ToolGPA

NOVEMBER 2026

CiviCRM

The Insider's Guide

Open source constituent CRM for nonprofits and civic groups



Every plan, grade, refund rule and rival among CRM tools, read from CiviCRM's own pages.

Made by CiviCRM LLC · checked Nov 13, 2026 · toolgpa.com

2.4
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 CiviCRM's own pages, its app-store listings and our grades. Every fact in it is on CiviCRM'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

2.4

GPA, above 76 of the 116 other CRM tools we grade

CiviCRM is a web-based constituent relationship management system for nonprofits, associations and other civic organizations. It covers contacts, donations, memberships, events, case management and bulk email. The software is free to download and run yourself, and a hosted edition called Spark is sold by monthly subscription.

To get you started, here are **9 things to know about CiviCRM**, taken from its own pages and our grades.

> "
>
> **The main product is self-hosted and needs a server and upkeep.**
>
> From our grade for ease of use

1 **Best for an open source CRM you can host yourself**

CiviCRM is an open source constituent CRM for nonprofits, free to download under the AGPL.

2 **Paid plans start at $15 a month**

As its pricing page puts it: $15 per month for up to 5,000 contacts (Spark Starter).

3 **There is a free plan**

The full software is free to download, use and share under the GNU AGPL v3; you host it yourself or pay a hosting partner.

4 **It runs on Web**

Web.

5 **Contact management**

Keeps donors, members, volunteers and other contacts with their relationships and history in one place, with custom fields, import and export, and deduplication.

6 **Contributions and memberships**

Takes payments through customizable contribution pages and manages memberships with automated renewals and reminders.

7 **Events and peer-to-peer fundraising**

Runs any number of events and lets supporters raise money through their own fundraising pages.

8 **A 2.4 GPA, above 76 of 116**

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

9 **Keep it**

To replace CiviCRM you would be making newsletters sent to thousands of people that still reach the inbox. That is not a weekend's work, with an AI app builder or without one.

CiviCRM at a glance

PRICING Free plan, from $15 per month for up to 5,000 contacts (Spark Starter)	FREE PLAN Yes
FREE TRIAL None stated	RUNS ON Web
MADE BY CiviCRM LLC, since 2005	CATEGORY CRM Software
OUR GRADE 2.4 GPA, fair	

The report card

Best for an open source CRM you can host yourself

CiviCRM is an open source constituent CRM for nonprofits, free to download under the AGPL. The catch is that you host it yourself or pay a partner, and the hosted Spark plans from $15 a month do not carry every feature or complex customisation.

TOOLGPA REPORT CARD	CiviCRM	Graded Nov 13, 2026
SUBJECT	GRADE	COMMENT
Value for money	B	Spark Starter is $15 a month for up to 5,000 contacts, right at the category's cheaper quarter. The free download only counts as free if you run the server yourself.
Free plan and trial	C	The software is free to download, but it needs your own server and upkeep, and CiviCRM publishes no price for hosting help. There is no trial.
Features	B	Contacts, contributions and memberships, events, peer-to-peer fundraising, bulk email and SMS, case management and reports. Spark ships most but not all of that.
Ease of use	D	The main product is self-hosted and needs a server and upkeep. No store rating on record.
Platforms and integrations	B	Web only, with WordPress, Drupal, Joomla, Backdrop, Mailchimp, Zapier, QuickBooks and Xero. No native phone or desktop apps.
Grade point average		Fair, out of 4.0 **2.4**

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 CiviCRM is for

- ✓ Fits if you have someone technical who can host and maintain a server
- ✓ Works for groups that want to own their data and avoid per-seat pricing

Who it is not for

- ✗ Not for you if you want no server work, as the free download needs hosting and upkeep
- ✗ Tight if you pick Spark: it is not the full download and takes no complex customisation
- ✗ Watch out: Spark prices rise with contacts and emails, and are listed only to 10,000 contacts
- ✗ Skip it if you want a native phone app, as there is none

Good to know

Good for

- ✓ Nonprofits and associations that want to own their data and code
- ✓ Organizations with a technical person or a hosting partner
- ✓ Small groups that want a cheap hosted CRM through Spark

Worth knowing

- ⓘ The free download needs your own server and upkeep, or a paid hosting partner or expert, and the price of that is not published by CiviCRM.
- ⓘ Spark is described by the vendor as not a replacement for the full download: it ships most but not all features and does not take complex customizations.
- ⓘ Spark prices rise with contacts and emails; the page lists tiers only up to 10,000 contacts and 50,000 emails.
- ⓘ Runs in a browser only; there are no native mobile or desktop apps.

