



FREELANCING
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The Ultimate Guide of Free Resources for Freelancers



Hey there, I'm Erin!

I've been freelancing since 2014 when I decided to leave my corporate job to stay home with my daughter. I was nearing the end of my maternity leave and facing a crossroads - go back to work and put my daughter into full-time daycare or cobble together an income from low paying virtual assistant employment and freelancing gigs while taking care of her at home. My choice seemed crazy to some, but I knew that if I worked hard I could succeed. Six months later, I was able to start my own company.



Since then I've dabbled in virtual assistant services, freelance writing, social media marketing, and community management -- with varying degrees of success. I used these income streams to match my previous full-time salary while working less than part-time hours.

When I first got started I searched the internet for **free resources** that would help me take my business to the next level. I'm a researcher by nature so I tried out everything I could get my hands on to find the best tools for the job.

If you're looking for the best free resources for freelancers, you're in luck! I'm not going to overwhelm you with a comprehensive list of everything that exists. I couldn't offer that to you if I wanted to, because new tools are created every day! What I am going to do is tell you about the products that I use and love. These have my stamp of approval.

Without any further ado, here are the best free resources for freelancers.

Business Management

Running a secure and legal business is extremely important for a freelancer. These tools will help you run your day-to-day operations.

HelloSign

If you need to get a contract signed, this is the service to use. It's easy to use and free up to three signatures per month. If you need more than that, plans start at \$13/month. Even better, HelloSign has an audit trail, should you run into any legal troubles.

LastPass

Never forget another password again! LastPass is a secure way to save and share passwords. It's great for working with clients and will save you a ton of time logging into sites. It adds a layer of security to your business and its free version has all of the major features.

PayPal

Paypal is the easiest and most popular way to get paid. For the convenience of free invoicing and money transfers, you are charged 2.9% + \$0.30 per transaction. There are other programs that charge lower fees, but they require monthly paid memberships.

Project Management

Your business needs systems to ensure nothing falls through the cracks. Here are two tools you can use to get organized.

Wunderlist

Wunderlist is a clean and simple project management tool that allows you to keep track of all your tasks. This tool is as easy to use as a pen and paper. You can organize your tasks into folders, share them with others, and set reminders for them (both one-time and recurring). It's available on your phone, computer, or website. Plus, your account syncs up automatically so you can add and check off tasks from anywhere.

Asana

Asana is a beefed-up task management system that allows for collaboration, file management, detailed notes on tasks and subtasks, and assignments. With Asana, you and your client (or teammate) can see the status of a project simply by logging in.

Email Management

Email is a necessary evil in a freelancer's world. These tools will help you master your inbox so it doesn't eat up your time.

Boomerang for Gmail

If you send emails, you need this tool! Boomerang has a ton of awesome features. You can schedule emails to send in the future, set reminders, request read receipts and track clicks, and pause your inbox so you aren't distracted by incoming emails while you work. Boomerang also includes an AI feature called Responsible that lets you know how likely it is that your email will get a reply.

Inbox by Gmail

Don't like the tab layout of Gmail? You may enjoy the streamlined look of Inbox. Inbox uses bundles (instead of folders and labels) to keep your emails organized. It turns your inbox into a to-do list by allowing you to set reminders and mark emails "complete". It also allows you to turn an email into a task, snooze it until later, or pin it to the top of your inbox. New features are regularly being added to improve Inbox's functionality.

File Management

Being organized is one of the most important traits of a successful freelancer. File management systems prevent you from scrambling to find a project you completed six months ago. Use these tools to keep your documents centralized and organized.

Google Drive

Google Drive is a file storage site that gives you tons of space for your documents. You can create folders and easily share them with clients or collaborators. Google Drive comes with every Google account and offers 15GB of free space. Should you need more space, you can upgrade to 100GB for \$1.99 per month.

Dropbox

Dropbox is another popular file management system with the same features as Google Drive. Dropbox offers 2GB for free and has paid plans starting at \$8.25 per month for 1TB of storage.

Time Management

What you don't measure, you can't manage. You need to know exactly where your time is going so you can be as productive as possible. Here are two great tools for tracking your time and boosting your productivity.

Toggl

Toggl is an easy-to-use time tracker, available as a Chrome extension, app, and website. The tool allows you to customize your tracking by adding projects, client categories, and descriptions to your tasks. You can print reports for a specified date range or project/client and use them as invoices. You can also assign projects, track progress, and set up deadlines and budgets. The free version works for small teams (up to 5 people), but if you need more functionality, plans start at \$9/user per month.

Tomatoes

If you aren't using the Pomodoro technique to get more done, you should be! This technique involves working in 25 minute blocks followed by 5 minute breaks. After you complete three blocks, you get an extended break. The Tomatoes app or website keeps track of your completed Pomodoros and alerts you when it's time to take a break. One nice feature is that the timer counts down in a browser tab so you can easily see how much time is left in your block.

Communication

Although email is the most frequently used communication tool, sometimes you may need other options. These two tools allow you to text, talk, or video conference with anyone in the world for free.

Slack

Slack is a free chat program with a ton of functionality. You can set up channels to communicate with your clients privately or create mastermind groups to keep in touch with other freelancers. Slack is available as a website and an app for your phone and computer.

Skype

Sometimes, email doesn't cut it and you need to have a voice or video call with your client. Instead of giving out your mobile number, get a Skype account and give out your username. If you download the app, you can use it the same way you'd use your phone without the risk of long distance charges or burning through your data (if you're connected to WiFi). Even better, you can logout of Skype on nights and weekends and set your status to available or busy during the workday. Using Skype adds a layer of privacy while still allowing your clients to easily get in touch with you.

