ToolGPA

NOVEMBER 2026

Vanilla Forums

The Insider’s Guide

Customer community software, now sold as Higher Logic Vanilla



Every plan, grade, refund rule and rival among course and community platforms, read from Vanilla Forums’s own pages.

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

1.8

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

1.8

GPA, above 8 of the 98 other course and community platforms we grade

Vanilla Forums was founded in Montreal in 2009 and was acquired by Higher Logic in 2021, which rebranded it Higher Logic Vanilla. It is hosted community software for B2B and B2C companies, covering Q&A, discussions, gamification and product feedback. Pricing is sold through demos.

To get you started, here are **7 things to know about Vanilla Forums**, taken from its own pages and our grades.

> **No prices are published, and it is not a course platform or a downloadable forum.**
>
> From our report card of Vanilla Forums

1 **Best for hosted customer communities with Q&A**

Vanilla is hosted customer community software with Q&A, gamification and analytics, now under Higher Logic's name.

2 **It runs on Web**

Web.

3 **Q&A and discussions**

Customers crowdsource answers to support questions, with federated search that pulls content from outside platforms into one place.

4 **Drag-and-drop layout editor**

Change page layouts and add banners and buttons from a widget library, without writing code, plus moderation tools.

5 **Gamification and polls**

Badges, points and leaderboards recognize participation, and user polls and a product feedback process collect customer input.

6 **A 1.8 GPA, above 8 of 98**

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

7 **Keep it**

To replace Vanilla Forums you would be making an AI model, which you can rent by the request but not make. That is not a weekend's work, with an AI app builder or without one.

Vanilla Forums at a glance

PRICING Paid	FREE PLAN No
FREE TRIAL None stated	RUNS ON Web
MADE BY Higher Logic, LLC, since 2009	CATEGORY Courses & Communities
OUR GRADE 1.8 GPA, weak	

The report card

Best for hosted customer communities with Q&A

Vanilla is hosted customer community software with Q&A, gamification and analytics, now under Higher Logic's name. No prices are published, and it is not a course platform or a downloadable forum.

TOOLGPA REPORT CARD	Vanilla Forums	Graded Nov 13, 2026

SUBJECT	GRADE	COMMENT
Value for money	C	No price is published, so this sits in the middle by default. The vendor sends buyers to book a demo.
Free plan and trial	F	No free plan and no trial are on record.
Features	C	Q&A, a layout editor, gamification, polls, automation and analytics. The listing shows gaps for courses and memberships, which it does not cover.
Ease of use	C	No store rating is on record, and buying goes through a demo.
Platforms and integrations	B	Web, with Zapier, Salesforce, ChatGPT, Claude and Cursor on the list.
Grade point average		Weak, out of 4.0 **1.8**

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 Vanilla Forums is for

- ✓ Fits if you run a customer support community
- ✓ Works for companies that already use Salesforce

Who it is not for

- ✗ Skip it if you want a listed price, as none is published
- ✗ Not for you if you want a forum you download and run yourself
- ✗ Not for you if you want to sell courses, which it does not do
- ✗ Watch out: the old vanillaforums.com address now redirects to Higher Logic Vanilla

Good to know

Good for

- ✓ Software companies that want customers to answer each other's support questions
- ✓ Teams collecting product feedback from a user community
- ✓ Brands that want a self-service help hub next to their product

Worth knowing

- ⓘ The vanillaforums.com address now redirects to Higher Logic's site, where the product is called Higher Logic Vanilla.
- ⓘ No prices are published; the vendor directs buyers to book a demo.
- ⓘ It is hosted customer community software, not a course platform or a downloadable forum package.

What it costs

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

Vanilla Forums's current pricing could not be confirmed from its own site.

> **No price is published, so this sits in the middle by default.**
>
> From our grade for value for money

We could not confirm Vanilla Forums's current prices from its own site, so this guide lists no plans. higherlogic.com has them.

