AI Tool Directory

This directory gathers the tools mentioned throughout the book, along with several useful alternatives, organized by the workflow categories from Chapter 15. Each entry lists the tool's purpose, what its free version offers, what paid plans add, how difficult it is for a beginner, and where it fits best.

Before you use this directory, keep three things in mind:

- **Tools change constantly.** Features, plans, limits, and prices change often, sometimes monthly. Treat this directory as a starting map, and check each tool's current website before committing. Some even disappear: PlayHT and OpenAI's Sora video app, both popular in 2025, had shut down by mid-2026.
- **Always check commercial-use terms.** A monetized channel is commercial. Some free plans don't allow commercial use, or require attribution. Where known restrictions exist, they're flagged below with **[!]**. Record what you find in your content-source record (Chapter 19).
- **You don't need most of these.** Chapter 15's $0 Beginner Toolkit needs just one tool per category. This directory helps you choose, not collect.

Difficulty ratings: Easy: usable within an hour. **Moderate**: takes a few sessions to learn. **Advanced**: significant learning curve.

WRITING AND RESEARCH

ChatGPT (OpenAI)

Purpose	AI assistant for ideas, research, scripts, descriptions, and analysis; also generates images
Free version	Yes, with usage limits and access to less advanced models at busy times
Paid version	Monthly plans with higher limits, more capable models, and more features
Difficulty	Easy
Best use	All-purpose scripting, brainstorming, and repurposing

Claude (Anthropic)

Purpose	AI assistant for research, long-form writing, editing, and analyzing long documents
Free version	Yes, with usage limits
Paid version	Monthly plans with higher usage limits and additional features
Difficulty	Easy
Best use	Script drafting and editing, long scripts, and analyzing analytics data with large pasted content

Google Gemini (Google)

Purpose	AI assistant integrated with Google services; also generates images and video
Free version	Yes, with usage limits
Paid version	Monthly plans with more capable models, higher limits, and access to advanced image and video tools
Difficulty	Easy
Best use	Research, scripting, and creators already using Google Drive and Gmail

Perplexity

Purpose	AI research tool that answers questions with linked sources
Free version	Yes, with limits on advanced searches
Paid version	Monthly plan with more advanced searches and model choices
Difficulty	Easy
Best use	Fact-finding and locating sources to verify claims (Chapter 4). Always open and check the sources themselves.

VOICE AND AUDIO

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ElevenLabs

Purpose	AI text-to-speech narration, voice design, and voice cloning
Free version	Yes, with a small monthly allowance of speech. [!] **No commercial rights on the free plan, and attribution is required.** Not suitable for monetized videos.
Paid version	Tiered monthly plans, starting at a low-cost entry tier, that add commercial rights, more speech, and voice cloning
Difficulty	Easy
Best use	High-quality, natural-sounding narration for long-form videos. The entry paid tier is often a creator's first worthwhile upgrade (Chapter 15).

Built-in editor voices (in CapCut, Clipchamp, Descript, and others)

Purpose	Text-to-speech included inside video editors
Free version	Usually yes, with a limited voice selection. [!] Check each editor's terms for commercial use.
Paid version	More voices and higher quality with editor upgrades
Difficulty	Easy
Best use	Shorts and early videos while testing your channel

Audacity

Purpose	Free audio recording and editing software
Free version	Fully free and open-source
Paid version	None
Difficulty	Moderate
Best use	Recording and cleaning up your own narration, and adjusting volume levels (Chapter 6)

IMAGE GENERATION

ChatGPT and Google Gemini image generation

Purpose	Create images from text descriptions within the AI assistant
Free version	Yes, with limited daily images
Paid version	Higher limits and better quality with paid assistant plans
Difficulty	Easy
Best use	Quick scene images, thumbnail backgrounds, and channel art. [!] Review each provider's terms for commercial use.

Adobe Firefly (Adobe)

Purpose	AI image generation, and image editing tools such as generative fill
Free version	Yes, with limited monthly credits
Paid version	Monthly plans with more credits; also included in some Adobe subscriptions
Difficulty	Easy
Best use	Creators who want tools designed with commercial use in mind. Check current terms.

Leonardo.ai

Purpose	AI image generation with style controls and consistency features
Free version	Yes, with daily credits. [!] Check commercial-use and ownership terms for free-tier images.
Paid version	Monthly plans with more credits, private generations, and commercial rights
Difficulty	Moderate
Best use	Consistent visual styles across a series (Chapter 8)

Midjourney

Purpose	High-quality artistic AI image generation
Free version	None
Paid version	Monthly subscription plans only
Difficulty	Moderate
Best use	Distinctive, high-quality visuals for AI visual story and documentary channels, once your channel justifies the cost

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VIDEO GENERATION

Runway

Purpose	AI video generation from text or images, plus AI editing tools
Free version	Limited trial credits. [!] Check export limits and watermarks.
Paid version	Monthly credit-based plans
Difficulty	Moderate
Best use	Adding motion to key scenes, such as bringing a still image to life

Google Veo (through Gemini and Google's creative tools)

Purpose	AI video generation from text or images
Free version	Yes, inside YouTube: the Shorts camera includes a fast version of Veo for free, for short, lower-resolution clips. Wider access through Gemini varies by plan and region. [!] YouTube labels videos made with its own AI tools, and those labels can't be removed (Chapter 19).
Paid version	Available through paid Google AI plans
Difficulty	Moderate
Best use	Short, realistic clips for key moments. [!] Realistic scenes may require YouTube's altered or synthetic content disclosure (Chapter 19).

