

# Q&A

## The Problem of Upgrades And Code-Shares

**Last October, I bought a ticket from American Airlines to travel from Los Angeles to Hong Kong. I tried to upgrade to business class using American AAdvantage miles, but was told that this was not possible because I was on a code-share flight operated by Cathay Pacific, a partner in the One-world Alliance. I now wonder, what is the "alliance" in Oneworld? It seems that airlines are making it more and more difficult for frequent fliers to take advantage of the loyalty we show them. — David Anderson, Jakarta, Indonesia**

Remember that frequent flier programs are a marketing tool for airlines; they are not necessarily run as a benefit to travelers. Airlines award disproportionately more miles to travelers who pay the most for their tickets. And they often make it difficult to redeem miles. Alliances normally allow you to earn and redeem miles in airline partners' programs, but this often applies only to awards for free flights. There is often less reciprocity when it comes to other benefits, such as upgrades. Airlines' own customers invariably have priority over members of partner airlines' programs.

For instance, while you can use Cathay Pacific Asia Miles to upgrade on Cathay flights, you cannot do so with American AAdvantage miles, according to Tim Wagner, a spokesman for American, who points out that your AAdvantage miles can buy a ticket on Cathay.

Ravindra Bhagwanani, managing direc-

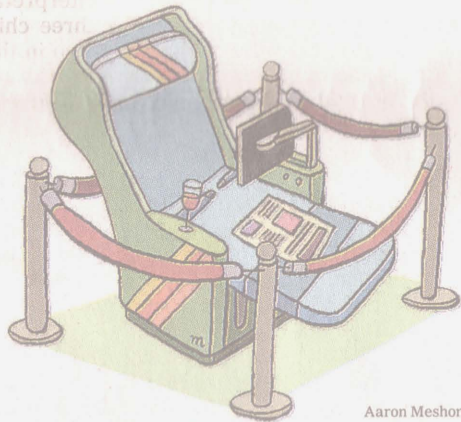
tor of Global Flight ([www.globalflight.net](http://www.globalflight.net)), which offers advice on making the most of frequent-flier programs, suggests that it may be worth joining two or three partner programs within an alliance to give you a better chance of upgrading on a code-share flight.

For example, all airlines within the Star Alliance (17 carriers, including Singapore Airlines, United and Air New Zealand) are expected, by the end of 2007, to allow frequent flier members to use their miles to upgrade on any other Star Alliance partner.

The bad news is that upgrades will be limited to full-fare passengers holding a ticket from the airline operating the flight.

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Questions for this column may be sent to [travelmail@nytimes.com](mailto:travelmail@nytimes.com). They will be answered only through the column. Please include a daytime phone number and a hometown.



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