

American Express Credit Cards History

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American Express was established in the year 1850 by Henry Wells, William Fargo, and John Butterfield. They got into the card business in 1958 with an annual fee of \$6. The cards were made of paper that had the account number and card member's name typed in. They began to issue embossed ISO 7810 plastic cards in 1959.

The First American Express Credit Cards: The Gold card was offered to the public in 1966 and a Platinum card in 1984. The platinum card had an annual fee of \$250 as it was an exclusive offer to only a few privileged customers. In 1987 they introduced the Optima card, which was the first American Express card that permitted customers to carry a balance. In 1994, the Optima True Grace card was introduced which offered a grace period but this card was discontinued after a while.

The Centurion card was offered in 1999 with an annual fee of \$1000 with a variety of exclusive benefits offered to its rich and elite cardholders. Another card was also introduced in 1999 called "Blue," which was a major triumph. The reason for its success was that it had no annual fees, offered its customers a rewards program and its success caused a cash back card the "Blue Cash" to be introduced quickly with introductory 0 APR for 6 months before the regular APR of 12.99% sets in.

The "Blue" card offers 0 APR for the first 15 months, after which the regular APR of 11.99% sets in. It offers a credit limit of \$100,000. It offers a grace period of 20 days before penalty comes into effect. One point reward is offered for every dollar spent which can be accumulated and traded for gifts. Balances can be transferred from other cards without a transaction fee and a charge of just 3.99% APR for the life of the balance.

In 2005 the "Clear" card was introduced which has no fee of any kind, and "One" which offers a savings accelerator plan. It was the year that they introduced the "ExpressPay," a wireless RFID payment method. In 2006 the "Red Card" was offered by the UK division of American Express with the company contributing to the Global Fund when each card member makes a purchase.

The Centurion card has an annual fee of \$2500 as of 2005, with the Platinum card charging \$350. The cards can be got easily by applying online. The APR depends on the card of your choice as well as the credit history. Card holders can pay the dues on their cards by Internet/Telephone banking, or Automated Banking Machines, by mailing a check or by paying it in person and it usually takes 3 to 4 days for the payments to be processed.