Kling

Purpose	AI video generation from text or images
Free version	Yes, with limited daily credits. [!] Check commercial and watermark terms.
Paid version	Monthly credit-based plans
Difficulty	Moderate
Best use	Short cinematic clips for AI visual story channels

AI AVATARS

HeyGen

Purpose	AI avatar presenters that speak your script
Free version	Limited, with watermarked videos
Paid version	Monthly plans with more minutes, no watermark, and custom avatars
Difficulty	Easy
Best use	AI avatar presenter format (Chapter 13). [!] Avoid avatar presenters for finance, health, and legal topics (Chapter 19).

Synthesia

Purpose	AI avatar presenters, popular for training and explainer videos
Free version	Limited trial or free tier
Paid version	Monthly plans with more minutes and features
Difficulty	Easy
Best use	Polished presenter-style explainers on non-sensitive topics

STOCK MEDIA AND PUBLIC-DOMAIN SOURCES

Pexels

Purpose	Free stock photos and videos
Free version	Fully free, commercial use allowed, attribution not required (appreciated)
Paid version	None
Difficulty	Easy
Best use	Stock-video explainers and B-roll

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Pixabay

Purpose	Free stock photos, videos, illustrations, music, and sound effects
Free version	Fully free under the Pixabay content license
Paid version	None
Difficulty	Easy
Best use	One-stop free source for visuals and background music. [!] Read the license for restrictions on depicted people, brands, and trademarks.

Unsplash

Purpose	High-quality free stock photography
Free version	Yes, free under the Unsplash license
Paid version	Unsplash+ for additional premium images
Difficulty	Easy
Best use	Striking still images for slideshows and thumbnails

Public-domain archives (Wikimedia Commons, Library of Congress, NASA, national archives, museum open-access collections)

Purpose	Historical photographs, maps, documents, artwork, and scientific imagery
Free version	Free; many items are public domain
Paid version	None
Difficulty	Easy to Moderate (searching takes practice)
Best use	History, biography, and science documentaries. [!] **Check each item's individual license.** Not everything in these collections is public domain.

Storyblocks

Purpose	Subscription stock video, images, and music
Free version	No (occasional trials)
Paid version	Subscription with unlimited downloads under its license
Difficulty	Easy
Best use	Channels whose subjects aren't well covered by free libraries. [!] Check license terms for videos published after you cancel.

VIDEO EDITING

CapCut

Purpose	Beginner-friendly video editor for mobile, desktop, and web, with templates, auto-captions, and AI tools
Free version	Yes, with limits on AI features, premium effects, and export options. [!] **Free-plan commercial use of CapCut's built-in assets (music, effects, templates) may be restricted.** Review CapCut's current terms of service, including its rights over uploaded content, and check whether it's available in your region.
Paid version	Pro subscription with more AI tools, premium assets, and broader commercial licensing
Difficulty	Easy
Best use	Fast Shorts production and simple long-form edits

Microsoft Clipchamp

Purpose	Browser-based and Windows video editor with templates, stock media, and text-to-speech
Free version	Yes, with standard exports and a basic stock library
Paid version	Premium plan with premium stock, brand kits, and higher-resolution exports
Difficulty	Easy
Best use	A simple, free alternative to CapCut, especially for Windows users

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DaVinci Resolve (Blackmagic Design)

Purpose	Professional-grade editing, color correction, and audio software
Free version	Yes, a very capable free version
Paid version	One-time purchase of the Studio version with advanced features
Difficulty	Advanced
Best use	Creators who want professional control and are willing to invest learning time

Descript

Purpose	Editing video by editing its transcript, plus AI voice, filler-word removal, and screen recording
Free version	Yes, with limits on transcription, exports, and AI features
Paid version	Monthly plans with higher limits and more AI tools
Difficulty	Easy to Moderate
Best use	Narration-heavy videos and tutorials. Removing pauses and mistakes is as easy as editing text.

