Continental Airlines (OnePass)		Non-Elite	79,982 -12,500 ↓
+ Delta Air Lines (SkyMiles Personal)		Silver Medallion	52,434 +30,000 ↑
+ United (Mileage Plus)		Member	47,199 +2,640 ↑
+ Virgin Atlantic (Flying Club)		Red	27,767 +15 ↑
Hotels		Status	Balance
Award Program -			
+ Starwood Hotels, etc. (Preferred Guest)		Preferred Guest	119,894 +10,000 ↑
+ Totals:	7 Accounts		607,771

My Mileage Accounts--600,000+ Miles

A couple of years ago, I read an article on Chris Guillebeau's site called the [Frequent Flyer Challenge](#). Chris wrote about his experience applying for credit cards that offered a mileage bonus for signing up. I've been hooked ever since I received my first 20,000

mileage bonus. And now I'm going to share with you the exact steps you need to follow to fly anywhere in the world, for free.

Step by step—how to earn a round trip flight to Colombia

Here are the specific steps. I'll go in depth after.

How To Get A Free International Ticket

1. Understand how frequent flyer miles, alliances, and credit card hacks work. (5 minutes)
2. Apply for the [Starwoods Preferred Card](#) for your everyday mileage card. (2 minutes)
3. Apply for American Airlines [Citibank Cards](#) for up to 120,000 frequent flyer miles. (2 minutes)
4. Meet minimum spending requirements to earn mileage bonuses. (1 minute if you spend quickly)
5. Redeem miles for a free ticket to Colombia. (5 minutes)

How Frequent Flyer Miles, Alliances, and Credit Card Hacks Work

I spend hours every week reading forums, booking sample tickets, and trying to optimize for miles. Honestly, if I just worked, I would make more than enough money to cover the ticket.

Fortunately for you, I've done all the hard work.

Alliances

An airline alliance refers to airline partners. When two airlines are in the same alliance, you can use the miles from one airline to book a flight on the other. For example, if I have miles with United Airways, I can book a ticket to Europe with Lufthansa, using my United Miles. However, I must book by calling United Airlines, not Lufthansa.

This also means that if you pay for a ticket on Lufthansa, you can earn miles that accrue in your United Account. The goal is to centralize all your miles into a single mileage account for each alliance.

There are three alliances:

- [Oneworld](#), consisting of American Airlines, British Airways, Cathay Pacific, Iberia, LAN, Qantas, and several others.
- [Star Alliance](#) which consists of United, Continental, US Airways, Lufthansa, Swiss, and several more.
- [Skyteam](#) which consists of Delta, Air France, KLM, and a bunch more. Skyteam sucks. It just does. This alliance is irrelevant for international flights. It's okay for flights within the US though, using Delta.

You'll want to create an account at one airline in each alliance, and centralize there. I recommend the following

Oneworld: Create an account at [American Airlines](#).

Star Alliance: Create an account at [United Airlines](#). (although, there may be benefits to using Air Canada—[read here for details](#).)

SkyTeam: Create an account at [Delta](#).

Once you have the mileage accounts set up, make sure that you credit miles into the correct alliance account whenever you fly.

Some notable exceptions that don't have alliances are JetBlue and Southwest Airlines. If you fly with these airlines, you can't credit them into one of the alliance accounts.

How Frequent Flyer Miles Work

This part is confusing for people. What are miles? How can you redeem them? How do they work?

Frequent flyer miles are accrued for flying on an airline. Usually, you earn one mile for every mile you fly. Flying isn't the only way to earn miles, however.

You can also earn miles by acting on promotions, or spending money using an airline credit card. Generally, you'll earn one mile per dollar spent.

Once you have enough miles in your account, you can redeem miles by going to your airline's website, or calling their help desk. I recommend you call in, because only by calling can you search partner airlines as well.

One major question is "How many miles does it take to fly somewhere?" For your resource kit, here are links to all the award charts.

Oneworld: [OneWorld Award Chart](#).

Star Alliance: [Star Alliance Award Chart](#).

SkyTeam: [SkyMiles Award Chart](#).