PART 02 · PRICING

What it costs

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

$15

A month to start. There is a free plan too

CiviCRM has a free plan. Paid plans start at $15 per month for up to 5,000 contacts (Spark Starter).

> **The free download only counts as free if you run the server yourself.**
>
> From our grade for value for money

SELF-HOSTED DOWNLOAD

$0

Free to download and run on your own server, standalone or with Backdrop, Drupal, Joomla or WordPress. You host and maintain it yourself.

SPARK STARTER

$15

per month for up to 5,000 contacts

Hosted CiviCRM with unlimited users, most CiviCRM components and CiviMail.

SPARK ESSENTIALS

$30

per month for up to 5,000 contacts

Everything in Starter plus Mosaico HTML emails, with up to 10,000 emails.

SPARK PRO

$50

per month for up to 10,000 contacts

Additional extensions, up to 50,000 emails and a custom domain.

The free plan

The full software is free to download, use and share under the GNU AGPL v3; you host it yourself or pay a hosting partner.

Read from civicrm.com on Nov 13, 2026.

What it does

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

1

Place it runs: Web

Open source constituent CRM for nonprofits and civic groups. Here is what it does, as its own site describes it, and what it covers: open source, self-hostable, reports, email campaigns, case management.

> **Contacts, contributions and memberships, events, peer-to-peer fundraising, bulk email and SMS, case management and reports.**
>
> From our grade for features

Contact management

Keeps donors, members, volunteers and other contacts with their relationships and history in one place, with custom fields, import and export, and deduplication.

Contributions and memberships

Takes payments through customizable contribution pages and manages memberships with automated renewals and reminders.

Events and peer-to-peer fundraising

Runs any number of events and lets supporters raise money through their own fundraising pages.

Bulk email and SMS

Sends email and SMS campaigns to segments of contacts; the Spark tiers cap monthly emails.

Case management

Tracks ongoing work with a constituent as cases with their own processes.

Reports and extensions

Ships with dozens of configurable reports, and a public extensions directory adds payment gateways, accounting links and other integrations.

Where it runs

Web

What it works with

WordPress
Drupal
Joomla
Backdrop
Mailchimp
Zapier
QuickBooks
Xero

CiviCRM is made by CiviCRM LLC, and has been around since 2005.

PART 04 · STANDING

Where it stands

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

76/116

Other CRM tools it is graded above

CiviCRM's GPA of 2.4 is higher than 76 of the 116 other CRM tools we grade, and level with 22.

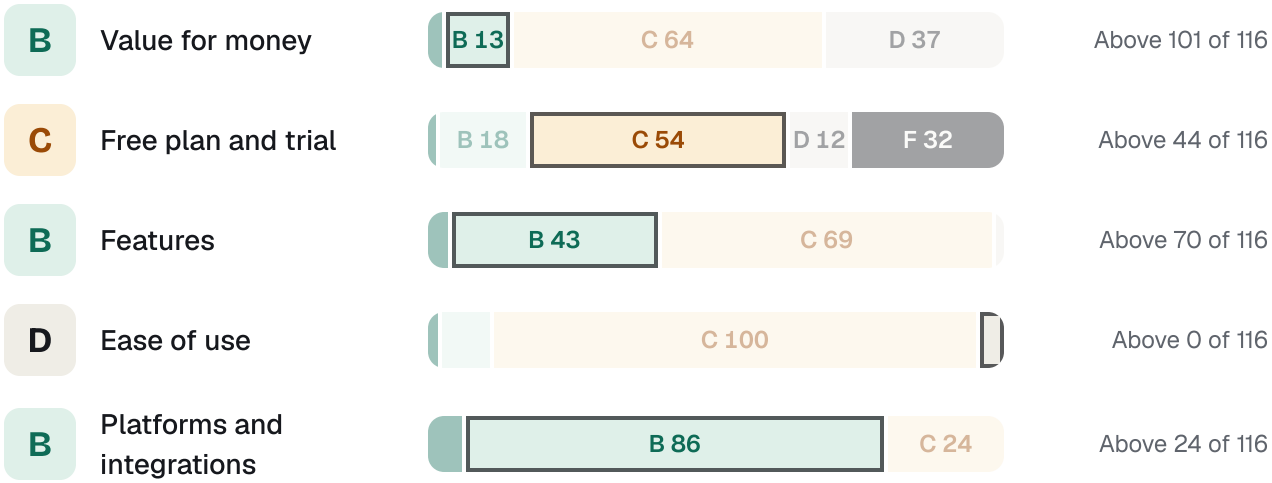
It stands best on value for money (B, above 101 of 116) and worst on ease of use (D, above 0).

