

M A V E R I C K A I / 2 0 2 6 E D I T I O N

The AI Tools I Actually Use

15 tools across 12 categories. No fluff. Just the ones I actually open every day.

I have tested hundreds of AI tools so you do not have to. This is my personal list for 2026, the ones I pay for with my own money and recommend to everyone who asks. No affiliate links.

No sponsored picks. Just the real ones.

Quick Reference

Every tool on this list with a direct link. Bookmark this page.

AI MODELS	ChatGPT	chatgpt.com
AI MODELS	Claude	claude.ai
CONTENT CREATION	Poppy AI	getpoppy.ai
PRESENTATIONS	Gamma	gamma.app
RESEARCH	Perplexity	perplexity.ai
VIDEO	Higgsfield	higgsfield.ai
CREATIVE & DESIGN	Picsart	picsart.com
BUILDING	Codex (OpenAI)	chatgpt.com
BUILDING	Claude Code	claude.ai
BUILDING	Lovable	lovable.dev
SEO	CYTD.ai	cytd.ai
MEETINGS	Supernormal	supernormal.com
LEARNING	NotebookLM	notebooklm.google.com
AUTOMATION	Manus	manus.im
MUSIC & AUDIO	Artlist	artlist.io

HOW TO READ THIS GUIDE

Before you pick any tools, get comfortable with the two AI models that power everything on this list: **ChatGPT** for thinking and brainstorming, **Claude** for writing and execution. They are covered first for a reason.

THE AI MODELS

01 ChatGPT

The best brainstorming partner I have ever had.

chatgpt.com

WHY I USE IT:

ChatGPT is still where I go when I need ideas fast. Fifty video concepts in two minutes. A back-and-forth brainstorm that actually gets better the longer the conversation goes. Custom GPTs are what set it apart for me. I have ones built for my content style, my audience, my niche, and they save me real time every single day. Image generation in ChatGPT is the best I have seen anywhere, near perfect text rendering and 2K resolution. And the features keep stacking: Agent Mode, Deep Research, Codex for coding, Sora for video. It feels less like a chatbot now and more like having a full team inside one app. For thinking, ideating, and exploring new ideas, nothing else comes close.

02 Claude

The best AI for writing that actually sounds like you.

claude.ai

WHY I USE IT:

I use Claude for all my writing. Every email, every script, every caption. It does not sound like a robot. That is the whole thing for me. Every other AI writes in that same generic, overly polished tone and you can spot it instantly. Claude writes the way a real person talks. I feed it my voice, my style, and it keeps everything consistent. The context window is massive, so I drop in my entire brand guide and it remembers all of it. Extended thinking, computer use, agentic coding, all built in now. I have tried switching to other models for writing and I keep coming back.

My advice: Use both. ChatGPT for thinking. Claude for writing. That is the combo.

CONTENT CREATION

03

Poppy AI

Where all my content starts.

getpoppy.ai

WHY I USE IT:

Poppy changed my workflow more than almost any other tool on this list. I drag in a TikTok, a YouTube video, an article, a voice note, whatever I have, and it breaks everything down into usable pieces. Scripts, captions, blog posts, threads. It runs on a visual canvas so you can see all your ideas laid out and connect them together. I used to spend an hour turning one video into five pieces of written content. Now it takes about ten minutes. It runs both GPT and Claude under the hood, which means you get the strengths of both models without switching apps. If you create content for a living, this should be the first thing you try.

PRESENTATIONS

04

Gamma

Turn ideas into polished presentations instantly.

gamma.app

WHY I USE IT:

Gamma killed the blank page problem for me. I tell it what my deck is about and it builds the whole thing, layouts, images, copy, all of it. I have used it for pitch decks, content breakdowns, and client deliverables. The designs actually look good, which is rare for AI-generated presentations. The new Gamma Agent can research the web, restyle your entire deck, and generate brand-specific images right inside the tool. You export to PowerPoint, PDF, or Google Slides. I stopped opening Google Slides entirely about three months ago.

RESEARCH

05

Perplexity

AI-powered research with sources you can trust.

perplexity.ai

WHY I USE IT:

Perplexity replaced Google for me. Not exaggerating. Instead of scrolling through ten blue links trying to find an answer, Perplexity reads everything and gives me a clear response with citations I can actually check. I use it before every video I make to fact-check and research topics fast. Deep Research runs on Claude Opus 4.6 now and the results are noticeably better than they were even a few months ago. They also launched Perplexity Computer, an autonomous agent that runs complex research workflows for you in the background. I probably save five or six hours a week with this thing.

VIDEO GENERATION

06

Higgsfield

Cinematic AI video with real camera control.

higgsfield.ai

WHY I USE IT:

Higgsfield is the video tool I keep coming back to. The camera controls are the reason. You get 50+ professional camera movements: drone shots, crash zooms, sweeping pans, the kind of stuff that makes AI video actually look cinematic instead of looking like AI video. It bundles 15+ models (Sora 2, Veo 3.1, Seedance 2.0, Kling 3.0) into one platform so you pick the best one for each project. Click-to-Ad lets you paste a product URL and it generates a video ad from it. I have tried all the standalone video generators and this is the one I keep my subscription active on.

CREATIVE & DESIGN

For anything creative, I use two tools. Higgsfield handles everything that moves (covered above). Picsart handles everything else.