Let's take a look at the American Award Chart and see what it means.

AADVANTAGE ALL-AIRLINE AWARD CHART							
AWARDS MAY BE USED ONE WAY OR COMBINED FOR ROUND-TRIP OR MULTI-CITY TRAVEL							
(Number of miles is listed in thousands)							
ORIGINATING FROM / TO	Wholly Within Continental US/Canada	Between the Caribbean, Continental US Canada or Mexico		Hawaii	Hawaii Inter-Island	Wholly Within Japan/Fiji/Jordan	Wholly Within Listed Countries †
Econ Off Peak	12.5	17.5		17.5	5	7.5	10
Economy Peak	25	30		22.5	NA	12.5	17.5
Business/First	32.5	40		47.5	NA		22.5
Premium							

ORIGINATING FROM / TO THESE ZONES	NORTH AMERICA	CENTRAL AMERICA SOUTH AMERICA ZONE 1	SOUTH AMERICA ZONE 2	EUROPE	INDIAN SUBCONTINENT MIDDLE EAST	AFRICA	ASIA ZONE 1	ASIA ZONE 2	SOUTH PACIFIC	CLASS
CENTRAL AMERICA SOUTH AMERICA ZONE 1	17.5 30 40	15 30 NA								Economy Business First
SOUTH AMERICA ZONE 2	20* 30* 50* 62.5*	NA 20 32.5 40	NA 12.5 22.5 30							Econ Off Peak Economy Business First
EUROPE	20* 30* 50* 62.5*	NA 45* 55* 70*	NA 50* 70* 90*	10 20 NA						Econ Off Peak Economy Business First
INDIAN SUBCONTINENT MIDDLE EAST	45* 67.5* 90*	60* 82.5* 102.5*	67.5* 90* 110*	20 30 40	17.5 25 35					Economy Business First
AFRICA	37.5* 75* 100*	67.5* 90* 110*	75* 97.5* 117.5*	30 37.5 50	30 45 NA	10 17.5 NA				Economy Business First
ASIA ZONE 1	25* 32.5* 50* 62.5*	#	#	NA 35 52.5 70	NA 22.5 30 45	NA 30 50 70	NA 10 20 30			Econ Off Peak Economy Business First
ASIA ZONE 2	35* 55* 67.5*	#	#	35 52.5 70	22.5 30 45	30 50 70	20 30 40	15 22.5 32.5		Economy Business First
SOUTH PACIFIC	37.5* 62.5* 72.5*	40* 85* 75*	37.5* 50* 75*	45 60 80	30 45 60	37.5* 50 75	30 45 60	25 35 45	20 30 42.5	Economy Business First

The OneWorld Award Chart

It's a complex beast, no? Let me break it down for you.

I've marked flights originating or ending in North America with a red box. As you can see, the cost in miles is based on the region you are originating from and the region you are ending up in. Doesn't matter which airport, which city, etc. This means that it costs the same number of miles to fly to a capital city as to a difficult and hidden airport.

So, if you see the column I've highlighted, you'll see the costs to fly from anywhere in the USA to any other region in the world. Here are some sample economy class one way itineraries.

USA -> Europe, offseason: **20,000 miles**

USA -> South America, offseason: **20,000 miles**

USA -> Central America (incl. Peru and Colombia), offseason: **15,000 miles**

USA -> Another city in USA: **12,500**

So, for 30,000 miles round trip, you can head all the way to Peru or Colombia. These tickets often cost \$1000+ to fly to. But, with miles, it costs almost the same as flying to another US city. Amazing, right?

So, depending on where you want to go, all you have to do is earn enough miles to book that ticket. Then, when actually booking the ticket, I recommend you call in—by calling in, they will check partner airlines as well as the original airline. When you try to book on the website, you have much less availability.

Here are the phone numbers to book award tickets, for your records:

Oneworld: Call 1-800-882-8880.

Star Alliance: For travel within the U.S., call 1-888-467-0507, for international award travel, call 1-888-674-4680.

SkyTeam: Call 1-800-323-2323.

