

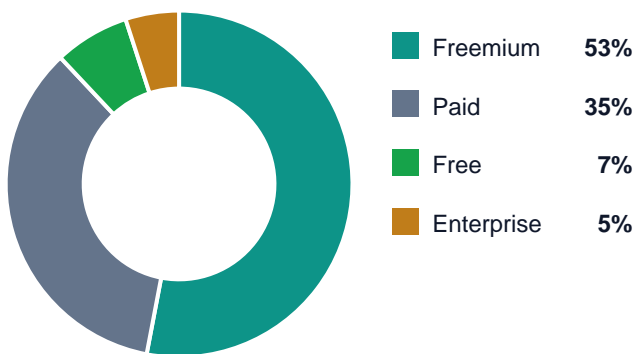
The State of AI Tools 2026

Pricing models, free tiers, and categories across 696 AI tools · Verified June 2026 · ToolChase editorial dataset

| | | | | | |
|------------|----------|------------|------------|------------|------------------|
| 696 | tools | 24 | categories | 7% | truly free |
| 53% | freemium | 35% | paid-only | 60% | some free access |

Most AI tools are freemium, few are truly free

The freemium model dominates: 53% of tools (370) offer a limited free tier and charge for more (ChatGPT, Claude, Canva, Gamma). Only 7% (47) are genuinely free or open source (Google Translate AI, DuckDuckGo AI Chat, Aider). A further 35% (243) are paid-only (GitHub Copilot, Midjourney, Jasper, Surfer SEO), and 5% sell on enterprise or custom terms. In total 60% offer some free access, but for most the free tier is a sample, not the product.



Most-searched AI tools

By raw search demand, ChatGPT is in a league of its own at about 94.61M searches a month, roughly 31 times the next-biggest AI tool. The most-searched tools after it:

| AI tool | Monthly US searches |
|------------|---------------------|
| Grammarly | 3.04M/mo |
| Gemini | 1.36M/mo |
| DeepSeek | 1.06M/mo |
| Claude | 932k/mo |
| QuillBot | 840k/mo |
| Perplexity | 330k/mo |
| Suno | 289k/mo |
| Midjourney | 234k/mo |

Cost and value

The flagship AI assistants have converged on one price: ChatGPT, Claude, Perplexity, Gemini, and Cursor all charge \$20/mo for their main consumer tier, while creative and productivity tools (Midjourney, Notion, Gamma, GitHub Copilot) run \$10 to \$15. Paying more does not reliably buy a better tool: averaging ToolChase editorial scores by

pricing model, the four groups are nearly identical (free 4.38, freemium 4.35, paid 4.34, enterprise 4.33), so the best free and freemium tools hold their own against anything paid.

Which AI categories are most free

| Category | Free share | Examples |
|----------------------------|------------|----------|
| Meeting Assistants | 90% free | |
| AI Assistants & Chatbots | 84% free | |
| Voice & Audio | 82% free | |
| Automation Agents Workflow | 82% free | |
| Education Learning | 81% free | |

Which AI categories are least free

| Category | Free share | Examples |
|--------------------------|------------|----------|
| Seo Content Optimization | 23% free | |
| Marketing & Copy | 28% free | |
| CRM & Sales | 32% free | |
| Productivity | 56% free | |
| Writing & Editing | 57% free | |

Methodology

Covers the 696 AI tools indexed in the ToolChase directory as of June 2026 across 24 categories. Each tool's pricing model is classified from its current vendor plans into Free (no paid tier, incl. open source), Freemium (free tier plus paid upgrades), Paid (no ongoing free tier; trials excluded), or Enterprise/Custom. Pricing is verified against official vendor pages; quality uses ToolChase editorial scores, not user reviews. Referral traffic is from ToolChase Web Analytics (90 days to June 2026, direct and internal excluded); search demand is United States monthly search volume from Ahrefs Keywords Explorer (June 2026). Figures are point-in-time and shift as vendors change plans.

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