07 Picsart

AI photo editing and creation on the go.

picsart.com

WHY I USE IT:

Picsart is my go-to for quick mobile edits. Background removal, image generation, photo enhancement, all on your phone. AI Replace lets you swap any object in a photo by highlighting it and typing what you want instead. I use it constantly when I am making content on my phone and do not have time to sit at a computer. They launched an AI agent marketplace where you hire AI assistants for specific tasks like resizing social content or editing product photos. Between Higgsfield for video and Picsart for images, I have not needed anything else for creative work.

BUILDING APPS & WEBSITES

This is the one category where I recommend three tools, because they each solve a different problem.

08 Codex

OpenAI's coding agent inside ChatGPT.

chatgpt.com

WHY I USE IT:

Codex lives inside ChatGPT. You describe what you want in plain English and it writes the code in a cloud sandbox, runs it, tests it, and shows you the result. I use it for quick scripts, prototypes, and automations where I want something working in minutes instead of hours. Goal Mode lets you set an objective and it figures out the steps on its own. Appshots give you a visual preview of what it is building so you can course-correct before it finishes. Good for getting from zero to something functional fast.

09 Claude Code

Build real apps and websites from your terminal.

claude.ai

WHY I USE IT:

Claude Code is the reason I tell people they do not need Shopify anymore. You describe what you want in plain English and it builds it. Full apps. Full websites. It runs in your terminal, reads your entire codebase, writes files, runs tests, and commits to Git. Agent Teams lets multiple Claude Code instances work on different parts of a problem at the same time. Plan Mode shows you exactly what it will do before it executes anything. Whether you write code or not, this changes how you think about building things.

10 Lovable

Describe your app and watch it get built live.

lovable.dev

WHY I USE IT:

Lovable is for people who want to see it happening in real time. You describe what you want your app to do and it builds it in front of you. Full-stack web apps with a visual builder, no coding needed. It generates production-ready React code, sets up a Supabase backend, and deploys to a live URL. I have used it to prototype ideas that would have taken a developer days to build. If you have an app idea but no technical background, this is the fastest way to make it real.

SEO / BUSINESS OWNERS

11

CYTD.ai

Get your brand cited by ChatGPT, Claude, and Google AI.

cytd.ai

WHY I USE IT:

SEO is not just about Google anymore. In 2026 you need to show up when people ask AI tools questions about your niche. CYTD.ai is built for exactly that. It tracks how ChatGPT, Claude, and Google AI mention your brand, gives you a visibility score, and generates content to improve your ranking. It connects to WordPress and Shopify so content syncs as drafts ready to publish. Built around three factors: Visibility, Compliance, and Relevance. If you run a business and you have not started thinking about AI SEO yet, you are already behind. This is the tool that catches you up.

MEETINGS

12

Supernormal

Never take meeting notes again.

supernormal.com

WHY I USE IT:

I hate taking notes during meetings. Supernormal joins your Google Meet, Zoom, or Teams call and handles transcription, summaries, action items, and follow-ups. All automatic. Their Voice Agent, called Norma, can actually participate in your meetings and answer questions in real time. After the meeting it turns everything into deliverables like presentations and project briefs. Their agents pull from your calls, emails, and documents to turn meeting context into finished work. I wish I had found this years ago.

LEARNING

13

NotebookLM

Your personal AI tutor built on your own materials.

notebooklm.google.com

WHY I USE IT:

NotebookLM is the most underrated tool on this list. Upload PDFs, Google Docs, YouTube videos, or website links and it becomes an expert on that material. It generates summaries, study guides, and audio overviews you can listen to like a podcast. I have used it to prep for videos on topics I knew nothing about, and the audio overviews alone saved me hours of reading. In 2026 they added 10 infographic styles to visually summarize sources, Cinematic Video Overviews, and PPTX export. Notebooks sync between the Gemini app and NotebookLM now too. If you need to learn something fast, start here.

AUTOMATION

14

Manus

Give it a goal and watch it work.

manus.im

WHY I USE IT:

Manus works differently than most AI tools. You do not build workflows step by step. You just describe what you want done and it figures out how to do it. It browses the web, gathers data, creates documents, builds presentations, all running in the background while you work on other things. The Desktop app lets its agents work directly with files and applications on your device. Wide Research uses parallel sub-agents to cover more ground faster. I use it for the kind of tedious research and document work that used to eat up my entire afternoon.

MUSIC & AUDIO

15

Artlist

Premium royalty-free music and SFX for creators.

artlist.io

WHY I USE IT:

Every creator needs music and sound effects, and licensing is usually a headache. Artlist fixed that for me. One subscription, everything covered, no per-use fees, no copyright strikes. Their library is huge and the AI search finds the right track in seconds. AI Music powered by Google Lyria 3 lets you generate original songs from text prompts with control over intros, verses, and choruses. The AI Toolkit now covers image, video, music, and voiceover generation all in one workspace. I have used Artlist for every video I have made in the last two years.

Want More AI Tips Like This?

I post daily AI content, tool breakdowns, and prompts that actually help you get more done. Follow me for the latest.

@MavGPT

TikTok | Instagram | Facebook

The bad tool for learning about AI is giving up.

The good one is following me.