ToolGPA

NOVEMBER 2026

aerc

The Insider's Guide

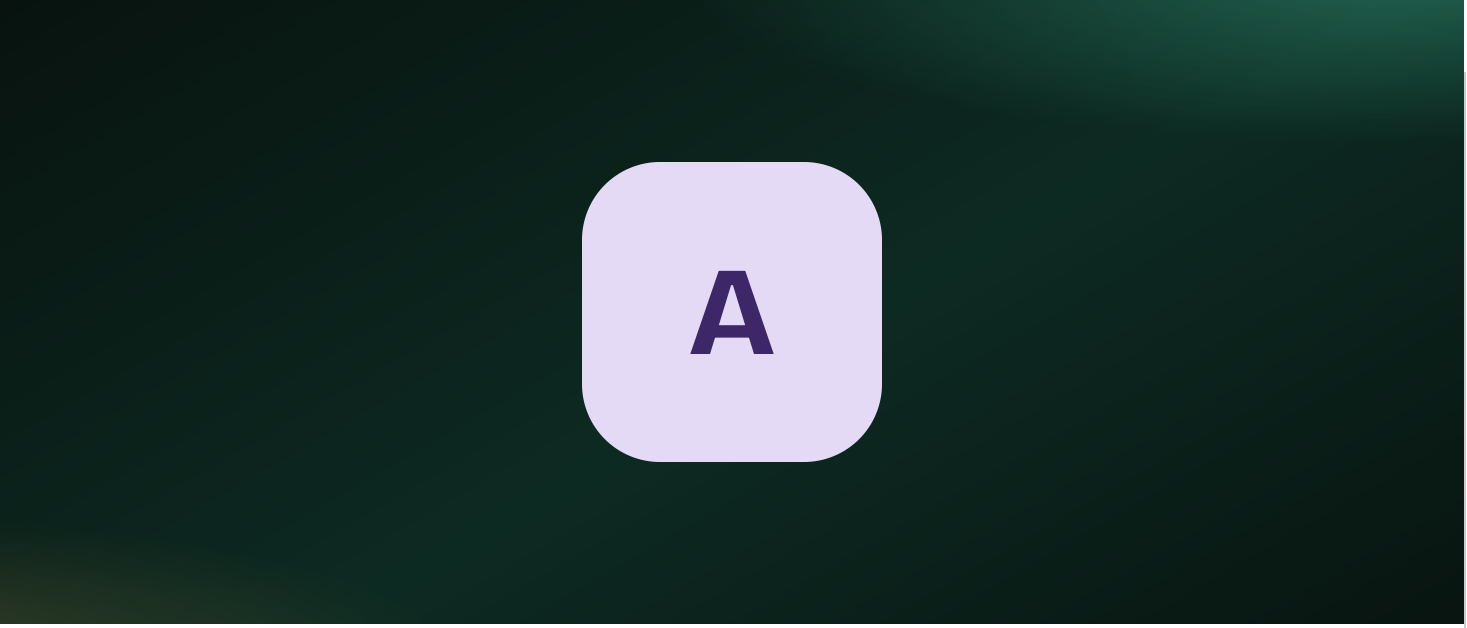
Terminal email client with Vim-style keys and git-email support



Every plan, grade, refund rule and rival among email apps, read from aerc's own pages.

Made by aerc · checked Nov 13, 2026 · toolgpa.com

2.6
GPA



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Who made this guide, what else is on the site, and how to cite it

ToolGPA put this guide together from aerc's own pages, its app-store listings and our grades. Every fact in it is on aerc's page too, where it is kept up to date. Checked Nov 13, 2026.

Welcome

What it is, who it suits, its grades and the ten things to know first

2.6

GPA, above 74 of the 122 other email apps we grade

aerc is an email client that runs in a terminal. It supports IMAP, Maildir, Notmuch, mbox and JMAP backends, with asynchronous IMAP and JMAP handling, threading and PGP through GnuPG. Its site calls it 100% free and open source software, and the project is MIT licensed.

To get you started, here are **8 things to know about aerc**, taken from its own pages and our grades.

