ToolGPA

NOVEMBER 2026

Exa

The Insider's Guide

Web search API built for AI agents and applications



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

Made by Exa Labs Inc. · checked Nov 12, 2026 · toolgpa.com

2.2
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 Exa's own pages, its app-store listings and our grades. Every fact in it is on Exa'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

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GPA, above 7 of the 49 other AI research tools we grade

Exa is a search API that returns web results, page contents and agent-run research for AI applications. Its index includes web, people, company and scholarly-works data. Developers start on a free monthly credit allowance and then pay per request.

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

> "
>
> **You need code, an API key and a client to use it, so it's a D.**
>
> From our grade for ease of use

1 **Best for giving AI agents a web search API**

Exa is a web search API for developers building AI agents, with search, page contents, monitors and agent endpoints.

2 **There is a free plan**

Starter: $10 in credits every month plus a $10 onboarding bonus, no payment method required.

3 **It runs on Web**

Web.

4 **Search API**

Returns web results with page text and highlights, with latency settings from about 450 ms to 10 seconds and categories such as news, companies, research papers and people.

5 **Contents API**

Fetches full page contents or token-efficient highlights for use as model context, with configurable live-crawl policies.

6 **Agent API**

Runs asynchronous deep-research tasks that return structured output with citations.

7 **A 2.2 GPA, above 7 of 49**

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

8 **Keep it**

To replace Exa you would be making a search engine with an AI model behind it. That is not a weekend's work, with an AI app builder or without one.

Exa at a glance

PRICING Free plan	FREE PLAN Yes
FREE TRIAL None stated	RUNS ON Web
MADE BY Exa Labs Inc.	CATEGORY AI Research Tools
OUR GRADE 2.2 GPA, fair	

The report card

Best for giving AI agents a web search API

Exa is a web search API for developers building AI agents, with search, page contents, monitors and agent endpoints. The free Starter gives $10 in credits a month, but past that you pay per request, so it's a developer product with no reading or note-taking app.

TOOLGPA REPORT CARD	Exa	Graded Nov 12, 2026

SUBJECT	GRADE	COMMENT
Value for money	C	No fixed monthly price: search from $4 per 1,000 requests, contents $1 per 1,000 pages and agent runs $0.012 to $1.00 each. It's a different kind of thing from a reading app, so it sits at C, and the bill depends on usage.
Free plan and trial	B	The Starter plan is $10 of credits every month plus a $10 onboarding bonus, with no payment method needed. A solo developer testing can live on that.
Features	C	Search, Contents, Agent and Monitors APIs plus agent tooling. A developer building block rather than a research tool, and zero data retention needs a $12,000 annual Enterprise commitment.
Ease of use	D	No store rating on record. You need code, an API key and a client to use it, so it's a D.
Platforms and integrations	B	Web API with Claude, ChatGPT and MCP hooks. No desktop or mobile apps, as the listing says.
Grade point average		Fair, out of 4.0 **2.2**

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 Exa is for

- ✓ Fits if you're building an AI agent that needs to search the live web
- ✓ Works for developers who want search results returned as page contents

Who it is not for

- ✕ Not for you if you want an app to read or take notes in, as it's an API
- ✕ Tight if you go past $10 of credits a month, when billing is by usage with no fixed price
- ✕ Pricey if you need zero data retention, which is Enterprise with a $12,000 annual credit commitment
- ✕ Watch out: Starter allows 10 searches per second and 50 agent concurrency

Good to know

Good for

- ✓ Developers adding web search to an AI agent or chatbot
- ✓ Teams that want scholarly and company data behind one API
- ✓ Builders who want to start free before paying per request

Worth knowing

- ⓘ The free Starter allowance is $10 of credits per month; past that, the Developer plan bills by usage with no fixed monthly price.
- ⓘ Per-request prices: search from $4 per 1,000 requests, contents $1 per 1,000 pages, monitors $2 per 1,000 requests, agent runs $0.012 to $1.00 each.
- ⓘ Zero data retention is an Enterprise option with a $12,000 annual commitment in API credits.
- ⓘ It is an API for developers, not a reading or note-taking app; it has no desktop or mobile apps.

