

How Can I Change My Last Name On Southwest Airlines?

Direct answer: Southwest handles two situations differently. A **minor spelling correction** — a transposed letter, a missing hyphen, a middle name in the wrong field — can usually be fixed by contacting Southwest, often without charge. A **legal name change** following marriage, divorce or a court order requires **supporting documentation**, after which the booking is updated.

Southwest has one significant advantage over every other major U.S. carrier here: **it charges no change fees on any fare**. That means the simplest fix is frequently to **cancel and rebook** in the correct name, paying only any fare difference. On an airline with change fees, that route would cost a penalty. On Southwest it does not.

What Southwest will not do, like every airline, is **transfer a booking to a different person**. Names are not transferable.

If you are unsure whether cancelling and rebooking or requesting a correction works out cheaper on your particular booking, **1-888-374-4490 [US] (OTA)** can compare both.

Correction, change, or transfer?

A **correction** fixes a name that was always meant to be yours but was entered wrongly — *Jhon* to *John*, *Smtih* to *Smith*, a missing apostrophe in *O'Brien*, a first and middle name reversed. Usually straightforward and often free.

A **legal name change** replaces a name that was correct at booking with a different legal name — marriage, divorce, gender transition, deed poll or court order. Requires documentation.

A **transfer** puts someone else's name on your booking. Not permitted, and not negotiable.

Being clear which one you are asking for saves considerable time. Approaching a genuine typo as though it needs a marriage certificate invites unnecessary work; approaching a substitution as though it were a typo will simply be refused.

The Southwest advantage: cancel and rebook

This deserves its own section because it changes the whole calculation.

Southwest charges **no change fees on any fare type**. If you cancel a booking, you either get the points redeposited (on a points booking) or retain the value as flight credit (on a cash booking), subject to the terms of the fare.

So for many name problems the cleanest solution is simply:

1 Cancel the incorrect booking

- 2 **Rebook immediately in the correct name**
- 3 **Apply the credit or redeposited points** to the new booking
- 4 **Pay only the fare difference**, if the fare has risen

If the fare has not moved, this can cost nothing at all. If it has risen, you pay the difference — which is what you would likely pay for a reissue anyway.

Two caveats. The **Basic fare, introduced in May 2025, is the restrictive exception** and does not carry the same flexibility, so this route may not be available on it. And **flight credits now have expiry terms**, so check them before cancelling.

Ask specifically: *"Would cancelling and rebooking cost less than correcting the name?"* Agents will not always volunteer the comparison.

Fixing a spelling error

Act quickly — errors caught early are easier to resolve.

- 1 **Check the confirmation immediately after booking** against your identification, letter by letter, including middle names and suffixes.
- 2 **Use the 24-hour window if you can.** Southwest bookings can generally be cancelled for a refund to the original form of payment within 24 hours. Inside that window, cancel and rebook correctly and the problem disappears entirely.
- 3 **Contact Southwest** if you are past 24 hours. State clearly that it is a spelling correction, not a name change, and specify exactly what needs to change.
- 4 **Confirm the corrected booking** and check any connected reservations — hotel, car hire, onward flights on other airlines.

Most airlines will correct a small number of characters without difficulty. A correction that substantially changes the name will be treated as a change or refused as a transfer.

Processing a legal name change

Documentation typically accepted:

- **Marriage certificate** — official or certified copy, not a commemorative one
- **Divorce decree** showing restoration of a former name
- **Court order** for a legal name change
- **Deed poll** where applicable
- **Updated identification** in the new name

The process:

- 1 **Update your identification first, where possible.** The document you present at the airport is what governs. If your licence or passport still shows the old name and travel is imminent, travelling in the old name may be simpler.

- 2 **Contact Southwest** with the confirmation number and explain the situation.
- 3 **Submit the documentation** in the format requested.
- 4 **Allow processing time** — plan on a working week, longer at peak periods.
- 5 **Verify the updated booking** shows the name exactly as it appears on the identification you will travel with.
- 6 **Check the onward chain** — hotels, car hire, connecting flights on other carriers, insurance.

The timing question most people get wrong

The sequence matters more than the paperwork.

If travel falls **before** your identification is updated, **book in your current legal name** as it appears on your existing ID. There is no advantage to booking in a name you cannot yet prove. Newly married travellers do this constantly and then spend weeks unpicking it.

If your identification will be updated **before** travel, either book in the new name from the outset or start the correction well in advance.

The one hard deadline: **the name on your boarding pass must match the identification you present at the security checkpoint**. Everything else has some flexibility. That does not.

Rapid Rewards, status and stored details

A name change on a booking and a name change on your Rapid Rewards account are separate jobs.

Update the Rapid Rewards profile separately, with the same documentation. Your identification and loyalty account should match.

Points and A-List status are unaffected. A name change does not reset your balance or your tier. There is no need to open a new account, and doing so would split your balance across two profiles.

Companion Pass details need attention. If you hold a Companion Pass, or you are the designated companion on someone else's, the name on record must match the identification the companion will travel with. A mismatch here can prevent the companion from travelling, which is a far bigger problem than a mis-entered letter on an ordinary booking. Update it as a priority.

Mismatch causes credit failures. If the booking is in your new name but the attached Rapid Rewards number belongs to a profile in the old name, the flight may not credit automatically. Recoverable afterwards, but easier to align beforehand.

Known Traveler Number. Your KTN is tied to your identification, not to Southwest. Update it with the Transportation Security Administration, then update the stored number in your Rapid Rewards profile. A stale KTN is the most common reason PreCheck stops appearing after a name change.