> "
>
> **It runs only in a terminal, and HTML mail is shown through a separate terminal browser.**
>
> From our report card of aerc

1 **Best for a terminal mail client with Vim-style keys**

aerc is a free terminal mail client with Vim-style keys, an embedded terminal for writing mail and a git-email workflow.

2 **It is free**

aerc has no paid plan at all. Free to download and use; the project says it is 100% free and open source software.

3 **It runs on 2 platforms**

Linux and macOS.

4 **Embedded terminal compose**

Edit emails in an embedded terminal, tmux-style, while checking incoming mail and other threads.

5 **Vim-style keybindings**

Vim-style keys and an ex-command system allow automation from a single keystroke.

6 **Several backends**

Supports multiple accounts over IMAP, Maildir, Notmuch, Mbox and JMAP, with SMTP and sendmail for sending.

7 **A 2.6 GPA, above 74 of 122**

That is against the other email apps we grade, on value, the free plan, features, ease of use and platforms.

8 **Keep it**

aerc is free, so making your own would save you nothing.

aerc at a glance

PRICING Free	FREE PLAN Yes
FREE TRIAL None stated	RUNS ON macOS, Linux
MADE BY aerc	CATEGORY Email Apps
OUR GRADE 2.6 GPA, good	

The report card

Best for a terminal mail client with Vim-style keys

aerc is a free terminal mail client with Vim-style keys, an embedded terminal for writing mail and a git-email workflow. It runs only in a terminal, and HTML mail is shown through a separate terminal browser.

TOOLGPA REPORT CARD | **aerc** | Graded Nov 13, 2026

SUBJECT	GRADE	COMMENT
Value for money	A	Free, and the project says it is 100% free and open source.
Free plan and trial	A	Nothing is locked: free to download and use, with no paid plans.
Features	C	Several backends, PGP through GnuPG and git patch workflows. HTML mail goes through an interactive terminal browser instead of showing in place, which is a real gap for ordinary mail.
Ease of use	D	It's a terminal program that you set up by editing files, and there's a keyboard vocabulary to learn first.
Platforms and integrations	C	Linux and macOS in a terminal. No graphical, web or phone version.

Grade point average — Good, out of 4.0 **2.6**

An A is worth 4 points, a B 3, a C 2, a D 1 and an F nothing. The GPA is the average of the five.

Who aerc is for

- ✓ Fits if you send patches by email and want git and mail in one place
- ✓ Works for people who already think in Vim keys

Who it is not for

- ✗ Skip it if you want HTML mail shown the way it looks in a browser
- ✗ Not for you if you need a graphical or web version, as it only runs in a terminal
- ✗ Skip it if you don't want to configure it by hand
- ✗ Watch out: support is mailing lists, a bug tracker and a wiki

Good to know

Good for

- ✓ Developers who send and review patches by email
- ✓ Terminal users who prefer Vim-style navigation

Worth knowing

- ⓘ Runs only in a terminal; there is no graphical or web version.
- ⓘ HTML email is rendered through an interactive terminal browser rather than shown natively.
- ⓘ Support is via mailing lists, a bug tracker and a wiki.

What it costs

Every plan, the free plan, ways to pay less and how prices have moved

Free

No paid plan at all

aerc is free to use.

> **Nothing is locked: free to download and use, with no paid plans.**

From our grade for free plan and trial

FREE

$0

Free and open source; no paid plans.

The free plan

Free to download and use; the project says it is 100% free and open source software.

Read from aerc-mail.org on Nov 13, 2026.

What it does

Its main features, where it runs, what it works with and who makes it

2

Places it runs: macOS and Linux

Terminal email client with Vim-style keys and git-email support. Here is what it does, as its own site describes it, and what it covers: open source, keyboard-first, email client.

> **Several backends, PGP through GnuPG and git patch workflows.**

From our grade for features

Embedded terminal compose

Edit emails in an embedded terminal, tmux-style, while checking incoming mail and other threads.

Vim-style keybindings

Vim-style keys and an ex-command system allow automation from a single keystroke.

Several backends

Supports multiple accounts over IMAP, Maildir, Notmuch, Mbox and JMAP, with SMTP and sendmail for sending.

git and email workflow

Highlights patches with diffs and offers first-class support for working with git and email.

