



• FREE

Which AI tool for *what*

THE FREE CHEAT SHEET

The best AI tool for each job, in a few pages, with sources.

THE GROUP	JOB
<div>V</div> <div>Video</div> <div>Short ads, long takes, avatars, editing footage</div>	4 jobs
<div>A</div> <div>Audio</div> <div>Voiceover and music</div>	2 jobs
<div>I</div> <div>Images</div> <div>Images, image editing, text in images</div>	3 jobs
<div>T</div> <div>Think & write</div> <div>Writing, research, slides</div>	3 jobs
<div>B</div> <div>Build</div> <div>Coding, app and website builders</div>	2 jobs
<div>W</div> <div>Work faster</div> <div>Agents, automation, meeting notes</div>	3 jobs
Every pick cites its source. Checked Oct 21-22, 2026.	

Which AI Tool for *What*: The Free Cheat Sheet

The best AI tool for each job, plus one tip that saves you time. Scan the job, open the pick, get to work.

How we picked: We read each tool's official pages, docs, changelogs and release notes. We have not tested these tools ourselves. Checked Oct 21–22, 2026. Claims marked "vendor" are the maker's own. Free option = a free tier or free plan exists today; limits vary.

* Affiliate link: we may earn a commission at no cost to you. It never changes our rankings.

1 CREATE: video

JOB TO BE DONE	BEST PICK	RUNNER-UP	FREE OPTION
Short video ad or clip	Higgsfield* Marketing Studio ¹	Runway (Seedance 2.5 and more in one app) ²	Google Vids with Gemini Omni 1.1 ³
Longer video / longest single take	Kling 4.0 ^{4,5}	Seedance 2.5 ⁶	Google Vids: extend scenes (not one take) ³
AI avatar or talking head	HeyGen Avatar V ⁹	Synthesia Express–3 ¹¹	HeyGen Free (watermarked, Avatar IV) ¹⁰
Edit real footage	Runway Aleph 2.0 ⁸	Kling 4.0 precise video editing ⁵	No free pick confirmed

JOB	WHY (ONE LINE)	BEST FOR	PRO TIP
Short video ad	Product photo or link in, UGC–style ad out ¹	DTC and product ads, UGC tests	Clips cap at 15 s. Check voiceover and pacing before posting ¹
Longest single take	Up to 30 s in one pass, steady complex camera moves ⁴	Long takes, action, one–shot stories	Pin story beats with up to 10 keyframes ⁵
AI avatar	Builds your avatar from a 15–second recording (vendor) ⁹	Explainers, training, sales videos	Record once, then change outfit and setting ⁹
Edit real footage	Edit one frame; the change carries through the clip ⁸	Ad variants without reshoots	Preview the edit as an image first. Clips up to 30 s, 1080p ⁸

Longest single take: 30 seconds. Three models tie: Kling 4.0⁴, Seedance 2.5⁶ and Wan 3.0⁷ each list up to 30 s in a single generation in their makers' docs. Kling wins our pick because 4.0 is live in the Kling app (launched Oct 15, 2026, per Kuaishou's Oct 16 announcement)⁴. Seedance 2.5 runs 4–30 s inside Runway². Wan 3.0's API is in preview⁷. Higgsfield* Cinema Studio 4.0, a multi-model filmmaking tool rather than a model, also offers 30 s generations with a Single Shot (no cuts) setting⁴⁸.

Status check: Sora's web and app closed Apr 26, 2026, and the Sora API shut down Sep 24, 2026^{44,45}. Google shut down the Veo 3.1 preview models in the Gemini API on Oct 22, 2026, and recommends Gemini Omni 1.1 Flash instead; Veo 3.1 GA models remain on Google Cloud's Gemini Enterprise Agent Platform^{46,47}.

2 CREATE: audio

JOB TO BE DONE	BEST PICK	RUNNER-UP	FREE OPTION
Voiceover	ElevenLabs (Eleven v4) ¹²	Murf* Studio ^{14,15}	ElevenLabs Free plan ¹³
Music	ElevenLabs Music v2.5 ¹⁷	Suno v6 ¹⁸	ElevenMusic Free (5 lossless downloads a day) ¹⁷

JOB	WHY (ONE LINE)	BEST FOR	PRO TIP
Voiceover	ElevenLabs' most emotive voice model; 90+ languages (vendor) ¹²	Narration, ads, dubbing, characters	Direct delivery with inline tags like [laughs] ¹²
Music	You own what you make, on every plan, Free included ¹⁷	Tracks you can download and use	Don't reference other artists' songs; those downloads are blocked ¹⁷

Note: Murf* is our runner-up for voiceovers you need to time to slides or video: its Studio has a timeline that syncs voice blocks with images and video¹⁴. Its free trial doesn't include downloads¹⁶. Suno has the fuller song studio, but Free has no commercial rights or monthly downloads, and paid plans cap downloads outside Suno Studio^{18,19}. Udio downloads have been disabled since Oct 29, 2025²⁰.

