

NOVABYTE PRESS

AI TOOL DIRECTORY

A Practical Guide to AI Tools for Work, Research,
Creativity & Productivity

Companion Resource for The AI Productivity Playbook

44 tools, organised by what you actually want to do.

This directory lists 38 core tools from the ebook's verified list, plus 6 additional recommended tools. Each entry tells you what it is best for, whether it is free or paid, who it suits, and where to find it.

A few good tools per category beat a long list you never learn. Start with one general assistant and add a specialist only when a real need appears.

38

core tools

6

additional tools

12

categories

HOW TO USE THIS DIRECTORY

Every tool below is listed with the same five pieces of information so you can scan rather than read. Pricing is the part that changes fastest, so it is worth understanding exactly what our four labels mean.

FREE	No paid tier is required for meaningful use.
FREE + PAID	There is a meaningful ongoing free tier, plus optional paid plans or features.
PAID	There is no meaningful permanent free tier. A temporary trial, or a batch of credits that eventually runs out, does not count as a free tier.
USAGE-BASED	The service is charged mainly according to how much you use it.

CORE LIST AND ADDITIONAL TOOLS

Most categories contain only the core list: the 38 tools verified for The AI Productivity Playbook. Four categories also carry a short Additional recommended tools block. These are worth knowing about, but they sit outside the ebook's verified core directory and are marked with a gold accent bar rather than a blue one.

THREE RULES WORTH MORE THAN THE LIST

- 1. Master one general assistant first.** ChatGPT, Claude or Gemini will handle the large majority of the work in the book.
- 2. Add a specialist only when a real need appears.** Reach for a research, design, image or video tool when a specific task calls for it, not before.
- 3. Try the free tier before you pay.** Most tools here have one. Confirm it does what you need on real work before committing to a subscription.

Pricing and plan availability may change. Check the provider's official website for the latest information.

NOVABYTE QUICK PICKS

One recommendation per job, chosen for practical usefulness. These are editorial picks based on each tool's published capabilities and how it is commonly used — not paid placements, and not a claim that NovaByte Press has formally tested every product on the market.

Best general AI assistant	ChatGPT	The broadest default, and the easiest place to build the habit.
Best for long-form reasoning	Claude	Holds long documents in view and writes with fewer rough edges.
Best for research	Perplexity	Answers arrive with sources you can open and check.
Best for academic evidence	Consensus	Summarises what published studies actually found.
Best for writing and editing	Grammarly	Follows you into the apps where you already write.
Best for presentations	Gamma	Fastest route from outline to finished deck. Paid only.
Best for image generation	Adobe Firefly	Built with commercial use in mind; Midjourney wins on pure quality.
Best for video	Runway	Generation plus a real editing toolkit in one place. Paid only.
Best for automation	Make	More automation per pound than the alternatives once you learn it.
Best for coding	GitHub Copilot	Works inside your existing editor with the lowest setup cost.
Best for meetings	Fathom	The most usable free tier for an individual taking notes.
Best for project management	Todoist	For solo work. ClickUp is the better pick once a team is involved.

01 GENERAL AI ASSISTANTS

The everyday workhorses. For most tasks in the book, one of these is all you need.

ChatGPT

FREE + PAID

BEST FOR Everyday drafting, summarising and questions of almost any kind.

GOOD CHOICE FOR Beginners, writers, students, office professionals

WEBSITE chatgpt.com

Claude

FREE + PAID

BEST FOR Long documents and careful, natural-sounding writing.

GOOD CHOICE FOR Writers, researchers, anyone editing lengthy text

WEBSITE claude.ai

Gemini

FREE + PAID

BEST FOR AI that sits inside Gmail, Docs, Drive and Sheets.

GOOD CHOICE FOR Google Workspace users, students, teams

WEBSITE gemini.google.com

Microsoft Copilot

FREE + PAID

BEST FOR AI chat plus assistance inside Windows and Microsoft 365.

