ToolGPA

NOVEMBER 2026

CORE

The Insider's Guide

Open access research search backed by a free API



Every plan, grade, refund rule and rival among AI research tools, read from CORE's own pages.

Made by Knowledge Media Institute, The Open University · checked Nov 13, 2026 · toolgpa.com

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GPA



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ToolGPA put this guide together from CORE's own pages, its app-store listings and our grades. Every fact in it is on CORE'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

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GPA, above 65 of the 69 other AI research tools we grade

CORE is a not-for-profit service from the Knowledge Media Institute at The Open University in the UK. It indexes research papers from repositories and journals and says it holds the largest collection of full-text open access papers. Searching is free, as is its API within rate limits, and organizations can pay for faster access.

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

> **No store rating on record, but you search and read open papers with nothing to set up.**
>
> From our grade for ease of use

1 **Best for searching open access research with a free API**

CORE searches open access research papers and offers a free API.

2 **It is free**

CORE has no paid plan at all. Free search and a free API with no registration, within CORE's rate limits.

3 **It runs on Web**

Web.

4 **Open access search**

One search across metadata and full texts from repositories and journals, over 400 million records according to the About page.

5 **API**

Real-time machine access to metadata and full texts, usable for commercial purposes under the terms and documented with examples.

6 **Recommender and Discovery**

Listed under content discovery services, alongside FreshFinds; the Recommender suggests related papers across the repository network.

7 **A 3.2 GPA, above 65 of 69**

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

8 **Keep it**

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

CORE at a glance

PRICING Free	FREE PLAN Yes
FREE TRIAL None stated	RUNS ON Web
MADE BY Knowledge Media Institute, The Open University	CATEGORY AI Research Tools
OUR GRADE 3.2 GPA, very good	

The report card

Best for searching open access research with a free API

CORE searches open access research papers and offers a free API. It covers open access content only, so paywalled papers are not there, and the free

API is rate limited, with faster rates for organisations at no published price.

TOOLGPA REPORT CARD	CORE	Graded Nov 13, 2026
SUBJECT	GRADE	COMMENT
Value for money	A	Free search and a free API, from a not-for-profit, with no paid plan for individuals.
Free plan and trial	A	Search and the API are free, with no registration, within rate limits that a normal person is unlikely to reach.
Features	C	Open access search, an API, a recommender, datasets and repository tools. It holds open access papers only, and dataset access for text mining is a top membership benefit.
Ease of use	B	No store rating on record, but you search and read open papers with nothing to set up. The API is for developers.
Platforms and integrations	B	Web and an API, with PubMed Central and Iris.ai. No desktop or phone app is listed.
Grade point average		Very good, out of 4.0 **3.2**

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 CORE is for

- ✓ Fits if you want free full-text open access papers and no paywalls
- ✓ Works for developers who want a free research API

Who it is not for

- ✗ Skip it if you need paywalled papers, as it covers open access content only
- ✗ Tight if you run heavy API use, as free use is rate limited and faster rates are typically paid, with no price published
- ✗ Watch out: dataset access for text mining is a benefit of the top Sustaining membership
- ✗ Skip it if you want AI summaries or chat, as none are listed

Good to know

Good for

- ✓ Developers building tools on open access papers
- ✓ Researchers looking for a free full text
- ✓ Repository managers who want content indexed

Worth knowing

- ⓘ Free API use is rate limited; faster rates for organizations are typically paid, with no price published.
- ⓘ Dataset access for text mining is a benefit of the top Sustaining membership level.
- ⓘ It covers open access content only, so paywalled papers are not available.

What it costs

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

Free

No paid plan at all

CORE is free to use.

> "
>
> **Free search and a free API, from a not-for-profit, with no paid plan for individuals.**
>
> From our grade for value for money

FREE

$0

Search and API access within published rate limits; registering organizations get a faster rate that is typically not free.

The free plan

Free search and a free API with no registration, within CORE's rate limits.

Read from core.ac.uk on Nov 13, 2026.

Ways to pay less

OTHER SAVINGS

30-day free trial for institutions

CORE says it offers a 30-day free trial of the API for Institution and Enterprise users, subject to eligibility checks at registration.

Stated on core.ac.uk

What it does

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

1

Place it runs: Web

Open access research search backed by a free API. Here is what it does, as its own site describes it, and what it covers: public API, AI search, research.

> **Open access search, an API, a recommender, datasets and repository tools.**

From our grade for features

Open access search

One search across metadata and full texts from repositories and journals, over 400 million records according to the About page.

API

Real-time machine access to metadata and full texts, usable for commercial purposes under the terms and documented with examples.

Recommender and Discovery

Listed under content discovery services, alongside FreshFinds; the Recommender suggests related papers across the repository network.

