

THE FREE STACK GUIDE

10 Free & Low-Cost Tools to Run Your Entire Business
Under \$100/Month

By RankTheStack.com

2026 Edition

What is this guide?

This is RankTheStack's curated list of 10 free and low-cost software tools that cover every essential function of running a modern business. We use or have personally tested every tool on this list. The total monthly cost of this entire stack? Under \$12 — or completely free if you stick to the free tiers.

Affiliate disclosure

Some links in this guide are affiliate links. If you sign up through them, we may earn a small commission at no extra cost to you. This never influences which tools make the list — only tools we genuinely recommend are included. Full disclosure at rankthestack.com/disclosure.

The Stack at a Glance

#	Tool	Category	Free tier?	Monthly cost
1	HubSpot CRM	CRM	Yes — unlimited users	\$0 free forever
2	MailerLite	Email marketing	Yes — up to 1,000 subs	\$0–\$9/mo
3	Canva	Design	Yes — very generous	\$0–\$12.99/mo

4	Notion	Docs & planning	Yes — personal plan free	\$0–\$8/mo
5	Brevo	Email automation	Yes — 300 emails/day	\$0–\$9/mo
6	Google Workspace	Email & docs	Free personal Gmail	\$0–\$6/mo
7	Rank Math	SEO (WordPress)	Yes — free plugin	\$0
8	Hostinger	Web hosting	No — very low cost	\$1.99/mo
9	Calendly	Scheduling	Yes — 1 event type	\$0–\$10/mo
10	Pretty Links	Affiliate links	Yes — free WordPress plugin	\$0

Total monthly cost (free tiers only): \$0 — \$1.99/mo for hosting

The Tools — Full Breakdown

1

HubSpot CRM

CRM & Sales

The best free CRM available in 2026. Manage contacts, track deals, schedule meetings, send tracked emails, and run a basic marketing dashboard — all completely free, forever. No credit card required. Unlimited users on the free plan, which alone makes it exceptional. When you're ready to scale, paid plans add marketing automation, advanced reporting, and custom pipelines.

Free tier: Yes — unlimited users, 1M contacts | Paid from: \$15/seat/mo (Starter) | Affiliate: Via hubspot.com/partners

Get it: hubspot.com

2

MailerLite

Email Marketing

MailerLite's free plan is one of the most generous in email marketing — automation workflows, landing pages, and pop-up forms are all included. The drag-and-drop editor is clean and modern, deliverability rates are excellent, and the interface takes minutes to learn. Perfect for building and nurturing your first email list.

Free tier: Yes — up to 1,000 subscribers | Paid from: \$9/mo | Affiliate: Via mailerlite.com/affiliates

Get it: mailerlite.com

3

Canva

Design & Graphics

Canva's free plan handles all the design work most small businesses need — social graphics, presentations, lead magnet PDFs, email headers, and more. The drag-and-drop editor requires zero design skills. Pro unlocks more templates, brand kit features, and a background remover, but the free tier is genuinely sufficient for most businesses.

Free tier: Yes — thousands of templates free | Paid from: \$12.99/mo (Pro) | Affiliate: Via canva.com/affiliates

Get it: canva.com

4

Notion

Docs & Project Management

Notion combines notes, wikis, databases, and project management in one platform. The free personal plan is genuinely unlimited for individual use — unlimited pages, blocks, and up to 5MB file uploads. Use it for SOPs, content calendars, client notes, business documentation, and to-do lists. Replaces several tools at once.

Free tier: Yes — personal plan is unlimited | Paid from: \$8/mo (Plus) | Affiliate: Via notion.so/affiliates

Get it: notion.so

5

Brevo

Email Automation

Brevo charges by email volume instead of subscriber count — meaning you can have 50,000 contacts and only pay for how many emails you actually send. The free plan (300 emails/day, unlimited contacts) is unmatched for budget-conscious businesses. Particularly strong for transactional emails, drip sequences, and SMS marketing.

Free tier: Yes — 300 emails/day, unlimited contacts | Paid from: \$9/mo | Affiliate: Via brevo.com

Get it: brevo.com

6

Google Workspace

Email & Docs

If you want a professional email address (you@rankthestack.com), Google Workspace Business Starter at \$6/month is the easiest path. You get Gmail with your custom domain, Google Drive, Docs, Sheets, Calendar, and Meet. The personal Gmail account is free but won't give you a custom domain email.

Free tier: Free personal Gmail | Paid from: \$6/user/mo (Business Starter) | Affiliate: N/A — no affiliate program

Get it: workspace.google.com

7

Rank Math SEO

SEO (WordPress)

Rank Math is the best free SEO plugin for WordPress, and in many ways better than the paid competition. It handles meta titles, descriptions, schema markup, XML sitemaps, keyword tracking, and integrates with Google Search Console. Install it the day you launch your WordPress site — it takes 15 minutes to configure and runs silently in the background.

Free tier: Yes — free WordPress plugin | Paid from: \$6.99/mo (Pro) | Affiliate: Via rankmath.com/affiliates

Get it: rankmath.com

8

Hostinger

Web Hosting

Hostinger consistently offers the fastest shared hosting at the lowest prices in the industry. The Premium plan at \$1.99/month (intro) supports 3 websites, includes a free domain for the first year, and uses LiteSpeed servers for significantly faster load times than most budget hosts.

RankTheStack itself runs on Hostinger's Premium plan.

Free tier: No — low cost entry | Paid from: \$1.99/mo (Premium intro) | Affiliate: Via hostinger.com/affiliates

Get it: hostinger.com

9

Calendly

Scheduling

Calendly eliminates the back-and-forth of scheduling meetings. Share your link, people pick a time that works, it syncs to your calendar automatically. The free plan covers one event type — typically enough for most small businesses. Paid plans unlock multiple event types, team scheduling, and payment collection for paid consultations.

Free tier: Yes — 1 event type free | Paid from: \$10/mo (Standard) | Affiliate: Via calendly.com/pages/partners

Get it: calendly.com

10

Pretty Links

Affiliate Link Management

If you're running an affiliate site, Pretty Links is essential. It cloaks your long affiliate URLs into clean branded links (rankthestack.com/go/hubspot), tracks every click automatically, and lets you update destination URLs sitewide with one change. The free plugin handles everything a new affiliate site needs.

Free tier: Yes — free WordPress plugin | Paid from: \$99/yr (Pro) | Affiliate: N/A

Get it: prettylinks.com

How to Build Your Stack

The right approach is to start free and only upgrade what you outgrow. Here's the recommended launch sequence:

Week 1 — Launch your website	Get Hostinger hosting, install WordPress, install Rank Math and Pretty Links. Your site is live.
Week 1 — Set up your email list	Create a free MailerLite account, connect it to your WordPress site, set up your first automation sequence.
Week 2 — Set up your CRM	Create a free HubSpot account. Import any existing contacts. Set up your deal pipeline.
Week 2 — Set up your workspace	Get Notion free. Create a content calendar, an SOP library, and a client/project tracking database.
Week 3 — Design assets	Get Canva free. Create your logo, social media templates, and lead magnet PDF.
Ongoing — Track and optimise	Check Rank Math weekly. Check MailerLite stats after each send. Check HubSpot pipeline monthly.

The golden rule

Use every tool's free tier for 30 days before paying for anything. After 30 days you'll know exactly which tools you actually rely on — and those are the only ones worth upgrading. Most businesses run successfully on \$0–\$20/month in software for the first year.

Start Building Your Stack Today

Every tool on this list has a free tier. Start with all of them free, use them for 30 days, then only pay for the ones you actually rely on.

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