GOOD CHOICE FOR Windows and Office users, office teams

WEBSITE copilot.microsoft.com

The web and app chat is free. Copilot inside Word, Excel and PowerPoint requires a paid Microsoft 365 plan.

Perplexity

FREE + PAID

BEST FOR Fast answers with the sources attached.

GOOD CHOICE FOR Researchers, students, fact-checkers

WEBSITE perplexity.ai

02 RESEARCH & LEARNING

Tools that work from real sources rather than memory. A found paper still has to be read and verified by you.

Gemini Notebook (formerly NotebookLM)

FREE + PAID

BEST FOR Asking questions of your own documents and getting cited answers.

GOOD CHOICE FOR Students, researchers, report writers

WEBSITE notebook.google.com

Elicit

FREE + PAID

BEST FOR Finding academic papers and pulling key details into a table.

GOOD CHOICE FOR Postgraduates, researchers, literature reviewers

WEBSITE elicit.com

Free-tier allowances change often. Confirm the current limit on your own account before planning work around it.

Consensus

FREE + PAID

BEST FOR Seeing what published studies actually conclude on a question.

GOOD CHOICE FOR Researchers, students, evidence-led writers

WEBSITE consensus.app

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDED TOOLS · OUTSIDE THE EBOOK'S CORE LIST

SciSpace

FREE + PAID

BEST FOR Explaining a dense paper you already have in hand.

GOOD CHOICE FOR Students and researchers reading outside their field

WEBSITE scispace.com

03 WRITING & EDITING

Second-pass tools. They tidy and tighten what you have written; they do not decide what you mean.

Grammarly

FREE + PAID

BEST FOR Grammar, spelling, clarity and tone across the apps you write in.

GOOD CHOICE FOR Students, professionals, non-native English writers

WEBSITE grammarly.com

The free plan covers spelling and grammar with a monthly cap on AI prompts. Rewrites and plagiarism checks are paid.

Hemingway Editor

FREE + PAID

BEST FOR Making sentences shorter and easier to read.

GOOD CHOICE FOR Bloggers, business writers, students

WEBSITE hemingwayapp.com

The web editor is free. The desktop app is a one-time purchase; AI rewriting sits in the paid Plus plan.

04 NOTES & KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

Where your own material lives. Pick one and stay in it — switching costs more time than it saves.

Notion

FREE + PAID

BEST FOR Notes, documents and simple databases in one workspace.

GOOD CHOICE FOR Students, freelancers, small teams

WEBSITE notion.com

Obsidian

FREE + PAID

BEST FOR A private, offline-first notes vault whose files you own.

GOOD CHOICE FOR Researchers, writers, privacy-conscious users

WEBSITE obsidian.md

Free app, including for work use. Paid options are the optional Sync and Publish add-ons.

Evernote

FREE + PAID

BEST FOR Capturing notes, web clippings and documents in one searchable place.

GOOD CHOICE FOR Existing Evernote users; anyone who relies on web clipping

WEBSITE evernote.com

Read the free plan carefully: it is capped at 50 notes and one notebook, which is closer to a trial than a long-term free tier.

05 MEETINGS & TRANSCRIPTION

These write the record of the meeting. Confirm names, numbers and decisions before circulating anything.

Otter.ai

FREE + PAID

BEST FOR Live transcription and searchable meeting notes.

GOOD CHOICE FOR Managers, journalists, students

WEBSITE otter.ai

The free plan includes a monthly transcription-minute allowance and a per-conversation length cap.

Fireflies.ai

FREE + PAID

BEST FOR Transcribing calls and pushing notes into your other tools.

GOOD CHOICE FOR Sales teams, consultants, client-facing roles

WEBSITE fireflies.ai

Fathom

FREE + PAID

BEST FOR Clean summaries and action items straight after the call.

GOOD CHOICE FOR Individuals, freelancers, small teams

WEBSITE fathom.video

One of the most generous free tiers in this category for individual use.

06 DESIGN & PRESENTATIONS

Speed to a presentable draft. Two of the three here have no permanent free plan – check before you commit.