What it does

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

1

Place it runs: Web

Customer community software, now sold as Higher Logic Vanilla. Here is what it does, as its own site describes it, and what it covers: AI features, chat assistant, workflow automation, reports, community.

> **Q&A, a layout editor, gamification, polls, automation and analytics.**

From our grade for features

Q&A and discussions

Customers crowdsource answers to support questions, with federated search that pulls content from outside platforms into one place.

Drag-and-drop layout editor

Change page layouts and add banners and buttons from a widget library, without writing code, plus moderation tools.

Gamification and polls

Badges, points and leaderboards recognize participation, and user polls and a product feedback process collect customer input.

Automation and AI

Automation rules trigger on user behavior or time, AI analysis tracks sentiment and trends, and MCP links ChatGPT, Claude and Cursor to the community.

Analytics

Pre-built and custom reports on how users engage, plus data exports for use in marketing campaigns or other analysis.

Admin and security

Role-based permissions, ranked statuses, individual privacy settings and an AI Bot Shield that detects and blocks bots.

Where it runs

Web

What it works with

Zapier
Salesforce
ChatGPT
Claude
Cursor

Vanilla Forums is made by Higher Logic, LLC, and has been around since 2009.

PART 04 · STANDING

Where it stands

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

8/98

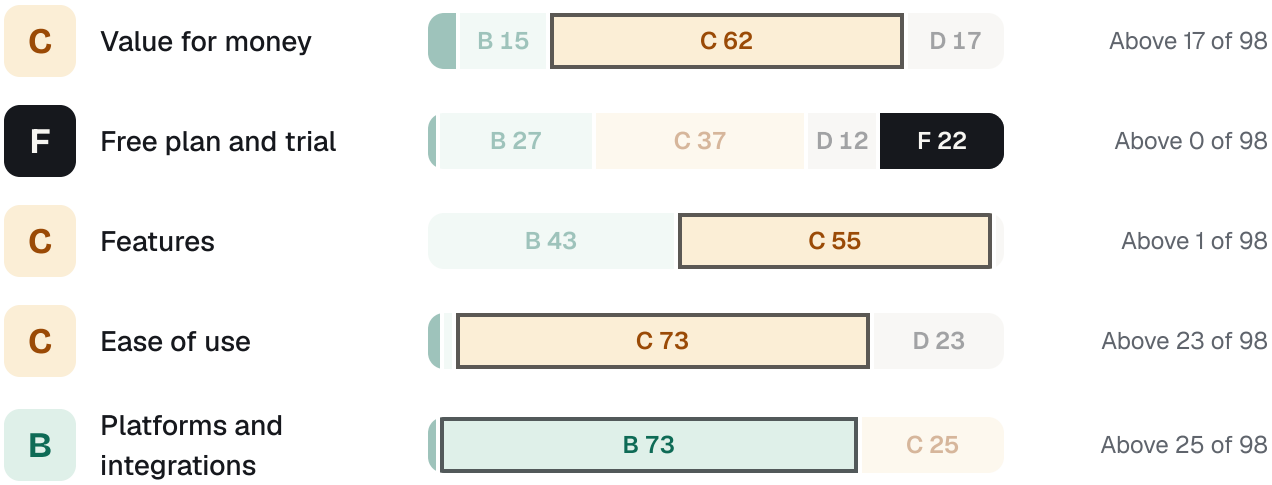
Other course and community platforms it is graded above

Vanilla Forums's GPA of 1.8 is higher than 8 of the 98 other course and community platforms we grade, and level with 14.

It stands best on platforms and integrations (B, above 25 of 98) and worst on free plan and trial (F, above 0).

Each grade against the category

Every bar is all 99 course and community platforms we grade, cut by the letter each got. Vanilla Forums'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 Vanilla Forums you would be making an AI model, which you can rent by the request but not make. 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: 76 of the 98 other course and community platforms grade higher.

What you could make

- Reports: an app builder makes this well.