PGP with GnuPG

Signs, encrypts and verifies messages using GnuPG; HTML mail renders through a terminal web browser.

Where it runs

macOS Linux

What it works with

GnuPG Notmuch git tmux

aerc is made by aerc.

Where it stands

Its grades against its category, and whether to keep it or make your own

74/122

Other email apps it is graded above

aerc's GPA of 2.6 is higher than 74 of the 122 other email apps we grade, and level with 13.

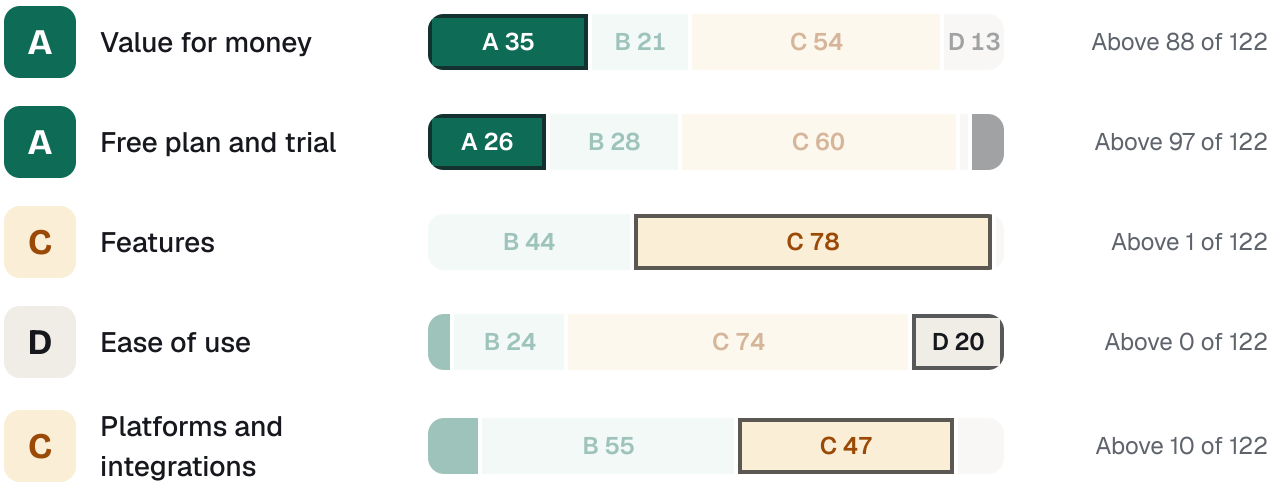
It stands best on free plan and trial (A, above 97 of 122) and worst on ease of use (D, above 0).

aerc has no paid plan.

On features, ease of use and platforms it scores 1.7 out of 4. Nothing scores higher for less, though at least one tool matches that score at a lower price.

