56 BEST BLOGGING TOOLS for 2016

Best blogging tools for : Theme / Site Building

#1 - Jupiter theme by Artbees (US$57) - First things first, lets make your blog look beautiful. And better yet, let's make it really, really customisable! If you're going to be taking this blogging caper seriously, then you are going to need some sort of landing page/ sales page builder. And why pay $50 (or more) a month for one, when you can get a theme that has it built in? Very customisable, very stylish, and pretty decent load time too (when it's not over run with plugins like mine is right now...oops!).

#2 - Thrive Landing Pages (US$67) - Already have a theme you love, but it doesn't have any sort of page builder or Visual Composer included? Then you can just add on the Thrive Landing Pages plugin for a one off payment of US$67, and it will do everything you need!

Best blogging tools for : Email & List Building

#3 - Active Campaign (From $9 a month) - I think we all know about my love of active campaign. It is the smartest and easiest to use of the email and email automation software services. Plus it costs the same as the not-smart-at-all ones (aka Mailchimp), so my theory is, if you're going to spend the money, you may as well get the best tool from the start. And for those of you saying, 'Oh, but Infusionsoft / Convertkit etc.. are awesome too'. Sorry, hate to tell you. I tried them all, and AC just kills the competition, hands down!

#4 - Thrive Leads (US$67) - If you want to make your list building efforts as easy (and intelligent!) as possible, then Thrive leads is the BEST option. It looks beautiful, has so many options for customisation, allows A/B split testing, lets you show different offers, pop-ups and boxes to different people based on a whole range of criteria too. Plus they keep on improving it. Many hearts for this one!

#5 - MixMax (FREE +) - Make your regular email much smarter with email templates, canned responses, email view tracking, email snoozing (aka if you can't respond to an email right now, but you don't want to either forget about it or have it clogging up your inbox, you can snooze it to go away and appear at a time that works better for you).

#6 - Active Campaign Extension for Google Chrome (FREE)- See what emails someone has opened, what pages they've viewed on your site, what lists they are in and more from inside your inbox (making it so much easier to respond to readers emails and questions too!).

#7 - Streak CRM for Gmail (FREE +) - We don't use this anymore (because we moved to Zendesk & Asana, details below), but if you do any sort of email based customer support, PR or guest-posting outreach or direct sales emails (and then follow ups!), then you need a CRM system (Customer Relationship Management) to make sure you keep on top of everything and none of those oh-so important follow ups get missed. Streak is a really easy to use, really affordable and it runs inside of Gmail which makes life a lot easier as well.

Best blogging tools for : *Tasks & Project Management*

#8 - Asana (Free +)- After I lost my day planner (more than once!), I realised I needed an online to-do list and task management tool. Also I needed one to manage my staff, and better yet a tool that would allow me to save any important documents, instructions or other details for each task (to make sure we are not wasting time re-finding them each time). Asana does just that, plus it has celebration unicorns (which are awesome!).

#9 - InstaGannt (Free +) - If you use Asana to plan out any bigger projects (aka a product launch), and you are more of a visual person (like I am), then InstaGannt is an amazing integration which takes any Asana project and instantly converts it into an online Gannt chart (if you don't do project management this will mean nothing to you, if you do... then you're probably more than a bit excites right now!)

Best blogging tools for : *Productivity*

#10 - Self Control - It is such a time waster to be "just checking" your social media and email every few minutes. But it's so hard to stop it! So, take the decision out of your hands with the Self Control app (for Mac, you can use the StayFocusd app for PC). Where you can block access to pre-set sites of your choice for certain blocks of time.

#11 - Kill NewsFeed (Free) - Don't want to go quite that hardcore, but need to kick your Facebook break habit? The Block The Feed Chrome extension still allows you to access things like Facebook pages and groups, but it shuts down the Facebook feed (so you won't get lost in the cat-video rabbit hole again!)

#12 - The timer in your phone! - OK, not technically a "new tool". But one of the best productivity tricks I know. Whenever I am procrastinating over something, or have something "big and boring" to do. I break it into chunks, allocated an amount of time to each chunk (usually around 20-30 minutes), and then I set the timer and I am off. It's amazing how much you get through with a bit of a deadline!

Best blogging tools for : *Social Media*

#13 - Plano.ly (from $7 a month) - While I used to use the full-service desktop schedulers for Instagram, I've recently swapped to the slightly paired back version (you can pre-plan your schedule, upload images and text ready to go, but you still have to hit "publish" to send it to Instagram). The reason being that as I quite often post random things in between, I like having the reminder that something I scheduled is about to be published (so I can delay it, or skip it, or even update it if I need to).