Canva

FREE + PAID

BEST FOR Quick, good-looking slides, social posts and documents.

GOOD CHOICE FOR Small businesses, teachers, marketers

WEBSITE canva.com

Gamma

PAID

BEST FOR Turning a prompt or outline into a presentation or web page.

GOOD CHOICE FOR Consultants, teachers, founders

WEBSITE gamma.app

Sign-up credits are a one-time allowance that does not refresh, so this is not a free tier under our definition.

Beautiful.ai

PAID

BEST FOR Slides that lay themselves out to a professional standard.

GOOD CHOICE FOR Business teams, consultants, agencies

WEBSITE beautiful.ai

Access begins with a time-limited trial that requires a card. There is no permanent free plan.

07 IMAGE GENERATION

Always check usage rights before publishing generated images commercially.

ChatGPT image generation

FREE + PAID

BEST FOR Making images from a description inside a chat you already use.

GOOD CHOICE FOR Small businesses, content creators, teachers

WEBSITE chatgpt.com

Adobe Firefly

FREE + PAID

BEST FOR Image generation designed with commercial use in mind.

GOOD CHOICE FOR Designers, marketers, Creative Cloud users

WEBSITE firefly.adobe.com

The free tier is a small monthly credit allowance with watermarked results.

Midjourney

PAID

BEST FOR Polished, artistic images where visual quality matters most.

GOOD CHOICE FOR Designers, illustrators, brand and campaign work

WEBSITE midjourney.com

No free plan and no standard free trial; a subscription is required to generate.

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDED TOOLS · OUTSIDE THE EBOOK'S CORE LIST

Ideogram

FREE + PAID

BEST FOR Images that need legible text, such as posters and logos.

GOOD CHOICE FOR Marketers, small businesses, social media creators

WEBSITE ideogram.ai

Leonardo

FREE + PAID

BEST FOR Iterating on a look with fine control and presets.

GOOD CHOICE FOR Designers and creators who want a usable free allowance

WEBSITE leonardo.ai

08 VIDEO, AUDIO & CREATIVE AI

The fastest-moving category here. Confirm current limits and pricing before building a workflow on any of them.

Synthesia

FREE + PAID

BEST FOR Presenter-style videos from a written script, with no camera.

GOOD CHOICE FOR Trainers, HR teams, educators

WEBSITE synthesia.io

The free plan gives a small monthly video allowance with visible branding on the output.

CapCut

FREE + PAID

BEST FOR Fast, approachable editing for short-form and social video.

GOOD CHOICE FOR Content creators, small businesses

WEBSITE capcut.com

Plans were restructured in early 2026. Some previously free export options now sit behind a paid tier.

ElevenLabs

FREE + PAID

BEST FOR Natural-sounding voiceover and narration from text.

GOOD CHOICE FOR Podcasters, course creators, video makers

WEBSITE elevenlabs.io

The free tier is for testing only. Commercial usage rights begin on the first paid plan.

Descript

FREE + PAID

BEST FOR Editing audio and video by editing the transcript.

GOOD CHOICE FOR Podcasters, video editors, interviewers

WEBSITE descript.com

Free exports are watermarked and the monthly transcription allowance is small.

Runway

PAID

BEST FOR Text- and image-to-video with a broader editing toolkit.

GOOD CHOICE FOR Filmmakers, agencies, motion designers

WEBSITE runwayml.com

The free credits are a one-time grant that does not renew, so this is not a free tier under our definition.

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDED TOOLS · OUTSIDE THE EBOOK'S CORE LIST

Kling

FREE + PAID

BEST FOR Lifelike movement in short generated clips.

GOOD CHOICE FOR Social creators, marketers testing AI video

WEBSITE klingai.com

Pika

FREE + PAID

BEST FOR Quick, playful clip generation and effects.

GOOD CHOICE FOR Social media creators, hobbyists

WEBSITE pika.art

09 AUTOMATION

For the repetitive steps between apps. Automate a task only after you have done it manually enough to know the rules.

Zapier

FREE + PAID

BEST FOR Connecting apps so routine steps happen without you.