3 CREATE: images

JOB TO BE DONE	BEST PICK	RUNNER-UP	FREE OPTION
Images	ChatGPT Images 2.5 ²¹	Midjourney V8.2 ²²	Gemini app (Nano Banana; 2.1 needs a paid plan) ²³
Image editing	Nano Banana 2.1 ²⁴	ChatGPT Images 2.5 ²¹	Gemini app ²³
Text in images (ads, posters)	Ideogram ²⁵	Nano Banana 2.1 ²⁴	ChatGPT Free (Images 2.5) ²¹

JOB	WHY (ONE LINE)	BEST FOR	PRO TIP
Images	On every ChatGPT tier, with templates, Sketch and precise edits ²¹	Everyday visuals, flyers, product shots	Type @Sketch and draw the layout you want ²¹
Image editing	Blends up to 14 reference images, up to 4 consistent characters ²⁴	Composites, product swaps, recurring characters	Set the Thinking level to high for tricky edits ²⁴
Text in images	Layerize text: fix misspelled words without regenerating ²⁵	Ads, posters, packaging with copy	Turn lettering into text layers, then change font and size ²⁵

4 Think and write

JOB TO BE DONE	BEST PICK	RUNNER-UP	FREE OPTION
Writing	Claude (Docs) ^{26,49}	ChatGPT (writing blocks, Word add-in) ²⁷	Claude Free: Docs is on all plans ^{26,49}
Research	Perplexity Research ^{28,50}	Gemini Notebook (formerly NotebookLM) ²⁹	Perplexity Free (limited Research) ²⁸
Slides	Gamma 5 ³⁸	ChatGPT for PowerPoint ²⁷	Claude Slides, on all plans ²⁶

JOB	WHY (ONE LINE)	BEST FOR	PRO TIP
Writing	Write and edit a doc beside the chat; export to Word or Google Docs ^{26,49}	Long drafts, newsletters, reports	Highlight a passage, click "Edit with Claude" to fix just that part ²⁶
Research	Runs dozens of searches, reads hundreds of sources, cites them ^{28,50}	Fact-finding and market scans with citations	Export the finished report to PDF or a document ^{28,50}
Slides	Agent plus freeform canvas; keeps PowerPoint and PDF design intact ³⁸	Polished decks, fast	Pull Slack threads or Granola transcripts straight into a deck ³⁸

Note: Gemini Notebook works from the sources you add, and now lets you review the outline before it renders slides or a Video Overview²⁹.

5 Build

JOB TO BE DONE	BEST PICK	RUNNER-UP	FREE OPTION
Coding (agentic)	Claude Code ³⁰	OpenAI Codex ³¹	Codex Free (desktop app, rolling out) ³¹
App or website builder	Lovable ³³	Bolt ³⁵	Google AI Studio Build mode ³⁶

JOB	WHY (ONE LINE)	BEST FOR	PRO TIP
Coding	One agent across terminal, IDE, desktop and web; scriptable and schedulable ³⁰	Developers shipping in real repos	Put your standards in CLAUDE.md; it's read every session ³⁰
App builder	Add Claude, Gemini, Perplexity and more inside the apps you build ³³	Non-coders building polished apps	Share drafts privately: invite-only publishing works on Free and Pro ³⁴

Switching? The ChatGPT desktop app can import your setup and recent work from Claude Code, Claude Cowork or Cursor; the Codex CLI has `/import` for Claude Code and Cursor³².

Skip Firebase Studio: it shuts down Mar 22, 2027, and new signups have been closed since Jun 22, 2026. Google points to AI Studio or Antigravity³⁷.

