

SETUP GUIDE

9 free tools that replace paid software

Nine open-source projects from GitHub that do the job of a tool you might be paying for. Some open in your browser, some are an app you download, and two need a server. Start with the easy ones.

WHAT THIS IS

Open source means the people who made the software publish all of it for free, and anyone can use it. Most of these projects also run a hosted version with a free plan, so you sign up on their website like any other app. Nothing here needs you to write code.

WHAT IT REPLACES

The nine, and which one to start with

FREE TOOL	INSTEAD OF	WHAT IT DOES	EASIEST WAY TO GET IT
Penpot	Figma	Design and prototypes	Browser. Free plan
Plane	Jira	Projects, tasks and boards	Browser. Free plan for up to 12 users
Chatwoot	Intercom	Live chat on your website	Browser. Free plan for 2 people
Documenso	DocuSign	Send documents to be signed	Browser. 5 documents a month free
Cap	Loom	Screen recordings with a share link	App for Mac or Windows
Voicebox	ElevenLabs	AI voices, on your own computer	App for Mac or Windows
InvokeAI	Midjourney	AI images, on your own computer	App. Needs a powerful computer
Twenty	Pipedrive	CRM: contacts and deals	Free only on your own server
Listmonk	Mailchimp	Email newsletters	Free only on your own server

Plans and limits were checked on each project's own website on 14 October 2026. Free plans can change, so look at the pricing page before you rely on one.

BEFORE YOU START

Three things to check

1 An email address you can open right now.

Every browser tool sends you a link to confirm your account.

2 Which Mac you have (for the three apps).

To check: click the Apple logo (top-left of your screen) → **About This Mac**. "Chip" says Apple M1, M2 and so on, or Intel. The macOS version is listed too.

3 On Windows, your graphics card (only for InvokeAI).

To check: press the Windows key, type **Task Manager**, press Enter → **Performance** tab → **GPU**. It shows the card's name and its "Dedicated GPU memory".

Open in your browser: nothing to install

All four work the same way: go to the address, sign up with your email, click the link they send you, and you are in.

Penpot, instead of Figma

FREE PLAN

- 1 Go to `design.penpot.app` and create an account.
- 2 Start a new file and design.

Penpot calls its free plan "free and fully featured". You can work with others on the same file.

Plane, instead of Jira

FREE FOR UP TO 12 USERS

- 1 Go to `app.plane.so`, click Sign up and create your account.
- 2 Create a workspace when it asks, then your first project.

After sign-up, check which plan you are on in the workspace settings. Some users have reported a paid trial being switched on by default.

Chatwoot, instead of Intercom

FREE PLAN: 2 PEOPLE

- 1 Go to `chatwoot.com`, sign up and pick the free plan, called Hacker.
- 2 Add a website inbox, then copy the snippet it gives you into your website.

It includes up to 2 people answering, 500 conversations a month and the live-chat box. Chats are kept for 30 days.

Most website builders have a box for "custom code" or "header code". That is where the snippet goes.

Documenso, instead of DocuSign

FREE: 5 DOCUMENTS A MONTH

- 1 Go to `documenso.com` and sign up.
- 2 Upload a PDF, add the people who sign it, place the signature boxes, send.

The free plan allows 5 documents a month and up to 10 signers per document.

Download an app

Each of these is a normal app. If your Mac asks whether you are sure you want to open an app downloaded from the internet, click **Open**.

Cap, instead of Loom

MAC, WINDOWS

- 1 Go to `cap.so`, click Download and install it like any app.
- 2 Record your screen, then copy the share link.

The free plan is for personal use. Share links on the free plan are for recordings up to 5 minutes long.

Voicebox, instead of ElevenLabs

MAC, WINDOWS · RUNS OFFLINE

1 Go to `voicebox.sh/download` and pick your computer.

On a Mac, choose Apple Silicon if "Chip" said Apple M-something, or Intel if it said Intel. On Windows, choose the 64-bit installer.

2 Open it and make your first voice.

It runs entirely on your computer, so your recordings never leave it, and it is free.

InvokeAI, instead of Midjourney

NEEDS A POWERFUL COMPUTER

Check first. Mac: any Apple M-chip with macOS 14 or newer; 16 GB of memory or more is recommended. Windows: an Nvidia graphics card with at least 4 GB (older image models) or 8 GB (newer ones). Bigger models need more.

1 Download the Invoke Launcher from `github.com/invoke-ai/launcher/releases/latest`

Mac: the file ending in `arm64.dmg`. Open it and drag the app into Applications. Windows: the file ending in `.exe`. Run it.

2 Open the Launcher, click Install and follow the prompts.

The image models it uses are large downloads, so start this when you have time and space on your drive.

PART 3

Needs your own server

These two are free to run, but only on a server you set up yourself. If you have never rented a server, start with Parts 1 and 2 and come back to these later.

Twenty, instead of Pipedrive

30-DAY FREE TRIAL IN THE CLOUD

Easiest: try it at `twenty.com`. The cloud version has a 30-day trial with no card; after that it costs from 9 dollars per user per month. **Free for good:** run it on your own server. It needs Docker and at least 2 GB of memory, and the official install is one line:

```
bash <(curl -sL https://raw.githubusercontent.com/twentyhq/twenty/main/packages/twenty-docker/scripts/install.sh)
```

Listmonk, instead of Mailchimp

NO OFFICIAL HOSTED VERSION

Listmonk is self-hosted only. It needs a server, a Postgres database (version 12 or newer) and an email-sending service to deliver your newsletters. If you don't want to run a server, the Listmonk docs list paid one-click hosts that set it up for you. Instructions: `listmonk.app/docs/installation`

GOOD TO KNOW

- **"Free" means the free plan or your own server.** The hosted free plans have limits (listed above). Self-hosting has no plan limits, but you pay for and look after the server.
- **Export your data now and then.** Most of these let you download your files, contacts or documents. Do it before you rely on one for client work.
- **Start with one.** Pick the paid tool you use most, try its free swap for a week, then decide.
- **Want help setting these up for your business?** Join the PathionAI community. The link is on my Instagram profile.