Dataset and FastSync

Listed under access to raw data: a dataset of the corpus for text and data mining, and a FastSync service, beyond the API.

Repository tools

A dashboard, OAI identifier resolver and FAIR certification help repositories manage how their content appears.

Where it runs

Web

What it works with

OAI Resolver

PubMed Central

Iris.ai

CORE is made by Knowledge Media Institute, The Open University.

Where it stands

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

65/69

Other AI research tools it is graded above

CORE's GPA of 3.2 is higher than 65 of the 69 other AI research tools we grade, and level with 4.

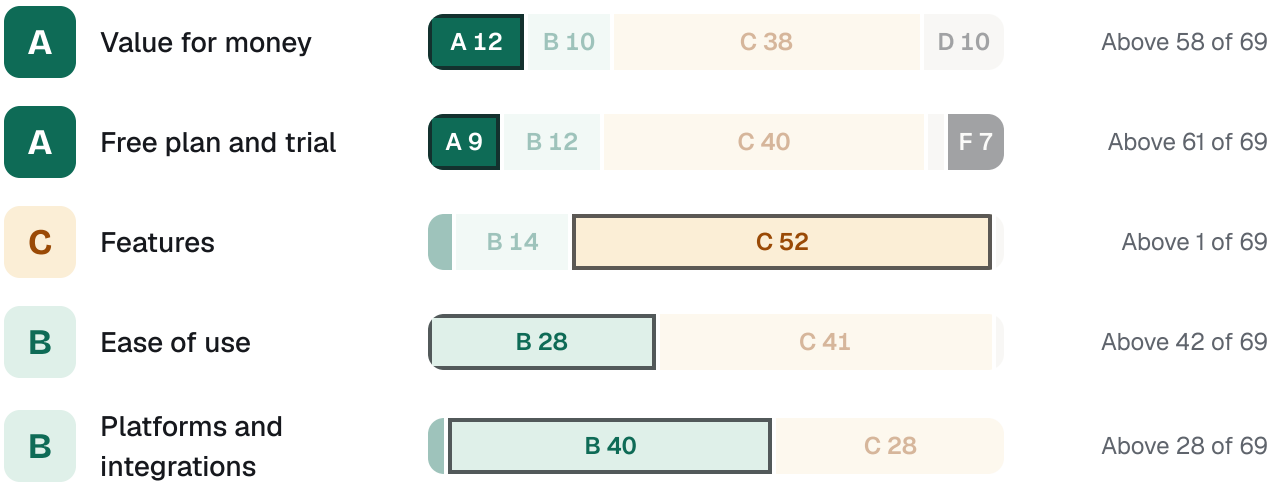
It stands best on free plan and trial (A, above 61 of 69) and worst on features (C, above 1).

CORE has no paid plan.

On features, ease of use and platforms it scores 2.7 out of 4, and no tool on the category's chart scores higher without costing more.

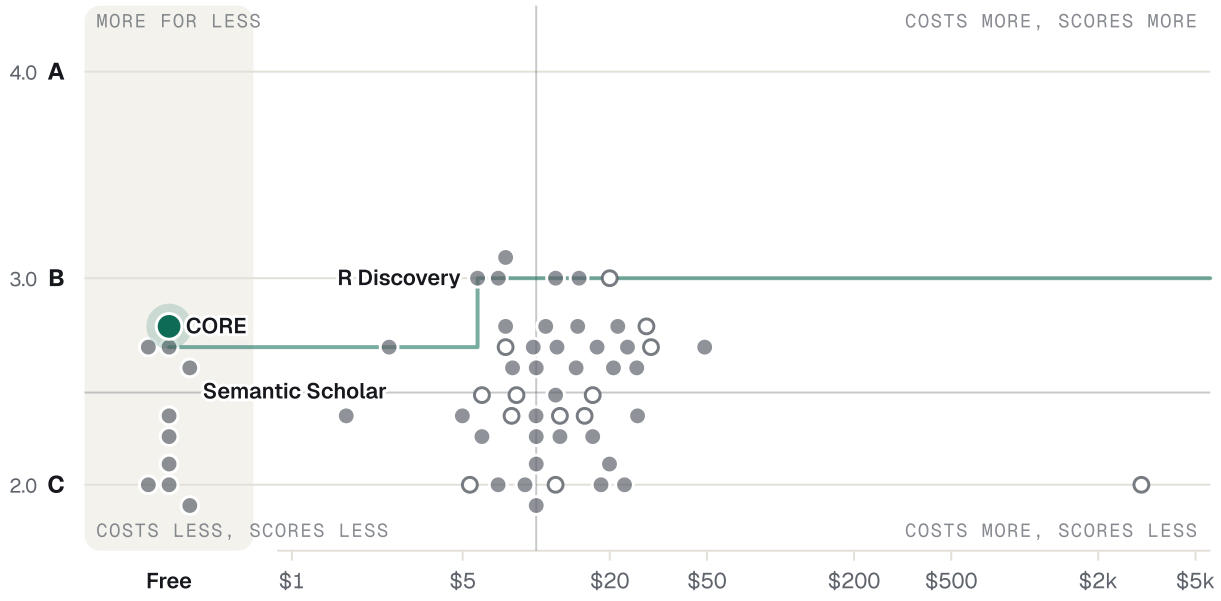
Each grade against the category

Every bar is all 70 AI research tools we grade, cut by the letter each got. CORE's own letter is outlined.