6 Work faster

JOB TO BE DONE	BEST PICK	RUNNER-UP	FREE OPTION
Agents: hand off a task	Claude (Cowork built in) ³⁹	ChatGPT Work ²⁷	ChatGPT scheduled tasks (Free: up to 3 active) ²⁷
Automation across apps	Zapier (AI by Zapier) ⁴⁰	n8n ⁴¹	n8n Community edition, self-hosted ⁴¹
Meeting notes and transcription	Granola ⁴²	Otter ⁴³	Granola Basic ⁴²

JOB	WHY (ONE LINE)	BEST FOR	PRO TIP
Agents	Runs in the cloud and keeps going after you close your laptop ³⁹	Research, documents, multi-step work	Schedule recurring tasks; they run with no device online ³⁹
Automation	Mix AI steps with fixed steps in one Zap ⁴⁰	Repeatable workflows across business apps	Require approval per tool before anything irreversible ⁴⁰
Meeting notes	Bot-free capture from your device audio ⁴²	Back-to-back calls, no bot in the room	Free shows 30 days of history, so save notes you'll need ⁴²

Note: Otter's free Basic plan covers 300 transcription minutes a month, up to 30 minutes per conversation⁴³.

Get the latest picks

Picks change fast. Get the updates first in the Found Motive newsletter, plus deep dives at foundmotive.com. Browse by job at foundmotive.com/best-ai-tools or try the [Tool Picker](#).

* Affiliate link: we may earn a commission at no cost to you. It never changes our rankings.

Sources

Checked Oct 21-22, 2026. Dates in brackets are the page's own date where shown.