Its paid plans start at $15 a month, against a middle price of $29 for the category: 21 of the 93 others that charge start lower.

On features, ease of use and platforms it scores 2.3 out of 4. 14 tools score higher and cost less.

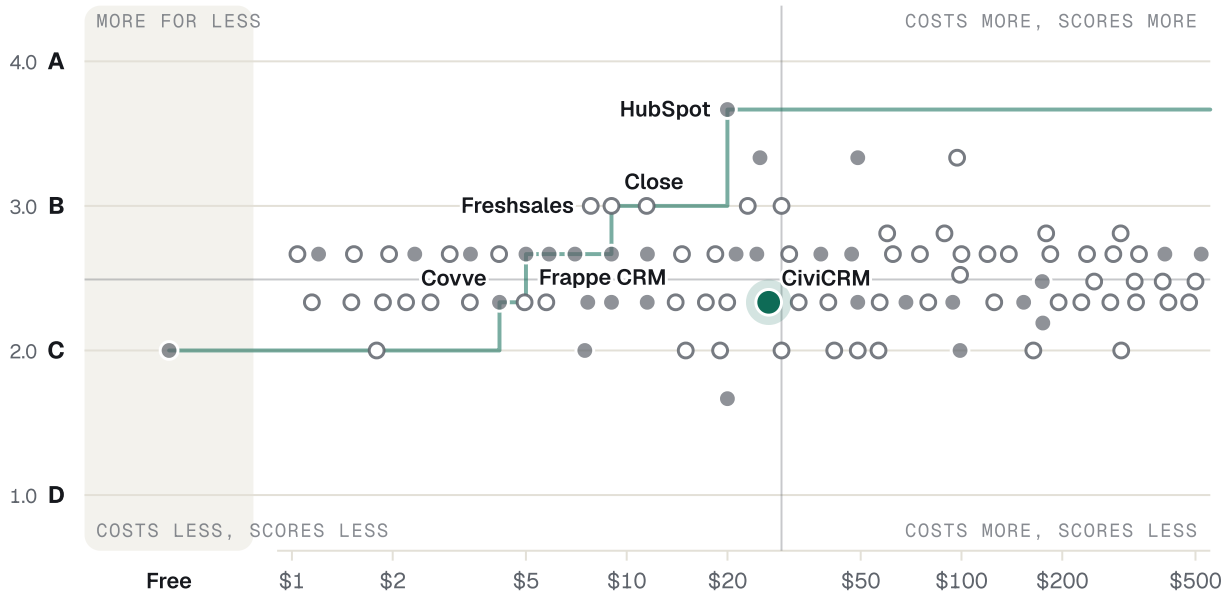
Each grade against the category

Every bar is all 117 CRM tools we grade, cut by the letter each got. CiviCRM's own letter is outlined.



Price against what you get

Each dot is one of 95 CRM tools. Further left costs less; higher up scores better on features, ease of use and platforms. CiviCRM 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

To replace CiviCRM you would be making newsletters sent to thousands of people that still reach the inbox. That is not a weekend's work, with an AI app builder or without one.

It costs $180 a year. CiviCRM is open source, so there is a third way: take its code and run it yourself.

What you could make

- Case management and reports: an app builder makes these well.

What you could not

- Newsletters sent to thousands of people that still reach the inbox.

- It plugs into other products, WordPress, Drupal and Joomla among them.
- The depth: we grade its features B, which means it covers the whole job.

What this rests on. CiviCRM'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



SuiteCRM, EspoCRM, Bloomerang, Neon CRM and Little Green Light

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

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SuiteCRM

Free plan · from £130/mo

Open-source CRM with no per-user license fees.

- CiviCRM also covers email campaigns and case management.
- SuiteCRM also covers sales pipeline, marketing automation and workflow automation.

