ToolGPA

NOVEMBER 2026

Discourse

The Insider's Guide

Open-source discussion forum software with hosted plans



Every plan, grade, refund rule and rival among course and community platforms, read from Discourse's own pages.

Made by Discourse · checked Nov 12, 2026 · toolgpa.com

2.6
GPA

Discourse

One platform. Any community.

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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 Discourse's own pages, its app-store listings and our grades. Every fact in it is on Discourse's page too, where it is kept up to date. Checked Nov 12, 2026.

Welcome

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

2.6

GPA, above 35 of the 41 other course and community platforms we grade

Discourse is forum software for communities, customer support and product feedback, built around topics, categories, trust levels and badges. It is open source and also sold as hosted plans that include chat, AI features and plugins. Plans scale by staff seats, storage and email volume rather than by member count.

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

> **A hosted forum needs categories, settings and moderation set up before it feels like yours.**
>
> From our grade for ease of use

1 **Best for a discussion forum, hosted or self-run**

Discourse is open-source forum software with hosted plans, including a free one for small forums.

2 **Paid plans start at $100 a month**

As its pricing page puts it: $100 per month.

3 There is a free plan

Free hosting plan: 2 staff seats, 10 categories, 5GB of storage, 20k emails a month and 500k page views a month.

4 It runs on 3 platforms

Web, iOS and Android.

5 Topic-based forum

Organizes discussion into categories and tags with unlimited members on every hosted plan.

6 Trust levels and badges

Members earn abilities as they participate, and badges reward chosen behaviors.

7 Built-in chat

Adds channels for short-form conversation alongside long-form topics.

8 A 2.6 GPA, above 35 of 41

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

9 Keep it

To replace Discourse you would be making chat that a whole team counts on staying up. That is not a weekend's work, with an AI app builder or without one.

Discourse at a glance

PRICING
Free plan, from $100 per month

FREE PLAN
Yes

FREE TRIAL
Free trial on Pro and Business, no credit card required up front

RUNS ON
Web, iOS, Android

MADE BY
Discourse

CATEGORY
Courses & Communities

OUR GRADE
2.6 GPA, good

The report card

Best for a discussion forum, hosted or self-run

Discourse is open-source forum software with hosted plans, including a free one for small forums. The free plan caps you at 2 staff seats and 10 categories, and SSO, events and gamification wait on the $500 Business plan.

TOOLGPA REPORT CARD — **Discourse** — Graded Nov 12, 2026

SUBJECT	GRADE	COMMENT
Value for money	B	A free hosted plan exists, and Pro is $100 a month, above the $49 middle of courses and communities tools. SSO and events need Business at $500.
Free plan and trial	B	The free plan gives 2 staff seats, 10 categories, 5GB of storage and unlimited members, which a small forum can live on.
Features	C	Topic forum, trust levels, chat, AI and translation, plugins and an API. The listing's gap: SSO, workflows, events and gamification need Business, and there is no course checkout.
Ease of use	C	No store rating on record. A hosted forum needs categories, settings and moderation set up before it feels like yours.
Platforms and integrations	B	Web, iOS and Android apps, with plugins and an API. No desktop app.

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 Discourse is for

- ✓ Fits if you want a discussion forum where members ask and answer questions
- ✓ Works for small communities that can stay inside 2 staff seats and 10 categories

Who it is not for

- ✗ Tight if you grow: the free plan stops at 2 staff seats and 10 categories
- ✗ Pricey if you need SSO or events, which start at $500 a month
- ✗ Skip it if you want to sell courses, because it has no course checkout
- ✗ Watch out: plans are sold by staff seat, not by member count

Good to know

Good for

- ✓ Public forums, support communities and product feedback boards
- ✓ Organizations that want open-source software with a hosted option

Worth knowing

- ⓘ The free plan caps staff seats at 2 and categories at 10.
- ⓘ SSO, workflows, events and gamification are on Business ($500 a month) and above.
- ⓘ Plans are sold by staff seats, not by members; members are unlimited.
- ⓘ It is a discussion forum, not a course platform, so it has no built-in course checkout.