#14 - Edgar (US$49 a month) - This tool is probably a little expensive for what it is (and how I use it), but it's still cheaper than paying someone else to do it... or worse yet me having to do it... so for now it can stay (I'm pretty sure someone else will come out with a cheaper/better option soon though so watch this space). Basically Edgar is a social scheduling tool that allows you to create lots of recurring ever green content that gets shared again and again according to your schedule. This is a great way of making sure your best posts keep getting viewed, and also saves you a lot of time each week/month once it's all set up.

#15 - BoardBooster (varies) - This is basically the same thing, but for Pinterest. You can use board booster for all your Pinterest scheduling (although it can be a bit clunky!), but where it really shines is that you can set it to re-post old pins from certain boards. Aka we have it re-pinning around 50-100 pins a day... all on autopilot!

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#16 - Tailwind - (from $10 a month) - Because I HATE the scheduling in Board Booster, I also use Tailwind to help schedule in any more seasonal or timely pins and re-pins.

#17 - Instagress (from $10 a month) - Whenever someone says to me, 'What is the easiest way to grow a following on Instagram?', I immediately say "Instagress!". It's what a LOT of the big accounts have used. Just be careful to only set it to run on slow or medium (never fast.. that can get your account blocked!), and you should be fine. Although there is a risk to using it (as with any Instagram robot-like functionality), so use at your own risk.

Best blogging tools for : *Marketing*

#18 - Deadline funnel (US$37+ a month) - This is more of an advanced tool, but if you want to be able to create limited time only offers (ones that are actually really just for a limited time... customers will not be able to access them again after that), then this is the best tool out there. It creates timers that can be synced across not just your blog, but your emails, and third party sites too (aka if you use Leadpages or another page builder or checkout system).

#19 - Webinar Jam ($399 a year... or $299 if you don't sign up straight away, they send you a discounted offer... just saying!) - Using webinars is such an important part of my business. I use them to drive sales, to help teach my courses, to increase engagement and lots, lots more. So I needed to have the right tool. Webinar Jam is my favourite because it has a lot of really cool things all built it (like countdown timers for offers), and because it runs off the back of Google Hangouts, all webinars are automatically saved to my Youtube channel (unlisted of course), so it saves me heaps of time uploading videos too. It's downsides are that Google hangouts can be a bit glitchy at times, and also the design of things like the "thank you" pages leaves a bit to be desired. But other than that it's awesome!

#20 - Adespresso (from $49 a month) - If you sell anything "on the line" then you'll need to do Facebook ads at some point. And Adespresso is the easiest way to not just set up ads, to but split test a whole bunch of text, images even targeting (in just minutes!), so you can figure out what works (and what doesn't) easily, before you waste too much money. Its super easy to use, the reports are really easy to read, and they have a few cool "next level" options too like

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#21 - MotionMail (Free +) - If you have a sale or other limited time offer and want to show animated, real-time countdown timers IN your EMAILS then MotionMail is awesome (they look pretty decent too!)

#22 - Social Share Links Generator (Free) - Need to embed customer social share links in your emails or pages without an app or plugin (aka "If you love this click here to tweet it out!"), then bookmark this free generator website (it's so damn handy!)

#23 - Click to Tweet (Free)- Go the next step further and embed pretty "Click to tweet" quote boxes in your posts with the Click to Tweet plugin.

#24 - Expiring link generator (Free) - Want to not just show a countdown, but make your promotion links expire after a certain time as well? Then check out this simple to use generator (and make sure you read the instructions and test it first, it might be free, but it does take a bit of fiddling to get it to work).

#25 - UTMftw - tracking link generator for Google Analytics campaigns (FREE) - If you are running any sort of campaign or promotion, it's a good idea to start tracking where things are coming from (aka which of your promotion efforts are working!), and this free Chrome extension helps you create those custom tracking links really easily. It also has a free Google Analytics custom dashboard that I really recommend you install (it helps you visually track all that data too!)

Best blogging tools for : *Marketing*

#26 - Evernote (Free +) - I use Evernote as my, you guessed it, online notebook. When even I do a course or training, have a meeting, do a brainstorm etc.. it all goes in here. I also use it to save shortcuts to things like any media coverage, and site designs I like, or any cool blog posts or articles I want to read again later (all meticulously saved into folders with tags of course).

#27 - Google Drive (Free) - This is where we save and share any documents that multiple people on the team might need to access and edit (so you don't end up with lots of different versions). For example our sales & stats trackers, client campaign trackers and editorial calendars etc..

As any documents saved to Google drive can be accessed and edited in real-time by multiple people (without over riding each others work!)

#28 - DropBox (Free +) - DropBox has a few uses for us. Firstly it's where we store any design assets (aka templates for blog post images, banners etc..). It's also where I store all my receipts and bank statements in a folder I share with my book keeper (and I use Zapier to automatically send any email receipts to this folder as well).