What it costs

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

2

plans to choose from

Exa has a free plan.

> **It's a different kind of thing from a reading app, so it sits at C, and the bill depends on usage.**
>
> From our grade for value for money

STARTER

$0

$10 of credits each month, access to all endpoints, 10 search queries per second and 50 agent concurrency.

ENTERPRISE

Custom

Zero data retention, custom MSA and DPA, SSO and SCIM, SLAs and custom indexes, sold through sales.

The free plan

Starter: $10 in credits every month plus a $10 onboarding bonus, no payment method required.

Read from exa.ai on Nov 12, 2026.

What it does

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

1

Place it runs: Web

Web search API built for AI agents and applications. Here is what it does, as its own site describes it, and what it covers: public API, AI search, AI agents, research.

"

Search, Contents, Agent and Monitors APIs plus agent tooling.

From our grade for features

Search API

Returns web results with page text and highlights, with latency settings from about 450 ms to 10 seconds and categories such as news, companies, research papers and people.

Contents API

Fetches full page contents or token-efficient highlights for use as model context, with configurable live-crawl policies.

Agent API

Runs asynchronous deep-research tasks that return structured output with citations.

Monitors API

Runs searches on a schedule and sends updates by webhook.

Agent tooling

The Starter plan lists an MCP server, a Claude connector, a ChatGPT plugin and more than 50 integrations.

Where it runs

Web

What it works with

Claude ChatGPT MCP

Exa is made by Exa Labs Inc.

Where it stands

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

7 /49

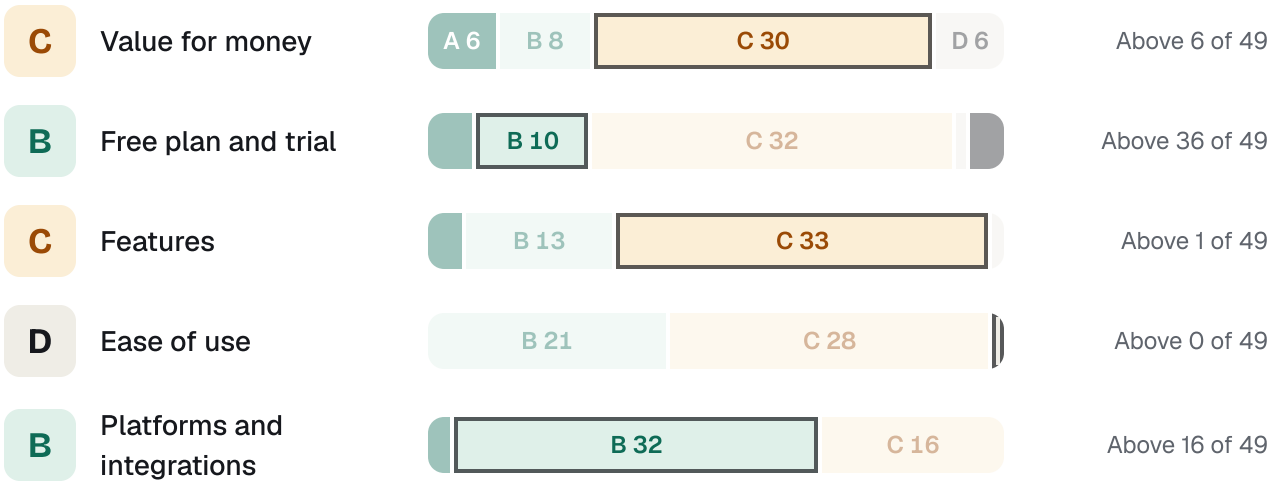
Other AI research tools it is graded above

Exa's GPA of 2.2 is higher than 7 of the 49 other AI research tools we grade, and level with 11.

It stands best on free plan and trial (B, above 36 of 49) and worst on ease of use (D, above 0).