PART 02 · PRICING

What it costs

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

$100

A month to start. There is a free plan too

Discourse has a free plan. Paid plans start at $100 per month.

FREE

$0

2 staff seats, 10 categories, 5GB storage, 20k monthly emails and 100k AI daily credits.

PRO

$100

per month

5 staff seats, unlimited categories, 20GB storage, 100k monthly emails, API and webhook access, 15+ plugins.

BUSINESS

$500

per month

15 staff seats, 100GB storage, SSO, workflows, events, gamification and priority support.

ENTERPRISE

Custom

Unlimited staff seats, 99.9% uptime guarantee, custom migration and design services; sold through sales.

The free plan

Free hosting plan: 2 staff seats, 10 categories, 5GB of storage, 20k emails a month and 500k page views a month.

Trying it first

Free trial on Pro and Business, no credit card required up front

Read from discourse.org on Nov 12, 2026.

What it does

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

3

Places it runs: Web, iOS and Android

Open-source discussion forum software with hosted plans. Here is what it does, as its own site describes it, and what it covers: open source, public API, AI features, team chat, community.

"

Topic forum, trust levels, chat, AI and translation, plugins and an API.

From our grade for features

Topic-based forum

Organizes discussion into categories and tags with unlimited members on every hosted plan.

Trust levels and badges

Members earn abilities as they participate, and badges reward chosen behaviors.

Built-in chat

Adds channels for short-form conversation alongside long-form topics.

AI and translation

Uses daily AI credits and translates content into a plan-dependent number of languages: 2 on Free up to 10 on Enterprise.

Plugins and API

Official plugins plus an API that covers what the interface does; API and webhook access starts at Pro.

Mobile apps

Free iOS and Android apps with push notifications for hosted communities.

Where it runs

Web iOS Android

What it works with

Its own pages name no integrations.

Discourse is made by Discourse.

PART 04 · STANDING

Where it stands

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

35/41

Other course and community platforms it is graded above

Discourse's GPA of 2.6 is higher than 35 of the 41 other course and community platforms we grade, and level with 2.

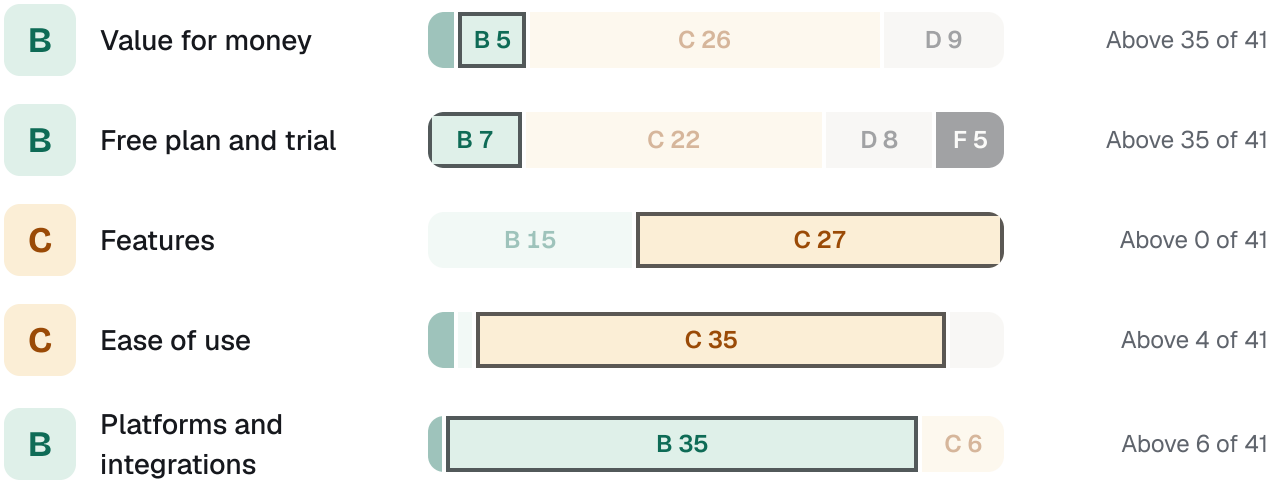
It stands best on value for money (B, above 35 of 41) and worst on features (C, above 0).