#29 - Dasheroo (Free +) - I am very visual. And I like to be able to see my important numbers and data all in one place. Enter Dasheroo, a fully customisable dashboard that you can create to show and track what is important to you!

Best blogging tools for : *Team Management*

#30 - Hubstaff (from $5 per staff member per month) - If you have any international freelancers, Hubstaff is brilliant. Not only does it allow you to track their time, and activity, but it also automates their pays as well (yippee, less admin for everyone!).

#31 - Slack (Free +) - If you hate emails (like I do!), and hide from your inbox at times, then you will love slack. It's basically an Instant messenger for your teams, and you can have as many different "channels" (which are just conversation groups) as you like. It also has a smartphone app, so you can respond or post on the go. I find it's the best way to get quick answers to things, and share little updates on projects etc.. And just a pro tip. If you don't want to get overwhelmed with yet another thing to respond to, you can turn the notifications off. But I would suggest you create one channel called "urgent" and leave the notifications on for that channel, that way if someone needs you urgently, they can get you, but otherwise you only see the posts when you login and check it.

#32 - Asana - Asana gets two mentions, because it is just so damn useful, particularly if you have to manage a team or collaborate in anyway.

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#33 - Google Sites/ wiki (Free) - This is a new thing for us, and we are really only just setting it up (thanks for the reccy Dot Polka!), but it's a great way to basically create a "how-to" guidebook for your blog and business. It's easily shared, and updated, and you can easily embed and link to other files and documents too.

#34 - Snagit (US$50) - Need to give feedback on something visual, or want to show someone how something is done, or save an instructional video to be used to train any VAs or staff? Then Snagit is an awesome screen capture and video screen capture tool. Plus it automatically saves those videos to Google so that saves you some uploading time as well.

#35 - Zendesk (from $5 per user per month) - Once you start selling products, or even giving away things for free. You are going to start getting customer/reader emails. And staying on top of them all, without destroying your inbox can be tricky. Which is where Zendesk comes in. Even better if you have someone helping you with your emails of customer support (as it makes it super easy for them to respond, follow up etc.. and for you to see exactly what they've been doing as well).

Best blogging tools for : *Images & Video*

#36 - Vimeo (free +) - I use the premium Vimeo subscription to host all the videos for me paid-courses and also my free trainings (it keeps them more secure than Youtube does).

#37 - iMovie (Free) - And to create those videos? Well I normally just film and edit them straight into iMovie on my laptop (but I have done some basic editing on the iPhone and iPad as well). iMovie is free and simple to use. Not sure where to start? You can actually book in for a free demo at your local Mac store (so why not, right?). We also have a how-to video for this that I just added to the Blogsquad Community.

#38 - Handbrake App (free) - This has saved me soooo many grey hairs, and so much time too. Handbrake app is a free file compression software, that quickly reduces the files size of your videos drastically (down to about 15% of the file size!), without ruining the picture quality.

#39 - Stocksy (from $25 per image) - If you are looking for non-lame stock photos, this is the place to go. They are not cheap (about $25 a photo), so I only use them for more long-term use projects like eBook covers and other branding items. But they are really pretty!

#40 - AdobeStock - They bought dollarphotoclub.com and turned it into $5 photo club. But although that's no longer as cheap (damn them), they do still have one of the best selections and $5 isn't too bad really, is it?

#41 - CreativeMarket (varies) - Looking for cool templates, backgrounds, fonts etc.. Creative Market is an online market place for design type things, and is my new favourite place to peruse. It's also great for getting inspiration too.

#42 - TinyJpg - Stop uploading such big damn photos to your blog and slowing it the hell down! TinyJpg is a free online image compressor that is super easy to use (it also has a free WordPress plugin, but I prefer the online version as I have too many plugins already!)

#43 - PicMonkey (Free +) - When I am feeling lazy, or just want to quickly resize, brighten, crop or compress an image I use PicMonkey. It's fast, free and no fuss. Plus it makes your images look so much better!

Best blogging tools for : *Nerdy Things / Site Admin*

#44 - Vaultpress (from $9 a month) - Even if your hosting has built in back-ups, you still need to have back-ups of your back-ups (because theirs could fail, it does happen!), and Vaultpress is definitely the most "non-techie" friendly option to both set-up, and then restore your crashed blog as well.

#45 - Sucuri (from $16.99 a month)- Again in the "You can never be too careful" family sits Sucuri. It scans your site for any nasty malware, or other digital (site ruining) gremlins, and they'll help you clean it up when things go south as well.