How to Hack Travel With Credit Cards

So, now we are getting closer to the method. Here's the deal — many banks in the US want you to apply for their cards. In order to get you to do this, they offer enormous promotions if you apply.

My favorite card, the [Starwoods Preferred Card](#), gives you 25,000 miles that you can redeem on any airline. The coolest part is that Starwoods offers a 5,000 point bonus when you transfer 20,000 at a time—the only card that offers such a serious bonus.

The [OneWorld cards](#) are great for mileage. Here's why.

For spending just \$750 in 4 months, you get 30,000 miles. BUT, that's not it—you also get \$100 in free credit. That's right—they are actually paying you \$100 AND giving you a FREE Roundtrip flight to central america...for just a single credit card.

So, if your goal is to get to Colombia or Peru or central america, round trip, you only need to apply for a SINGLE Citi AAdvantage card. But you can apply for 4 or more at the same time, earning up to 120,000 miles.

The other cards that are great for starting out are the United and Continental Award cards. I use the Continental OnePass card. These guys give you 30,000 miles after hitting the minimum spend, and because they are about to merge, you can transfer the miles into a single account. Awesome.

Now here's the cool part—after you've received the miles, you can cancel the card, and they'll usually pay you more if you just hold off for 24 hours. I usually call in, and they say 'we'll give you 3,000 miles if you wait to cancel.' Free 3,000 miles? Score.

Your credit score doesn't usually go down. We'll talk about that a bit later on.

The Step-by-Step process

Okay, so now that you understand how the whole system works, here is what you need to do.

1) Best overall card (GET THIS FIRST): [Starwoods Preferred Amex Card](#).

Why? You can transfer the miles to ANY frequent flyer program, and it gives you a 25% bonus (25,000 miles for every 20,000 points transferred).

Apply at the link above to get the bonus offer: 15,000 automatic points, 10,000 bonus after spending \$5,000 in 6 months, and \$0 fee for the first year (AMAZING)

You shouldn't ever have to cancel this card, it is the best of the best. It should be your goto card.

2) Next card to get: [American Airlines Citi Mastercard and Amex](#)

Why? American Airlines is part of the OneWorld Alliance, which has the best redemption offer out of any alliance. Offseason, you can get to Europe OR South America for 20k miles.

Apply at the link above to get 30,000 miles after spending \$750 in 4 months of membership, and 10,000 more after spending another \$5,000 in 6 months. PLUS, get \$100 in statement credit (that is FREE MONEY, with no annual fee for the first year).

Other excellent cards to research and get: [Continental OnePass Mastercard](#), [United MileagePlus Explorer Visa](#). There are other ones with many airlines, but these are good to start with.

Check out Chris Guillebeau's [Airline Card Comparison Chart](#) for more info.

And that's really all there is to it...

It takes 5 minutes to apply for a card. For example, this is all you have to do to sign up for the [Starwoods Card](#).

AMERICAN EXPRESS
spg Preferred Guest
3759 816543 21001
C.F. FROST

The Starwood Preferred Guest® Credit Card from American Express

Average Cardmember Rating: #
★★★★★

Earn up to 25,000 Starpoints®
Receive 10,000 bonus Starpoints after your first purchase¹
An additional 15,000 bonus Starpoints when you spend \$5,000 in the first 6 months²

REVIEW CARD BENEFITS
See FAQs
Terms, Conditions & Disclosures

Get a decision in as little as 60 seconds

Our commitment to world-class service comes with every Card. How may I assist you? Secure. Learn More

Your Personal Info *Required fields 1 of 3

First Name* Middle Initial Last Name* Name on Card* (20 character limit)

Date of Birth* (mm/dd/yyyy) Social Security Number* E-mail Address*

Primary Phone Number* Home Street Address* Apt/Ste Home Zip Code*

Want Additional Cards for your account? [Add Cards](#)

Are you enrolled in the Starwood Preferred Guest® Program? Yes No

[The Starwoods Amex Signup Form](#)

As you can see, it's just a few fields...and takes less than a few minutes.