Each grade against the category

Every bar is all 50 AI research tools we grade, cut by the letter each got. Exa's own letter is outlined.



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 Exa you would be making a search engine with an AI model behind it. That is not a weekend's work, with an AI app builder or without one.

That makes this kind of software worth paying for, not this one in particular: 31 of the 49 other AI research tools grade higher.

What you could not

- A search engine with an AI model behind it.
- A library of papers and sources to search.
- An AI agent, with the models and the safeguards behind it.
- It plugs into other products, Claude, ChatGPT and MCP among them, and has an API.

What this rests on. Exa'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



Tavily, Perplexity, Serper and Brave Search API

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

2.4 GPA

Tavily

Free plan · from $30/mo

Web search, extract and crawl API built for AI agents.

- Tavily also covers sERP API.

Exa and Tavily compared in full

2.8 GPA

Perplexity

Free plan · from $17/mo

AI search assistant that answers questions with cited sources.

- Only Perplexity lists iOS and Android apps.
- Only Perplexity lists a browser extension.
- Exa also covers AI agents and research.

Exa and Perplexity compared in full



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Serper

Free trial · from $50 one-time

Google search results API sold in prepaid credit packs.

- Exa has a free plan. Serper does not, though it has a free trial.
- Exa also covers AI search, AI agents and research.
- Serper also covers sERP API.

Exa and Serper compared in full



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Brave Search API

Free plan

Web search API from Brave's own index, built for AI agents and apps.

- Exa also covers AI search, AI agents and research.
- Brave Search API also covers sERP API.

Exa and Brave Search API 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 Exa free?

Exa has a free plan. Starter: $10 in credits every month plus a $10 onboarding bonus, no payment method required.

How much does Exa cost?

Exa lists 2 plans. Starter: $0.

What platforms does Exa work on?

Exa is available on Web.

Does Exa have an Android app?

No Android app was listed when its pages were read on Nov 12, 2026. Exa is listed for Web.

Does Exa have an iPhone app?

No iPhone app was listed when its pages were read on Nov 12, 2026. Exa is listed for Web.

Is Exa open source?

Exa is not described as open source on its own site, as read on Nov 12, 2026.

Does Exa have an API?

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

What does Exa integrate with?

Exa's listing names Claude, ChatGPT and MCP. A listing names up to eight integrations, so it may connect to more.

Who makes Exa?

Exa is made by Exa Labs Inc.

What are the alternatives to Exa?

The closest alternatives to Exa in our directory are Tavily, Perplexity, Serper and Brave Search API.

How does Exa compare with other AI research tools?

Exa's GPA of 2.2 is higher than 7 of the 49 other AI research tools we grade, and level with 11.

Could I make my own version of Exa?

To replace Exa you would be making a search engine with an AI model behind it.

Where this guide comes from

The prices, plans, platforms and features were read from Exa'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 Exa'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 Exa Labs Inc. Prices change, so check exa.ai before you buy.

exa.ai/pricing

exa.ai

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
tools graded

95
categories

739
price changes on record

579
apps priced in 12 countries

What else is on toolgpa.com

Exa, kept up to date

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

toolgpa.com/tools/exa

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, "Exa: The Insider's Guide", checked
Nov 12, 2026. https://toolgpa.com/tools/exa
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Know someone choosing between AI research tools?

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

ToolGPA elsewhere: youtube.com/@toolgpa

See our other guides

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

AI Research Tools Insider's Guide

Every one of the 50 AI research tools we grade, compared

Ai2 Asta Insider's Guide

AI research assistant for finding papers and analyzing data

3.2 GPA

Semantic Scholar Insider's Guide

Free AI-powered search engine for scientific literature

3.2 GPA

ChatPDF Insider's Guide

Ask questions about PDFs and get answers with citations

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 Exa'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. Exa is a trademark of its owner, and this guide is not made, paid for or approved by Exa Labs Inc. Prices and plans change: check exa.ai before you buy.