Its paid plans start at $100 a month, against a middle price of $49 for the category: 30 of the 36 others that charge start lower.

On features, ease of use and platforms it scores 2.3 out of 4. 12 tools score higher and cost less.

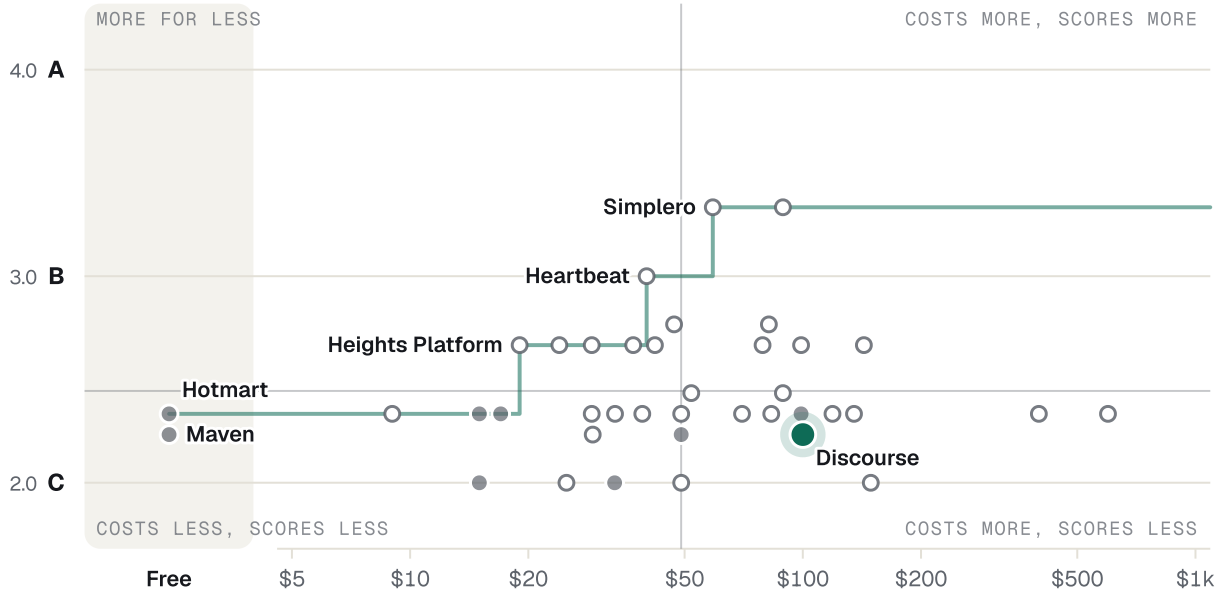
Each grade against the category

Every bar is all 42 course and community platforms we grade, cut by the letter each got. Discourse's own letter is outlined.



Price against what you get

Each dot is one of 39 course and community platforms. Further left costs less; higher up scores better on features, ease of use and platforms. Discourse 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 Discourse you would be making chat that a whole team counts on staying up. That is not a weekend's work, with an AI app builder or without one.

It is one of the better ones too: its GPA of 2.6 is higher than 35 of the 41 other course and community platforms we grade. It costs $1,200 a year. Discourse is open source, so there is a third way: take its code and run it yourself.

What you could not

- ✕ Chat that a whole team counts on staying up.

- ✕ A members' space with posts, chat and events that people keep coming back to.
- ✕ A real app for iOS and Android. Something home-made would be a web page.
- ✕ An API that other software can build on.
- ✕ AI features, unless you pay a model provider for each request yourself.

What this rests on. Discourse'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



Bettermode, Circle, Mighty Networks, Khoros and Disciple Media

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

1.8 GPA

Bettermode

Free trial · from $149/mo

Branded community platform with Q&A, events and AI search.

- Discourse has a free plan. Bettermode does not, though it has a free trial.
- Only Discourse lists iOS and Android apps.
- Discourse is open source, according to its own site.