- 1 Higgsfield, "Meet the New Marketing Studio" [Aug 18, 2026]. <https://higgsfield.ai/blog/new-marketing-studio-higgsfield>
- 2 Runway Help, "Creating with Seedance 2.5". <https://help.runwayml.com/hc/en-us/articles/53542207042323-Creating-with-Seedance-2-5>
- 3 Google, "Anyone can make stunning HD videos with Gemini Omni in Google Vids" [Sep 23, 2026]. <https://blog.google/products-and-platforms/products/workspace/gemini-omni-in-google-vids/>
- 4 Kuaishou IR, "Kling AI Officially Launches Next-Generation Kling 4.0" [Oct 16, 2026]. <https://ir.kuaishou.com/news-releases/news-release-details/kling-ai-officially-launches-next-generation-kling-4-0-raisein-g/>
- 5 Kling, "Kling 4.0 User Guide". <https://kling.ai/quickstart/kling-4-model-user-guide>
- 6 ByteDance Seed, "Introducing Seedance 2.5" [Jul 31, 2026]. <https://seed.bytedance.com/en/blog/one-take-creation-flexible-referencing-introducing-seedance-2-5>
- 7 Alibaba Cloud Model Studio, "Text-to-video" (Wan 3.0) [updated Oct 16, 2026]. <https://www.alibabacloud.com/help/en/model-studio/text-to-video-guide>
- 8 Runway, "Aleph 2.0". <https://runway.com/product/aleph-2>
- 9 HeyGen, "Announcing Avatar V" [updated Oct 20, 2026]. <https://www.heygen.com/blog/announcing-avatar-v>
- 10 HeyGen, Pricing. <https://www.heygen.com/pricing>
- 11 Synthesia, "Synthesia Launches New AI Assistant ... and Express-3 Avatar Model" [Jul 15, 2026]. <https://www.synthesia.io/post/synthesia-launches-new-ai-assistant-for-faster-video-creation-and-express-3-avatar-model>
- 12 ElevenLabs, "Introducing Eleven v4" [Sep 28, 2026; updated Oct 19, 2026]. <https://elevenlabs.io/blog/eleven-v4>
- 13 ElevenLabs, Pricing. <https://elevenlabs.io/pricing>
- 14 Murf Help, "Working with the Studio". <https://help.murf.ai/working-with-the-studio>
- 15 Murf Help, "Gen2 Voices and Features". <https://help.murf.ai/gen2>
- 16 Murf Help, "Free Trial Features". <https://help.murf.ai/is-murf-free-to-use>
- 17 ElevenLabs, "Introducing Music v2.5" [Sep 11, 2026; updated Sep 20, 2026]. <https://elevenlabs.io/blog/music-v2-5-model>
- 18 Suno, Pricing. <https://suno.com/pricing>
- 19 Suno Help, "How do downloads work?" [edited Sep 3, 2026]. <https://help.suno.com/en/articles/13876865>
- 20 Udio Help, "Changes associated with the UMG partnership" [Feb 17, 2026]. <https://help.udio.com/en/articles/12683565-changes-associated-with-the-universal-music-group-umg-partnership>
- 21 OpenAI, "Introducing ChatGPT Images 2.5" [Sep 8, 2026]. <https://openai.com/index/introducing-chatgpt-images-2-5/>
- 22 Midjourney, "Version 8.2" [Jul 24, 2026]. <https://updates.midjourney.com/version-8-2/>
- 23 Google, Gemini image generation overview. <https://gemini.google/overview/image-generation/>
- 24 Google AI for Developers, "Nano Banana 2.1" model page [Oct 2026]. <https://ai.google.dev/gemini-api/docs/models/gemini-nano-banana-2.1>
- 25 Ideogram Docs, "Edit Text and Layers". <https://docs.ideogram.ai/edit/text-and-layers>
- 26 Claude Help, "What are artifacts and how do I use them?". <https://support.claude.com/en/articles/17153992>
- 27 OpenAI Help, "ChatGPT release notes" (entries Jun 11, Jun 17, Jul 6, Jul 13, Aug 27, Sep 23 and Oct 20, 2026). <https://help.openai.com/en/articles/6825453-chatgpt-release-notes>
- 28 Perplexity Help, "What is Research mode?" [last modified Oct 20, 2026] (direct fetch blocked by a bot check; read via search-index copy; corroborated by [50]). <https://www.perplexity.ai/help-center/en/articles/10738684-what-is-research-mode>
- 29 Google, "How to shape your slides and videos with Gemini Notebook" [Oct 19, 2026]. <https://blog.google/innovation-and-ai/products/gemini-notebook/co-create-slides-videos/>
- 30 Claude Code Docs, "Overview". <https://code.claude.com/docs/en/overview>
- 31 OpenAI, Codex pricing and plans. <https://developers.openai.com/codex/pricing>
- 32 ChatGPT Learn, "Import from another agent". <https://learn.chatgpt.com/docs/import>
- 33 Lovable, "The AI you already use, now powering the apps you create" [Oct 15, 2026]. <https://lovable.dev/blog/ai-models-and-tools-in-lovable>
- 34 Lovable Docs, Changelog (Oct 8, 2026 entry). <https://docs.lovable.dev/changelog>
- 35 Bolt, Release notes (Oct 12-18, 2026). <https://support.bolt.new/releases-notes>
- 36 Google AI for Developers, "Build apps in Google AI Studio". <https://ai.google.dev/gemini-api/docs/aistudio-build-mode>
- 37 Firebase, "Firebase Studio sunset and project migration". <https://firebase.google.com/docs/studio/migrating-project>
- 38 Gamma Community, "Gamma 5 is live for everyone" [Oct 6, 2026]. https://community.gamma.app/x/gamma-announcements/msg_xSMHx6AmJvWv/gamma-5-is-live-for-everyone
- 39 Claude Help, "Use Claude Cowork on web, desktop, and mobile". <https://support.claude.com/en/articles/15520349-use-claude-cowork-on-web-desktop-and-mobile>
- 40 Zapier, "Zapier Agents is now AI by Zapier". <https://zapier.com/blog/zapier-agents-is-now-ai-by-zapier/>
- 41 n8n Docs, "Compare editions". <https://docs.n8n.io/deploy/host-n8n/community-edition-features>
- 42 Granola, Pricing. <https://www.granola.ai/pricing>
- 43 Otter Help, "Conversation, import, and app limits on the Basic free plan". <https://help.otter.ai/hc/en-us/articles/360047538094-Conversation-import-and-app-limits-on-the-Basic-free-plan>
- 44 OpenAI API Docs, "Deprecations" (Sora 2 and Videos API, shutdown 2026-09-24). <https://developers.openai.com/api/docs/deprecations>
- 45 OpenAI Help, "What to know about the Sora discontinuation". <https://help.openai.com/en/articles/20001152-what-to-know-about-the-sora-discontinuation>
- 46 Google AI for Developers, "Gemini deprecations" (Veo models). <https://ai.google.dev/gemini-api/docs/deprecations>
- 47 Google AI for Developers, "Video generation in the Gemini API". <https://ai.google.dev/gemini-api/docs/video>
- 48 Higgsfield, "Meet Cinema Studio 4.0" and Cinema Studio 4.0 Generate API docs (duration up to 30 s, "single-shot" pacing) [Aug 12, 2026]. <https://higgsfield.ai/blog/cinema-studio-4-0> and <https://docs.higgsfield.ai/docs/models/cinema-studio-4/generate>
- 49 Claude Help, "Get started with Claude Docs". <https://support.claude.com/en/articles/16923645-get-started-with-claude-docs>
- 50 TechCrunch, "Perplexity launches its own freemium 'deep research' product" [Feb 15, 2025]. <https://techcrunch.com/2025/02/15/perplexity-launches-its-own-freemium-deep-research-product/>