GOOD CHOICE FOR Small businesses, office managers, non-technical users

WEBSITE zapier.com

The free plan carries a small monthly task allowance — enough to test an idea, not to run a business on.

Make

FREE + PAID

BEST FOR Visual, multi-step automations with more logic per pound spent.

GOOD CHOICE FOR Freelancers, operations teams, agencies

WEBSITE make.com

n8n

FREE + PAID

BEST FOR Automation you can run on your own server if you want to.

GOOD CHOICE FOR Technical users, privacy-sensitive teams

WEBSITE n8n.io

Free when self-hosted; the managed cloud plans are paid.

10 DATA ANALYSIS & SPREADSHEETS

Useful for the tedious middle of spreadsheet work. Always check the arithmetic yourself.

ChatGPT — Data Analysis

FREE + PAID

BEST FOR Uploading a spreadsheet and asking plain questions about it.

GOOD CHOICE FOR Analysts, admin staff, small-business owners

WEBSITE chatgpt.com

Microsoft Copilot in Excel

PAID

BEST FOR Formulas, cleanup and analysis inside Excel itself.

GOOD CHOICE FOR Finance, admin and reporting roles

WEBSITE microsoft.com/microsoft-365/copilot

Requires a paid Microsoft 365 plan that includes Copilot. There is no free route to the in-app Excel features.

Gemini in Google Sheets

PAID

BEST FOR Formula help and analysis inside Google Sheets.

GOOD CHOICE FOR Teams already working in Google Workspace

WEBSITE workspace.google.com

Included from Business Standard upward. Business Starter has only limited access.

11 CODING & DEVELOPMENT

Named here for readers who write software. Skip this page if you do not.

GitHub Copilot

FREE + PAID

BEST FOR Code suggestions inside the editor you already use.

GOOD CHOICE FOR Developers, students learning to code

WEBSITE github.com/features/copilot

Cursor

FREE + PAID

BEST FOR An AI-first code editor built for multi-file work.

GOOD CHOICE FOR Working developers and small engineering teams

WEBSITE cursor.com

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDED TOOLS · OUTSIDE THE EBOOK'S CORE LIST

Devin Desktop *(formerly Windsurf)*

FREE + PAID

BEST FOR Larger, multi-file changes guided by an AI agent.

GOOD CHOICE FOR Developers comfortable delegating bigger tasks

WEBSITE devin.ai

12 TASK & PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Not AI tools first, but each now has AI assistance built in. One system beats three half-used ones.

Todoist

FREE + PAID

BEST FOR Capturing and organising personal tasks quickly.

GOOD CHOICE FOR Individuals, freelancers, students

WEBSITE todoist.com

Asana

FREE + PAID

BEST FOR Coordinating tasks and deadlines across a team.

GOOD CHOICE FOR Small teams, project coordinators

WEBSITE asana.com

Free-plan seat limits were tightened for new accounts in late 2025. Check the current cap before onboarding a team.

ClickUp

FREE + PAID

BEST FOR One workspace for tasks, documents and tracking.

GOOD CHOICE FOR Small teams wanting an all-in-one system

WEBSITE clickup.com

BEFORE YOU COLLECT TOOLS

You do not need most of what is in this directory. Nearly everything in The AI Productivity Playbook can be done inside a single general assistant from the first category. The directory exists so that when a specific need appears — a literature review, a deck, a voiceover, a spreadsheet you cannot face — you already know where to look.

Treat every line here as a starting point rather than a specification. New tools appear constantly, free tiers are tightened and loosened without notice, and prices move. Confirm current capabilities, limits and cost on the official website before you rely on any tool — and remember that whatever you use, checking its output stays on your side of the desk.

Disclaimer. Tool features, free tiers, and pricing may change over time. Always check the provider's official website for current plan details. NovaByte Press is not affiliated with the tools listed unless explicitly stated.

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The AI Productivity Playbook

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NovaByte AI Success Series · Updated August 2026 · AI drafts. You verify.