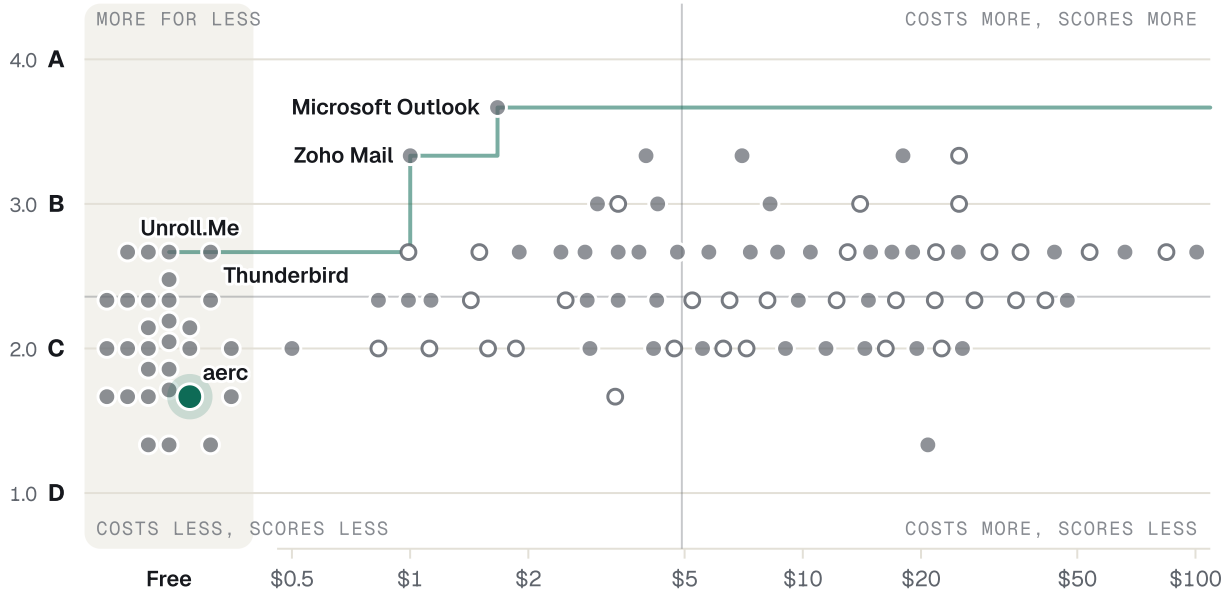
Each grade against the category

Every bar is all 123 email apps we grade, cut by the letter each got. aerc's own letter is outlined.



Price against what you get

Each dot is one of 107 email apps. Further left costs less; higher up scores better on features, ease of use and platforms. aerc is the marked dot.



What paid plans start at, a month (each step along is roughly double)

Keep it, or make your own?

Whether this is something you could build for yourself with an AI app builder, and what you would give up.

Keep it

aerc is free, so making your own would save you nothing.

And it is not the kind of software a weekend replaces.

What you could not

- ✕ An email client: sending, receiving, threading and searching years of mail.
- ✕ A real app for macOS and Linux. Something home-made would be a web page.

What this rests on. aerc's listing: what it does, where it runs, what it plugs into and what it costs. It is a judgement about the kind of software this is. We have not built a replacement for it, and making your own means looking after it too. How we decide, and every tool's verdict.

The alternatives

The tools it is most often weighed against, side by side



NeoMutt, Mutt, Thunderbird, Claws Mail and Mailspring

The 5 tools aerc is most often weighed against, with where each one differs from it.



2.8 GPA

NeoMutt

Free

Command-line mail reader forked from Mutt with extra features.

aerc and NeoMutt compared in full



2.4 GPA

Mutt

Free

Small text-based mail client for Unix systems.

- Only aerc lists a macOS app.

aerc and Mutt compared in full



3.2 GPA

Thunderbird

Free

Free, open-source email app for Windows, macOS, Linux and Android.

- Only Thunderbird lists Windows and Android apps.
- Thunderbird also covers tasks and calendar.

aerc and Thunderbird compared in full

C

2.8
GPA

Claws Mail

Free

Lightweight GTK email and news client, free under the GPL.

- Only aerc lists a macOS app.
- Only Claws Mail lists a Windows app.
- Claws Mail also covers inbox filtering.

aerc and Claws Mail compared in full

M

2.4
GPA

Mailspring

Free plan · from $8/mo

Open-source desktop email client for Mac, Windows and Linux.

- Only Mailspring lists a Windows app.
- Mailspring also covers templates.

aerc and Mailspring compared in full

Quick answers

The questions people ask about it, each answered in a line or two

12

Questions, each answered in a line or two

The short version of everything above, for when you only need the answer. Each one is told in full in its part of the guide.

Is aerc free?

Yes. aerc is free to use. Free to download and use; the project says it is 100% free and open source software.

How much does aerc cost?

aerc lists one plan. Free: $0.

What platforms does aerc work on?

aerc is available on Linux and macOS.

Does aerc have an Android app?

No Android app was listed when its pages were read on Nov 13, 2026. aerc is listed for Linux and macOS.

Does aerc have an iPhone app?

No iPhone app was listed when its pages were read on Nov 13, 2026. aerc is listed for Linux and macOS.

Is aerc open source?

Yes. aerc is open source, according to its own site.

What does aerc integrate with?

aerc's listing names GnuPG, Notmuch, git and tmux. A listing names up to eight integrations, so it may connect to more.