Price against what you get

Each dot is one of 59 AI research tools. Further left costs less; higher up scores better on features, ease of use and platforms. CORE 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

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

And it is not the kind of software a weekend replaces. It is one of the better ones too: its GPA of 3.2 is higher than 65 of the 69 other AI research tools we grade.

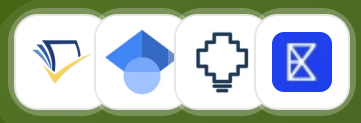
What you could not

- A library of papers and sources to search.
- A search engine with an AI model behind it.
- It plugs into other products, OAI Resolver, PubMed Central and Iris.ai among them, and has an API.

What this rests on. CORE'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



Semantic Scholar, Google Scholar, Open Knowledge Maps and Exa

The 4 tools CORE is most often weighed against, with where each one differs from it.

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Semantic Scholar

Free

Free AI-powered search engine for scientific literature.

- Only Semantic Scholar lists a browser extension.
- Semantic Scholar also covers citations.

CORE and Semantic Scholar compared in full

3.0 GPA

Google Scholar

Free

Free search engine for scholarly articles, books and theses.

- CORE also covers AI search.
- Google Scholar also covers citations and bookmarks.

CORE and Google Scholar compared in full



3.0
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Open Knowledge Maps

Free

Free visual maps of a research topic from open scholarly sources.

- CORE also covers AI search.
- Open Knowledge Maps also covers mind mapping.

CORE and Open Knowledge Maps compared in full



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Exa

Free plan

Web search API built for AI agents and applications.

- Exa also covers AI agents.

CORE and Exa compared in full

PART 06 · QUESTIONS

Quick answers

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

14

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 CORE free?

Yes. CORE is free to use.

How much does CORE cost?

CORE lists one plan. Free: $0.

What platforms does CORE work on?

CORE is available on Web.

Does CORE offer any discounts?

CORE publicly lists the following: 30-day free trial for institutions.

Does CORE have an Android app?

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

Does CORE have an iPhone app?

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

Is CORE open source?

CORE is not described as open source on its own site, as read on Nov 13, 2026.

Does CORE have an API?

Yes. CORE offers a public API, according to its own site.

What does CORE integrate with?

CORE's listing names OAI Resolver, PubMed Central and Iris.ai. A listing names up to eight integrations, so it may connect to more.

Who makes CORE?

CORE is made by Knowledge Media Institute, The Open University.

What are the alternatives to CORE?

The closest alternatives to CORE in our directory are Semantic Scholar, Google Scholar, Open Knowledge Maps and Exa.

How does CORE compare with other AI research tools?

CORE's GPA of 3.2 is higher than 65 of the 69 other AI research tools we grade, and level with 4.

Is CORE good value for money?

ToolGPA grades CORE A for value for money. CORE has no paid plan.

Could I make my own version of CORE?

CORE 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 CORE'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 CORE'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 Knowledge Media Institute, The Open University. Prices change, so check core.ac.uk before you buy.

core.ac.uk/about
core.ac.uk/membership
core.ac.uk/services/api

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

CORE, kept up to date

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

toolgpa.com/tools/core-research

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, "CORE: The Insider's
Guide", checked Nov 13, 2026.
https://toolgpa.com/tools/core-research
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Know someone choosing between AI research tools?

Send them this guide:
toolgpa.com/tools/core-research/guide

ToolGPA elsewhere: youtube.com/@toolgpa

See our other guides

The best-graded AI research tools after CORE, each with an Insider's Guide of its own.

AI Research Tools Insider's Guide

Every one of the 70 AI research tools we grade, compared

Ai2 Asta Insider's Guide

AI research assistant for finding papers and analyzing data

3.2 GPA

Brave Search Insider's Guide

Private web search engine with its own index and AI answers

3.2 GPA

Resoomer Insider's Guide

Free text summarizer and rewriting toolkit for documents

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 CORE'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. CORE is a trademark of its owner, and this guide is not made, paid for or approved by Knowledge Media Institute, The Open University. Prices and plans change: check core.ac.uk before you buy.