After applying, you'll either get an 'Application Approved' message or 'Application Received.' If it says 'Application Received,' then you'll know the result via email or mail in a few days.

Next, just meet the spending requirements.

And that's all it takes to fly free. [Click here now to apply and get started.](#)

Some Frequently Asked Questions

1) What about your credit score?

I've written several articles about credit scores [when I blogged at Lending Club](#), but my experience has been this: In the four or so years that I've done credit card mileage hacking, my credit score has *increased* from 715 to 800. The reason is this: I always

pay off my cards on time. Because each new card increases my credit limit, and I continue to pay off my card, my record looks consistently better and better, and therefore my score increases.

From anecdotes and experience, it seems that your credit score will drop in the short term, especially when canceling cards, but will go up in the long term. So, if you don't expect to be purchasing a house or car in the short term (1 year or so), then this mileage hack is perfect for you.

2) What if I'm already in debt?

Then, this is probably not for you. I don't recommend that people deeply in credit card debt attempt this method of mileage hacking for two reasons. 1) You probably won't be able to get the cards anyway, and 2) I'm worried you'll overspend and go deeper into debt. Don't do this if you're stupid and will go deep into debt.

If you've got good spending habits, and your credit history is decently long, then you're a perfect candidate for this method.

3) Do I need to sign up for the rewards program before signing up for the credit card?

No, usually they will create a number for you if you are a first time applicant.

But, if you are applying for three AAdvantage cards, you may want to create the account first, and use the same number—otherwise, they may create 3 different accounts for you.

Great, that's all there is to it! Please post any questions in the comments, and I'll add them to the FAQ above!

[Get the Starwoods Amex and get your first free ticket.](#)

Free Office Space In (almost) Every Country Of The World

[Regus](#) is a company that specializes in office space, all over the world. Whenever I travel to a new country, I use them to find a place to set up shop, get free wifi and free coffee.



My Office in Bogota, Colombia (incl. private bathroom)

Their service, BusinessWorld Gold, costs \$300/year for unlimited access to the shared business lounge in all of their locations.

You can see all the lounge locations by heading over to <http://regus.com>, and type in a location on the right panel, 'Find a Location.' I've used them in India, Berlin, Bogota, New York City, and a few other spots.

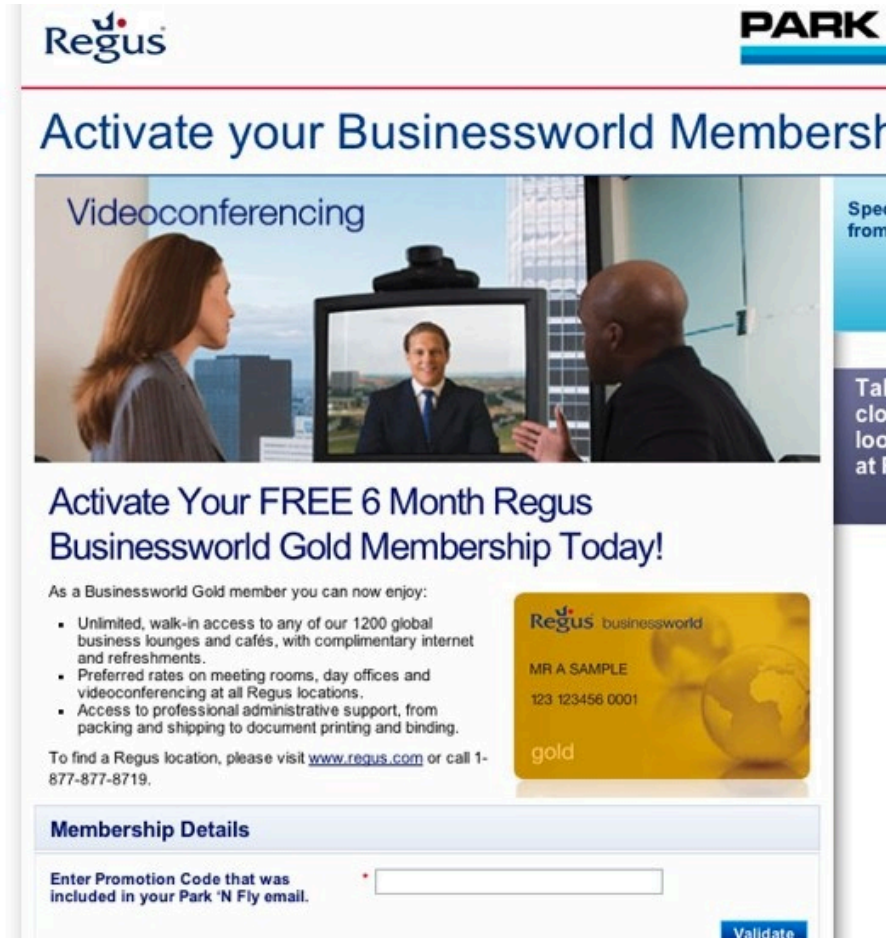
You get free coffee, free wifi, and a nice place to hang out while traveling. It's a great deal for \$300/year! But what if you don't want to pay that much?