Who makes aerc?

aerc is made by a company of the same name.

What are the alternatives to aerc?

The closest alternatives to aerc in our directory are NeoMutt, Mutt, Thunderbird, Claws Mail and Mailspring.

How does aerc compare with other email apps?

aerc's GPA of 2.6 is higher than 74 of the 122 other email apps we grade, and level with 13.

Is aerc good value for money?

ToolGPA grades aerc A for value for money. aerc has no paid plan. On features, ease of use and platforms it scores 1.7 out of 4.

Could I make my own version of aerc?

aerc is free, so making your own would save you nothing. And it is not the kind of software a weekend replaces.

Where this guide comes from

The prices, plans, platforms and features were read from aerc's own pages on Nov 13, 2026, and the grades were given on Nov 13, 2026. Graded from this listing, whose facts were read from the aerc project's own pages on 13 November 2026. Not based on using the product, and shorter than our full reviews.

Every tool we list gets five grades, A to F, each with its reason, and a GPA that averages them. How each is decided is at toolgpa.com/grades. This guide is ToolGPA's own work; it is not made, paid for or approved by aerc. Prices change, so check aerc-mail.org before you buy.

aerc-mail.org

git.sr.ht/~rjarry/aerc

github.com/rjarry/aerc

About ToolGPA

Who made this guide, what else is on the site, and how to cite it

7,721

Tools graded, in 95 categories

ToolGPA grades software the way a school report grades a pupil: five subjects, a letter for each with the reason written beside it, and a GPA that averages them. Prices, plans and platforms are read from each maker's own pages and dated, so you always know how fresh a figure is.

Every grade, review and ranking on ToolGPA is our own judgement. No company can pay for a grade or change one. Every tool on the site has a guide like this one, free to download and pass on. It all lives at **toolgpa.com**.

7,721	95	739	579
tools graded	categories	price changes on record	apps priced in 12 countries

What else is on toolgpa.com

aerc, kept up to date

Everything in this guide, with prices and grades as they are today

toolgpa.com/tools/aerc

How grades are given

The rules behind every letter and every GPA

toolgpa.com/grades

Value charts

What each tool costs against what it scores, for every category

toolgpa.com/charts

Compare

Any two tools side by side, plan by plan

toolgpa.com/compare

Price changes

Every price rise and cut on record, each with its source

toolgpa.com/price-changes

Prices by country

What apps cost on the App Store in 12 countries

toolgpa.com/prices-by-country

Pay less

Every public discount: yearly billing, students, nonprofits

toolgpa.com/save

Keep or make

Which tools are worth paying for, and which you could build yourself

toolgpa.com/keep-or-make

Scan for the live page

Prices and grades as they are today

Quoting this guide?

Please name ToolGPA and link to the live page, so readers can check the figures for themselves:

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ToolGPA, "aerc: The Insider's Guide", checked
Nov 13, 2026. https://toolgpa.com/tools/aerc
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Know someone choosing between email apps?

Send them this guide: toolgpa.com/tools/aerc/guide

ToolGPA elsewhere: youtube.com/@toolgpa

See our other guides

The best-graded email apps after aerc, each with an Insider's Guide of its own.

Email Apps Insider's Guide

Every one of the 126 email apps we grade, compared

Microsoft Outlook Insider's Guide

Microsoft's email and calendar app for desktop, mobile and web

3.6 GPA

AOL Mail Insider's Guide

Free webmail with news and weather in a companion mobile app

3.2 GPA

BlueMail Insider's Guide

Cross-platform email client with a unified inbox and built-in AI

3.2 GPA

ToolGPA

Choosing software? Every tool graded, every price dated.

Compare tools at toolgpa.com ›

Everything in this guide is ToolGPA's own summary of what aerc's pages, its app-store listings and public reviews said on the dates shown. Grades are our judgement under the rules at toolgpa.com/grades. Every grade, review and ranking on ToolGPA is our own judgement. No company can pay for a grade or change one. aerc is a trademark of its owner, and this guide is not made, paid for or approved by aerc. Prices and plans change: check aerc-mail.org before you buy.