CiviCRM and SuiteCRM compared in full

2.6 GPA

EspoCRM

Free plan · from $15/mo

Open-source CRM you can self-host for free or rent in the cloud.

- CiviCRM also covers email campaigns and case management.
- EspoCRM also covers kanban boards, sales pipeline and workflow automation.

CiviCRM and EspoCRM compared in full

1.8 GPA

Bloomerang

Paid

Donor management and fundraising platform for nonprofits.

- CiviCRM has a free plan. Bloomerang does not.
- Only Bloomerang lists iOS and Android apps.
- CiviCRM is open source and self-hostable, according to its own site.

CiviCRM and Bloomerang compared in full

1.8 GPA

Neon CRM

From $99/mo

Nonprofit CRM priced by revenue raised, with unlimited records.

- CiviCRM has a free plan. Neon CRM does not.
- CiviCRM is open source and self-hostable, according to its own site.
- CiviCRM also covers case management.

CiviCRM and Neon CRM compared in full

2.4 GPA

Little Green Light

Free trial · from $45/mo

Donor management database for small and mid-size nonprofits.

- CiviCRM has a free plan. Little Green Light does not, though it has a free trial.
- CiviCRM is open source and self-hostable, according to its own site.
- CiviCRM also covers case management.

CiviCRM and Little Green Light compared in full

PART 06 · QUESTIONS

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 CiviCRM free?

CiviCRM has a free plan. The full software is free to download, use and share under the GNU AGPL v3; you host it yourself or pay a hosting partner.

How much does CiviCRM cost?

CiviCRM lists 4 plans. Self-hosted download: $0.

What platforms does CiviCRM work on?

CiviCRM is available on Web.

Does CiviCRM have an Android app?

No Android app was listed when its pages were read on Nov 13, 2026. CiviCRM is listed for Web.

Does CiviCRM have an iPhone app?

No iPhone app was listed when its pages were read on Nov 13, 2026. CiviCRM is listed for Web.

Is CiviCRM open source?

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

What does CiviCRM integrate with?

CiviCRM's listing names WordPress, Drupal, Joomla, Backdrop, Mailchimp, Zapier, QuickBooks and Xero.

Who makes CiviCRM?

CiviCRM is made by CiviCRM LLC. It dates from 2005.

What are the alternatives to CiviCRM?

The closest alternatives to CiviCRM in our directory are SuiteCRM, EspoCRM, Bloomerang, Neon CRM and Little Green Light.

How does CiviCRM compare with other CRM tools?

CiviCRM's GPA of 2.4 is higher than 76 of the 116 other CRM tools we grade, and level with 22.

Is CiviCRM good value for money?

ToolGPA grades CiviCRM B for value for money. Its paid plans start at $15 a month, against a middle price of $29 for the category: 21 of the 93 others that charge start lower.

Could I make my own version of CiviCRM?

To replace CiviCRM you would be making newsletters sent to thousands of people that still reach the inbox.

Where this guide comes from

The prices, plans, platforms and features were read from CiviCRM'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 CiviCRM'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 CiviCRM LLC. Prices change, so check civicrm.org before you buy.

civicrm.org
civicrm.org/download
civicrm.com
civicrm.com/cloud/
civicrm.org/about
civicrm.org/license
civicrm.com/spark/

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

CiviCRM, kept up to date

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

toolgpa.com/tools/civicrm

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, "CiviCRM: The Insider's Guide",
checked Nov 13, 2026.
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Send them this guide: toolgpa.com/tools/civicrm/guide

ToolGPA elsewhere: youtube.com/@toolgpa

See our other guides

The best-graded CRM tools after CiviCRM, each with an Insider's Guide of its own.

CRM Software Insider's Guide

Every one of the 117 CRM tools we grade, compared

HubSpot Insider's Guide

Free CRM at the center of a marketing, sales and service suite

3.2 GPA

Frappe CRM Insider's Guide

Open-source CRM with unlimited users, billed by hosting

3.0 GPA

Givebutter Insider's Guide

Free fundraising platform with a built-in nonprofit CRM

3.0 GPA

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Choosing software? Every tool graded, every price dated.

Compare tools at toolgpa.com ›

Everything in this guide is ToolGPA's own summary of what CiviCRM'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. CiviCRM is a trademark of its owner, and this guide is not made, paid for or approved by CiviCRM LLC. Prices and plans change: check civicrm.org before you buy.