InVideo

Purpose	AI video creation from a script or prompt, matching stock footage automatically
Free version	Yes, with watermarked exports and limits
Paid version	Monthly plans without watermarks, with more AI minutes and premium stock
Difficulty	Easy
Best use	Fast first drafts of stock-video explainers. [!] Automatic assembly can look generic, so always customize (Chapter 19).

iMovie (Apple)

Purpose	Simple video editor for Mac, iPhone, and iPad
Free version	Fully free on Apple devices
Paid version	None
Difficulty	Easy
Best use	Mac users who want a straightforward free editor

SCREEN RECORDING

Built-in recorders (Windows Snipping Tool; Mac Screenshot toolbar)

Purpose	Record your screen without installing anything
Free version	Included with your operating system
Paid version	None
Difficulty	Easy
Best use	Quick tutorials and simple demonstrations

OBS Studio

Purpose	Free, open-source screen recording and live streaming
Free version	Fully free
Paid version	None
Difficulty	Moderate
Best use	Longer, higher-quality tutorial recordings with multiple sources

Loom

Purpose	Quick screen recording with easy sharing
Free version	Yes, with limits on video length and count
Paid version	Monthly plans with longer recordings and editing features
Difficulty	Easy
Best use	Short walkthroughs and recording rough drafts

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MUSIC AND SOUND

YouTube Audio Library (in YouTube Studio)

Purpose	Free music and sound effects cleared for YouTube
Free version	Fully free
Paid version	None
Difficulty	Easy
Best use	The safest starting point for background music. [!] Some tracks require attribution in your description.

Epidemic Sound

Purpose	Subscription music and sound effects library for creators
Free version	Limited trial
Paid version	Monthly or annual subscription
Difficulty	Easy
Best use	Channels wanting a large, high-quality, consistent music library. [!] Check how your license covers videos published while subscribed, after cancellation.

Suno (AI music generation)

Purpose	Creates original songs and instrumentals from text prompts
Free version	Limited credits and only a few lifetime downloads. [!] **Free-plan songs are for personal, non-commercial use only and can't be used in monetized videos.** Upgrading later doesn't license songs you made for free.
Paid version	Monthly plans that include commercial use for songs you download on the plan, with a monthly download limit
Difficulty	Easy
Best use	Custom background tracks or a channel theme. [!] AI music can occasionally resemble existing songs and trigger Content ID claims (Chapter 19).

THUMBNAILS AND GRAPHICS

Canva

Purpose	Design tool for thumbnails, channel art, graphics, and simple videos, with built-in AI tools
Free version	Yes, generous, with many free templates and elements
Paid version	Canva Pro adds premium elements, background removal, brand kits, and more AI features
Difficulty	Easy
Best use	Thumbnails and channel branding. The free version is enough to start.

Adobe Express (Adobe)

Purpose	Quick design tool for thumbnails and social graphics, with Firefly AI features
Free version	Yes, with a basic template library and limited AI credits
Paid version	Premium plan with full templates, assets, and more credits
Difficulty	Easy
Best use	An alternative to Canva, especially for existing Adobe users

PUBLISHING, CAPTIONS, AND ANALYTICS

YouTube Studio (YouTube)

Purpose	Uploading, scheduling, captions, Insights (called Analytics until November 2026), the Research tab, A/B Testing for titles and thumbnails, the Ask Studio AI assistant, and monetization
Free version	Fully free with your channel
Paid version	None
Difficulty	Easy to Moderate
Best use	Everything from Chapters 10, 11, 17, and 20. **Auto-captions** are generated here automatically. Always review and correct them.

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vidIQ

Purpose	YouTube keyword research, competitor insights, and channel suggestions
Free version	Yes, with limited features
Paid version	Monthly plans with deeper research and AI tools
Difficulty	Easy
Best use	Extra keyword and topic ideas once you've mastered YouTube Studio's own tools

TubeBuddy

Purpose	Browser extension for YouTube SEO, bulk editing, and thumbnail testing
Free version	Yes, with limited features
Paid version	Monthly plans with advanced tools
Difficulty	Easy
Best use	Managing many videos and optimizing descriptions in bulk

STORAGE AND WEBSITE

Google Drive / OneDrive / Dropbox

Purpose	Cloud storage for scripts, audio, visuals, and exports
Free version	Yes, with limited storage (Google Drive offers the most free space of the three)
Paid version	Monthly plans with more storage
Difficulty	Easy
Best use	Project folders (Chapter 15). Keep scripts and source records in the cloud, and large video files on an external drive if space runs short.

External hard drive

Purpose	Local storage and backup for large video files
Free version	Not applicable (one-time purchase)
Paid version	One-time purchase
Difficulty	Easy
Best use	Archiving finished projects and backing up your library

WordPress.com

Purpose	Website for companion posts, a Videos library page, newsletters, and links (Chapters 12 and 18)
Free version	Yes, with a .wordpress.com address and basic features
Paid version	Plans with a custom domain, no WordPress.com ads, and more features
Difficulty	Easy to Moderate
Best use	Your channel's home base outside YouTube

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YOUR TOOL AND SUBSCRIPTION TRACKER

Chapter 15 recommended keeping a simple list of the tools you use and what they cost. Copy this table into a spreadsheet, add one row per tool, and review it every three months.

Tool	Plan & cost	Renews	Commercial OK?	Used for

Tips: Record free tools too, so you can see your whole toolkit at a glance. In the "Commercial OK?" column, note any attribution requirements. When you cancel a paid plan, note the date. Some licenses only cover content made while you were subscribed.

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