Writing & Blogging

No matter what your freelance niche is, you will do most of your communication with clients through email. That means your writing skills need to be top notch. These two tools will ensure that your message comes through loud and clear.

Grammarly

Grammarly is a free plugin that corrects your spelling and grammar. It adds spell check to places that don't have it like Facebook, Twitter, and Reddit. It's available as a Chrome plugin and an OS X app.

CoSchedule Headliner Analyzer

Are your headlines grabbing your audience's attention? If you aren't sure then you need CoSchedule's Headliner Analyzer. This tool scores your headlines by measuring word balance, length, and appearance. You can submit as many headlines as you like then use the one that gets the best score.

Social Media Marketing

Social media marketing is something that every business owner needs to do. Here's where you need to be and what you can use to make working with social media easier.

Facebook Pages

Facebook is the social sharing network for everyone from CEOs to grandmas. Your freelancing business needs a Facebook presence. Fill out your profile, post regularly (2-5 times per week), and respond to communications quickly.

Buffer

Scheduling your social media posts in advance is a must do because it saves a ton of time. Buffer allows you to schedule up to 10 posts on each social network (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, Google+) for free. Should you need to schedule more posts, you can upgrade to a paid plan.

Newsletter & Email Marketing

If you have a business, you need an email list. This list will be your greatest asset for drumming up new business and selling products. Regular communication with your list is how you build trust and engagement. Use this tool to stay connected.

Mailchimp

Mailchimp isn't the flashiest email creator on the block, but it gets the job done. You can send out newsletters and emails for free to a list of 2,000 or less. There are many tutorials out there on how to optimize Mailchimp and the site has a searchable troubleshooting database that provides step-by-step instructions for using the service.

Automations & Integrations

Technology is a wonderful thing. We aren't at the point where everyone has a personal robot yet, but we do have automations and integrations which are the next best things. Use these tools to save time and brainpower.

IFTTT

IFTTT (If This Then That) allows you to connect apps and devices that supercharge the benefits of each other. You know the phrase two heads are better than one? That's the idea behind this. For example, when you post a photo on Facebook, IFTTT can also post it on Twitter and Instagram and save it in your Google Drive.

Zapier

Zapier also connects apps and builds sequences, but it allows for more complicated scenarios than IFTTT. For example, when you get an email in Gmail, it can save the email to Dropbox, and alert you in Slack. One warning - be careful that you don't make more work for yourself! This tool should save you time, not increase your workload.

Graphic Design

You don't need to be a graphic designer to create beautiful images, logos, or branding materials for social media, blog posts, and websites. These resources make graphic design easy and fun for the average computer-savvy freelancer.

Canva

If you need to create high quality images for free, Canva is the best resource out there. There are hundreds of pre-made templates for every social media site. You can get inspiration from them or insert your own images and text and use them immediately.

Ribbet

If you need to edit, crop, or otherwise manipulate an image, Ribbet is the easiest and quickest program to use.

Stock Images

Images enhance your words and add interest to your work. If you have a website, social media account, or blog, you need high-quality stock images. There are hundreds of stock photo sites out there, but these four are the best.

Unsplash

If you need beautiful stock images, Unsplash is the way to go. There are hundreds of free stock image sites and many of them are great, but if I could only use one it'd be Unsplash. They have a great variety of categories and all of their images are free to use however you like.

Ivory Mix

Ivory Mix has their finger on the pulse of what's popular for Pinterest images today. If you're looking for images with lots of white space and beautiful objects, flowers, or design, look no further.

Kaboom Pics

This site has a huge variety of different image subjects and an easy to use search function.

Pixabay

Pixabay is another great place to find quality free images. They have a huge variety of images and add new ones constantly.

Concentration

It can be hard to concentrate when you work from anywhere. When you need to get stuff done, but can't lock yourself in an isolation chamber, here are some great tools to help you concentrate.

Soundrown

If you find music too distracting to listen to while you work, you should try ambient sound. Soundrown offers many soothing tracks including the sounds of a coffee shop, rain storm, birds singing, fire crackling, white noise and other nature sounds to help you concentrate on your work.

Self Control App for Mac

The Self Control app allows you to choose which websites you'd like to block and for how long. This can be super helpful when something is happening in the news and you need to get to work or you just can't stay off Facebook. Even if you restart your computer, you won't be able to access the sites until the timer runs out. Sort of evil, but very effective!

News Feed Eradicator for Facebook

If you need to use Facebook, but don't want to get distracted by your newsfeed then you need this tool. News Feed Eradicator removes your news feed and puts an inspirational quote in its place.

Lifestyle

The freelancing lifestyle is unique. You have the ability to work from anywhere, but you may not always make the healthiest choices. Here are some tools you can use to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

f.lux

If you use your computer at night, you need f.lux. Blue light has been shown to disrupt sleep for hours after you turn off the screen. At first the program will make your screen seem unnaturally yellow, but you'll get used to it quickly and reap the benefits of falling asleep faster.

Stop, Breathe, Think

Meditation is a huge energy booster and mood enhancer. If you start a meditation practice, you will notice major changes in your attitude and enthusiasm level. This app makes meditating fun by walking you through dozens of themed meditations and awarding you stickers when you reach milestones. The free library has a ton of offerings, but if you need more you can upgrade to premium for \$59 per year.

7 Minute Workout

Freelancing can be an inherently sedentary job, but sitting all day is not good for your body. Ideally, you should exercise for 30 minutes per day, but that isn't always possible. When life gets in the way and you don't have much time, this 7 minute workout is a great option.