What you could not

- An AI model, which you can rent by the request but not make.
- Connections to other products, each kept working as those products change.
- A members' space with posts, chat and events that people keep coming back to.
- Hooks into the device itself: widgets.
- What a company asks for before it lets staff use something: roles and permissions.

What this rests on. Vanilla Forums'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



Higher Logic, Discourse, Bettermode, Khoros and Flarum

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

1.8 GPA

Higher Logic

Paid

Online community and member marketing software for associations.

- Vanilla Forums also covers workflow automation.
- Higher Logic also covers marketing automation and email campaigns.

Vanilla Forums and Higher Logic compared in full

2.6 GPA

Discourse

Free plan · from $100/mo

Open-source discussion forum software with hosted plans.

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

Vanilla Forums and Discourse compared in full



1.8
GPA

Bettermode

Free trial · from $149/mo

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

- Vanilla Forums also covers chat assistant, workflow automation and reports.
- Bettermode also covers AI search and team chat.

Vanilla Forums and Bettermode compared in full



1.6
GPA

Khoros

Paid

Enterprise community and social media platform with AI tools.

- Vanilla Forums also covers chat assistant, workflow automation and reports.
- Khoros also covers AI search.

Vanilla Forums and Khoros compared in full



2.0
GPA

Flarum

Free

Free open-source forum software you host yourself.

- Flarum has a free plan. Vanilla Forums does not.
- Flarum is open source and self-hostable, according to its own site.
- Vanilla Forums also covers chat assistant, workflow automation and reports.

Vanilla Forums and Flarum compared in full

PART 06 · QUESTIONS

Quick answers

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

10

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 Vanilla Forums free?

No. Vanilla Forums is a paid product.

What platforms does Vanilla Forums work on?

Vanilla Forums is available on Web.

Does Vanilla Forums have an Android app?

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

Does Vanilla Forums have an iPhone app?

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

Is Vanilla Forums open source?

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

What does Vanilla Forums integrate with?

Vanilla Forums's listing names Zapier, Salesforce, ChatGPT, Claude and Cursor.

Who makes Vanilla Forums?

Vanilla Forums is made by Higher Logic, LLC. It dates from 2009.

What are the alternatives to Vanilla Forums?

The closest alternatives to Vanilla Forums in our directory are Higher Logic, Discourse, Bettermode, Khoros and Flarum.

How does Vanilla Forums compare with other course and community platforms?

Vanilla Forums's GPA of 1.8 is higher than 8 of the 98 other course and community platforms we grade, and level with 14.

Could I make my own version of Vanilla Forums?

To replace Vanilla Forums you would be making an AI model, which you can rent by the request but not make.

Where this guide comes from

The prices, plans, platforms and features were read from Vanilla Forums'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 Higher Logic, LLC'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 Higher Logic, LLC. Prices change, so check higherlogic.com before you buy.

higherlogic.com/vanilla/

higherlogic.com/thrive/packages/

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

Vanilla Forums, kept up to date

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

toolgpa.com/tools/vanilla-forums

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, "Vanilla Forums: The Insider's
Guide", checked Nov 13, 2026.
https://toolgpa.com/tools/vanilla-forums
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Know someone choosing between course and community platforms?

Send them this guide:
toolgpa.com/tools/vanilla-forums/guide

ToolGPA elsewhere: youtube.com/@toolgpa

See our other guides

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

Courses & Communities Insider's Guide

Every one of the 99 course and community platforms we grade, compared

Hylo Insider's Guide

Free open-source platform for community groups and coordination

3.2 GPA

Academy LMS Insider's Guide

WordPress LMS plugin with a free core and Pro licenses by site count

2.8 GPA

Circle Insider's Guide

Community platform with courses, events, payments and branded apps

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 Vanilla Forums'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. Vanilla Forums is a trademark of its owner, and this guide is not made, paid for or approved by Higher Logic, LLC. Prices and plans change: check higherlogic.com before you buy.