Let me help you get it for free :)

How do you escape paying? Here is a hack to get 6 months for free.

Head over to <http://regus.com/pnf>. Use the code 'PNF' or 'pnf' to get a free six month access pass to Regus BusinessWorld.

Easy peasy.



The image shows a promotional webpage for Regus BusinessWorld Gold Membership. At the top left is the Regus logo, and at the top right is the PARK 'N FLY logo. The main heading is "Activate your Businessworld Membership". Below this is a video thumbnail titled "Videoconferencing" showing two people in a meeting room. To the right of the video are two vertical text snippets: "Spec from" and "Tak clos look at F". The main promotional text reads "Activate Your FREE 6 Month Regus Businessworld Gold Membership Today!". Below this, a list of benefits is provided: "As a Businessworld Gold member you can now enjoy:" followed by three bullet points: "Unlimited, walk-in access to any of our 1200 global business lounges and cafés, with complimentary internet and refreshments.", "Preferred rates on meeting rooms, day offices and videoconferencing at all Regus locations.", and "Access to professional administrative support, from packing and shipping to document printing and binding." To the right of the list is a sample Regus BusinessWorld Gold membership card with the text "Regus businessworld", "MR A SAMPLE", "123 123456 0001", and "gold". Below the list, it says "To find a Regus location, please visit www.regus.com or call 1-877-877-8719." At the bottom, there is a "Membership Details" section with a form that says "Enter Promotion Code that was included in your Park 'N Fly email." followed by a text input field and a "Validate" button.

Regus

PARK 'N FLY

Activate your Businessworld Membership

Videoconferencing

Spec from

Tak clos look at F

Activate Your FREE 6 Month Regus Businessworld Gold Membership Today!

As a Businessworld Gold member you can now enjoy:

- Unlimited, walk-in access to any of our 1200 global business lounges and cafés, with complimentary internet and refreshments.
- Preferred rates on meeting rooms, day offices and videoconferencing at all Regus locations.
- Access to professional administrative support, from packing and shipping to document printing and binding.

To find a Regus location, please visit www.regus.com or call 1-877-877-8719.

Regus businessworld

MR A SAMPLE

123 123456 0001

gold

Membership Details

Enter Promotion Code that was included in your Park 'N Fly email. *

Validate

Thanks for Reading.

Here is what you should do next.

Thanks a lot for joining me on the journey to Hack The System.

The purpose of my site is to show you successful ways to hack your life---by getting free tickets or office space, by building a business, by becoming an expert in unconventional ways.

To learn, I started a podcast where I interview the most successful entrepreneurs I know. These include Leo Babauta, J.D. Roth, Chris Guillebeau, Ramit Sethi, Tynan, Cody McKibben, and many more.

Join me on the journey, and subscribe to the free podcast.

[Get Awesome Interviews at the Hack The System Podcast](#)

And then, you may want to see some of my other projects.

[90 Days to Becoming A DJ in Berlin](#)

[Nearest Burrito---Find the Burrito Closest to You](#)

[Maneesh Does Pushups All Over The World](#)