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#46 - Wp Rocket Cache ($39) - There are a whole heap of different caching plugins out there, and most are so complicated to set up you need a PHD and the actualy plugin designer on-hand to actually do it. WP Rocket is a lot simpler, and they offer a service to help actually configure it all for you as well (which costs extra, but to save me the migraine of figuring it out myself, I am happy to pay!).

#47 - Media Temple Wordpress Hosting (from $20 a month) - After years and years of hosting issues (my old blog was very temperamental.. as a lot of large old sites are!), I finally arrived at Media Temple, and have not looked back. Not only did they actually manage to stop my blog from crashing, but they improved the speed, have 24/7 free technical support, built in staging sites and lots more.

#48 - WPCurve (from $69 a month) - I am pretty nerdy, but even I don't want to be in charge of things like site updates and all those weird little fixes and maintenance that constantly needs doing on any website or blog. WPCurve is an easy and non-expensive alternative to having a developer actually on your staff. They look after all your back-ups, updates, malware and security, plus you can get them to help you fix or update as many little things as you want (so yep, if you have WPCurve, or something similar, you probably don't need the extra back-ups or security above... up to you!).

#49 - Zapier (Free +) - Like the tiny little robot slave you never had. Zapier is an amazing online automation system that helps you to, you guessed it, automate lots of your online tasks. Things like;
If you add a certain tag/folder to an email it forwards that email to your Want to know if one headline is going to work better bookkeeper.
If you share something on instagram with a certain hashtag, it saves that image into dropbox, or re-shares it on Facebook etc.. etc..

#50 - Visual Website Optimiser (free trial available then $49 a month) - than another, or if different colour buttons mean more or less sales? Well VWO is a really easy to use split-testing tool, that allows you (without any code at all), to temporarily make and test changes to the design of your website, and then track the results. Most bloggers won't need this until they start offering their own products, then it can be a total game-changer!

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Best blogging tools for : *Selling Stuff – Courses / Eproducts etc.*

#51 - Samcart ($99 a month) - I recently went on the hunt for the "perfect eCourse solution". And couldn't find it (not one that met all my needs anyway). So now I use a mix of tools to get the results and features I need. Samcart was one of the newer additions. It is basically just a prettier and more feature-packed shopping cart than the one that comes built in with my Membership plugin (Membermouse, below). And it allows me to do things like A/B Split test, run affiliate programs, offer special post-purchase offers and more. Plus the reporting is awesome (which is something I really appreciate these days! Data is king you know!).

#52 - Membermouse (from $19.95 a month) - It's not the BEST solution out there (for just a few silly reasons), but it is the best one for me (none of them are perfect it turns out!). Easy to set up, easy to use and fairly flexible. It gets the job done which is what is important to me.

#53 - Teachable (Free +) - Now this is actually a tool I don't personally use, but one that I recommend to anyone who wants to create their first online course (either free or paid). It is very easy to set up, and pricing starts from free + a percentage of sales (and if it's a free course you are offering then there's never a cost). The reason I don't use it myself is the customisation is very limited, but for anyone just starting out it's a great solution (especially as it deals with all the tricky stuff like taking payments for you right away, plus it's not a plugin so you don't need to worry about it clashing or breaking anything).

#54 - Selz (Free +) - if you're looking for a simple and beautiful solution for selling non-course based products, like eBooks, templates etc.. then we use Selz. There are lots of customisation options too, altough I've never really used any of them. But for the most important part, actually selling our stuff, it just works (and looks great too!).

#55 - Sendowl (from $9 a month) - Another great option for selling digital products is Sendowl. In fact I used to use both this, and Selz for different things. Again easy to use, looks great, and has lots of more pro features like affiliates, up-sells and handy tax options too.

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Best blogging tools for : *Other random apps for busy people*

#56 - Blinkist (free or $49.99 per year for premium features)- Got a mile-high pile of books to read, and no time to read them? I did too, until i discovered Blinkist. Basically it is a library of 15-minute overviews of lots of the most popular books. So all the important bits, and none of the fluff (most business books are about 97% fluff anyway!). Total time saver. And there is an audio version too, so you could get through two different books in a single walk of the dog (pretty rad!).

BONUS - Mealime (Free+) - This one has nothing to do with blogging. But it is very handy for time-poor bloggers (or anyone really), who has total decision fatigue and is stuck in a bit of a food rut too. Mealime is a weekly menu planner, that lets you put in the type of diet your follow (aka low-carb, vegetarian, low-meat etc..), how many meals you want to plan for, and how many people you are feeding, and it them creates a meal plan for you (which you can easily update if you don't like any of the suggested dishes). It then gives you a shopping list, and all the directions. Now if only it would actually do the shopping and the cooking for you, it would be perfect!

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