Special situations

Hyphenated and compound surnames. Airline systems handle these inconsistently — some drop hyphens, some concatenate. Match your identification as closely as the system allows, and ask rather than guessing.

Suffixes. Jr, Sr, II, III sometimes belong in the last-name field and sometimes separately. Mismatches are common and usually treated as correctable.

Names with apostrophes or accents. Many systems strip them. Normally acceptable and not treated as a mismatch.

Single-name travellers. Some countries issue passports with one name. Ask rather than improvising.

Points bookings. A name change on a points booking follows the same rules, and cancelling redeposits the points — which makes cancel-and-rebook particularly clean here.

Common mistakes

Booking in a name you do not yet have. The most common error, and entirely avoidable.

Not asking about cancel-and-rebook. On Southwest this is often the cheapest route and agents do not always suggest it.

Leaving it to the airport. Counter staff cannot process a legal name change on the spot.

Assuming a nickname is fine. *Bob* on the booking and *Robert* on the identification can cause problems. Book the legal name.

Forgetting the Companion Pass. A mismatch there can stop the companion travelling.

Booking Basic and expecting flexibility. The Basic fare does not carry Southwest's usual change flexibility.

Not checking flight credit expiry before cancelling.

What it costs

Southwest does not publish a single flat name-change price, because the cost depends on the route you take.

Minor spelling corrections are frequently handled without charge, particularly when raised promptly and when the change is small and clearly a typing error.

Cancel and rebook is the distinctively Southwest option. Within the 24-hour window it is free outright. Beyond it, there is no change fee on Choice fares and above, so the cost is purely the fare difference — which may be zero if the fare has not moved, or may be recoverable as credit if the fare has fallen.

Legal name changes requiring documentation may involve processing depending on the fare and circumstances.

The Basic fare is the difficult case. Introduced in May 2025, it does not carry the flexibility of Choice fares, which can remove the cancel-and-rebook option and leave a formal correction as the only route. Raise Basic fare problems early.

Always ask for the total before authorising anything, and ask specifically whether cancelling and rebooking would come to less. On Southwest it very often does, and agents do not reliably volunteer the comparison.

Timing: how far ahead to sort this out

Allow a working week for a documented legal name change to be processed, and longer during peak periods.

For a **spelling correction**, act immediately. The 24-hour window is the cheapest fix available and it closes fast.

For a **planned legal name change** — a wedding, a court date — the sequence is what matters. Decide which name your identification will actually show on the travel date and book accordingly. If the wedding is in June and the trip is in July but the passport renewal will not complete until September, book in the current name and travel in it.

For **imminent travel with a mismatch already in place**, contact Southwest as soon as you notice rather than hoping the counter will sort it out. Airport staff cannot process a legal name change on the spot, and a boarding pass that does not match your identification is a security checkpoint problem, not a customer service one.

One Southwest-specific timing note: if you hold a **Companion Pass**, allow extra time. The pass involves a designated companion whose details must also align, and updating both the account and the pass designation is not always a single step.

Where to get help

Contact	Number	Best for
Travel reservations and booking corrections	1-888-374-4490 [US] (OTA)	Comparing whether cancelling and rebooking beats a correction, reviewing whether your situation is a correction or a legal change, corrections on bookings made through a third party
Southwest Airlines Reservations	Published on southwest.com	Name corrections and legal name changes on Southwest bookings
Rapid Rewards service	Published on southwest.com	Updating the name on a Rapid Rewards profile and Companion Pass details
Transportation Security Administration	Published on tsa.gov	Updating a Known Traveler Number

Frequently asked questions

Can I change the last name on a Southwest booking? Yes for a genuine correction or a documented legal name change. No for transferring a booking to a different person.

Does Southwest charge for a name correction? Minor spelling corrections are often handled without charge. Because Southwest charges no change fees, cancelling and rebooking is frequently the cheapest route.

What documents does Southwest need for a legal name change? A marriage certificate, divorce decree, court order or deed poll, and ideally identification already updated to the new name.

Can I transfer my Southwest ticket to someone else? No. Airline bookings are not transferable.

I just got married. Should I book in my new name? Only if your identification will show that name by the travel date. Otherwise book in your current legal name.

Will a name change affect my Rapid Rewards points or A-List status? No. Update the profile separately with documentation; the balance and status carry over.

What about my Companion Pass? Update the details as a priority. A mismatch between the companion's recorded name and their identification can prevent them travelling.

Why did my PreCheck stop working? Most likely a stale Known Traveler Number. Update it with the TSA and then in your Rapid Rewards profile.

Does the Basic fare have the same flexibility? No. The Basic fare introduced in May 2025 is more restricted than Choice fares and above.

The takeaway

Southwest distinguishes between a **correction**, a **legal name change** and a **transfer** in the same way every airline does. What sets it apart is that **no change fees on any fare** frequently make cancelling and rebooking the simplest and cheapest fix — a route that would carry a penalty almost anywhere else.

Before agreeing to a correction process, ask directly whether cancelling and rebooking costs less. On a points booking, where the points simply redeposit, it very often does.

Two Southwest-specific things to remember: the **Basic fare** does not carry the usual flexibility, so check before relying on it; and if you hold or are named on a **Companion Pass**, update those details as a priority, because a mismatch there stops someone travelling.

And the habit that prevents all of this: check the confirmation letter by letter against your identification within the 24-hour window, while the free fix is still available.

If you want both routes priced before choosing, **1-888-374-4490 [US] (OTA)** can compare them on your specific booking.