Discourse and Bettermode compared in full

2.8 GPA

Circle

Free trial · from $89/mo

Community platform with courses, events, payments and branded apps.

- Discourse has a free plan. Circle does not, though it has a free trial.
- Discourse is open source, according to its own site.
- Discourse also covers team chat.

Discourse and Circle compared in full



2.4
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Mighty Networks

Free trial · from $79/mo

Community platform with courses, livestreams and paid memberships.

- Discourse has a free plan. Mighty Networks does not, though it has a free trial.
- Discourse is open source, according to its own site.
- Discourse also covers team chat.

Discourse and Mighty Networks compared in full



1.6
GPA

Khoros

Paid

Enterprise community and social media platform with AI tools.

- Discourse has a free plan. Khoros does not.
- Only Discourse lists iOS and Android apps.
- Discourse is open source, according to its own site.

Discourse and Khoros compared in full



1.8
GPA

Disciple Media

Free trial · from $599/mo

White-label community app for iOS, Android and web.

- Discourse has a free plan. Disciple Media does not, though it has a free trial.
- Discourse is open source, according to its own site.
- Discourse also covers team chat.

Discourse and Disciple Media compared in full

PART 06 · QUESTIONS

Quick answers

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

13

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 Discourse free?

Discourse has a free plan. Free hosting plan: 2 staff seats, 10 categories, 5GB of storage, 20k emails a month and 500k page views a month.

How much does Discourse cost?

Discourse lists 4 plans. Free: $0.

What platforms does Discourse work on?

Discourse is available on Web, iOS and Android.

Does Discourse have a Windows app?

No Windows app was listed when its pages were read on Nov 12, 2026. Discourse is listed for Web, iOS and Android.

Does Discourse have a macOS app?

No macOS app was listed when its pages were read on Nov 12, 2026. Discourse is listed for Web, iOS and Android.

Is Discourse open source?

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

Does Discourse have an API?

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

Does Discourse have a free trial?

Yes. Free trial on Pro and Business, no credit card required up front.

Who makes Discourse?

Discourse is made by a company of the same name.

What are the alternatives to Discourse?

The closest alternatives to Discourse in our directory are Bettermode, Circle, Mighty Networks, Khoros and Disciple Media.

How does Discourse compare with other course and community platforms?

Discourse's GPA of 2.6 is higher than 35 of the 41 other course and community platforms we grade, and level with 2.

Is Discourse good value for money?

ToolGPA grades Discourse B for value for money. Its paid plans start at $100 a month, against a middle price of $49 for the category: 30 of the 36 others that charge start lower.

Could I make my own version of Discourse?

To replace Discourse you would be making chat that a whole team counts on staying up.

Where this guide comes from

The prices, plans, platforms and features were read from Discourse's own pages on Nov 12, 2026, and the grades were given on Nov 12, 2026. Graded from this listing, whose facts were read from Discourse's own pages on 12 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 Discourse. Prices change, so check discourse.org before you buy.

discourse.org/pricing
discourse.org/features
discourse.org/open-source

PART 07 · ABOUT

About ToolGPA

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

5,038

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**.

5,038	95	739	579
tools graded	categories	price changes on record	apps priced in 12 countries

What else is on toolgpa.com

Discourse, kept up to date

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

toolgpa.com/tools/discourse

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, "Discourse: The Insider's Guide",
checked Nov 12, 2026.
https://toolgpa.com/tools/discourse
```

Know someone choosing between course and community platforms?

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

ToolGPA elsewhere: youtube.com/@toolgpa

See our other guides

The best-graded course and community platforms after Discourse, each with an Insider's Guide of its own.

Courses & Communities Insider's Guide

Every one of the 42 course and community platforms we grade, compared

Circle Insider's Guide

Community platform with courses, events, payments and branded apps

2.8 GPA

Fourthwall Insider's Guide

Creator shop with merch, digital products and memberships

2.8 GPA

Simplero Insider's Guide

All-in-one platform for courses, community, email and coaching

2.8 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 Discourse'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. Discourse is a trademark of its owner, and this guide is not made, paid for or approved by Discourse. Prices and plans change: check discourse.org before you buy.