

8 Top Free Accounting & Bookkeeping Software Apps

1. **Wave**
2. **ZipBooks**
3. **GnuCash**
4. **CloudBooks**
5. **Sunrise**
6. **BrightBook**
7. **Akaunting**
8. **Zoho Books**

1. [Wave](#):

Best for Sole Proprietors and Small Businesses

Wave Accounting is one of the more tested, reliable options listed here. It's an accessible, intuitive program that doesn't require much — if any — training to understand.

Its entire suite of accounting features is available for free — including unlimited income and expense tracking, the ability to run multiple businesses from a single account, and unlimited bank and credit card connections.

Most of Wave's issues are relatively nit-picky. For one, it doesn't allow users to track accounts payable. It also doesn't have a comprehensive mobile application for its accounting features.

Still, the program is one of the sounder, more robust free accounting applications available, and it's scalable enough to accommodate everyone from independent contractors to sole proprietors to small business owners.

Wave's Key Benefits

- Accessible setup and interface
- Unlimited bank and credit card connections
- Unlimited income and expense tracking
- Exportable accounting reports

- Integrates with [HubSpot CRM](#)

Wave's Key Drawbacks

- Can't track accounts payable
- No comprehensive mobile application

2. [ZipBooks](#):

Best for Small Businesses Looking to Upgrade From Spreadsheets

ZipBooks is a web-based financial software with a solid suite of accounting features. The company offers a free plan called ZipBooks Starter — an option that includes basic bookkeeping functionality, along with profit, loss, and balance sheet reporting.

It also covers certain invoicing and quote-related bases — plus the ability to accept payment via credit card or PayPal. It's a powerful, easy-to-use solution, but its free plan is extremely free plan-ish.

The program's features you can access with a free plan are restricted to the point that it might be easy to outgrow. You can only link one bank account and view basic reports with its starter option. Should your needs extend beyond that, you'll need to upgrade to one of its premium plans.

And while those upper-tier plans are reasonably priced, they're obviously not what someone who wants a free plan is looking for. Again, the solution itself is sound, but if you want a free program that will remain free as you scale, you should look elsewhere.

ZipBooks' Key Benefits

- Unlimited Invoices
- Ability to manage unlimited vendors and customers
- Accepts digital payments via Square and Paypal

ZipBooks' Key Drawbacks

- Only allows you to connect one bank account
- Only lets you view basic reports

3. [GnuCash](#):

Best for Sole Proprietors

GnuCash is a free, open-source accounting solution that can be downloaded for Linux, Windows, and Mac OS X. It offers double-entry accounting resources, a checkbook-style register, scheduled transactions, and customizable visual reporting.

GnuCash's initial setup and somewhat dated-looking interface might turn a lot of potential users off. But if you're willing to tough out its tricky installation and don't need your accounting solution to be particularly pretty, you're left with a solid application that covers a lot of bases for free.

That said, it's not much of a long-term solution for businesses anticipating a lot of growth. It's better suited for sole proprietors who need a program to get them through their day-to-day. If you fit that bill, check GnuCash out.

GnuCash's Key Benefits

- Double-entry feature ensures books balance
- Budget management tools can help plan financial strategy
- Works on a variety of operating systems
- Can handle internationalized dates and currencies

GnuCash's Key Drawbacks

- Installation is less straightforward than most other platforms
- Interface isn't particularly accessible or visually appealing
- No customer support

4. [CloudBooks](#):

Best for Freelancers and Small Businesses

CloudBooks is a free accounting and invoicing solution tailored to accommodate small businesses and freelancers. The program boasts a user base of over 2 million subscribers and has a suite of capabilities that cover invoicing, time-tracking, reporting, and payment needs — among others.

The platform is an invoice management solution, above all else — and that can be a benefit or drawback in its own right, depending on what you need.

While CloudBooks has features extending beyond that functionality, invoicing appears to be its main selling point — meaning it's not quite as fully fleshed out with accounting functionality as other programs listed here.

So if you're looking for exceptional [invoice creation](#) and management software, you should check out Cloudbooks. If you need a more robust accounting-specific solution, you might want to look elsewhere.

CloudBooks' Key Benefits

- Allows for unlimited users
- Features email support
- Offers free cloud data storage
- Upgraded plans are reasonably priced

CloudBooks' Key Drawbacks

- Only lets you bill one client
- Caps your number of invoices at five
- Lacks phone or chat support

5. [Lendio](#):

Best for Small Businesses Looking for a Bookkeeping Solution

Lendio is one of the more prominent bookkeeping applications available for small businesses. Users can leverage the program to easily search and categorize business expenses, send customized invoices, and receive recurring payments.

It offers a free, self-service plan that provides businesses with a decent suite of features and a fair amount of flexibility when it comes to bookkeeping — allowing for unlimited invoices and transactions.

Lendio sets itself apart from other bookkeeping solutions with its dedicated bookkeeper services, but those services come at a hefty premium. As I mentioned, its free plan is self-service — which works for small businesses but might not be sustainable as your business expands.

Ultimately, Lendio is a straightforward, effective bookkeeping software with a free plan that can suit the needs of several small businesses. If you need a relatively short-term bookkeeping solution with a reasonable upgrade fee, Sunrise's free plan is worth checking out.

Lendio's Key Benefits

- Lets you manage income and expenses
- Lets you send unlimited invoices
- Lets you generate profits and losses

Lendio's Key Drawbacks

- Suite of features is pretty restricted, relative to that of its paid plan
- Lacks payment integrations
- No cash flow insights or alerts

6. [Brightbook](#):

Best for Creative Professionals and Freelancers

Brightbook is a web-based accounting solution tailored to suit the needs of independent contractors, freelancers, and small business owners — though it tends to work better for the former two.

The program is essentially designed to democratize accounting software. It has an extensive suite of features available for free — including resources for invoicing, visibility into your cash flow, financial reporting, and drafting financial statements — along with some paid features available for one-time fees.

One area where Brightbook struggles is its lack of mobile support. The program doesn't have a mobile application, and it can't be accessed via mobile browsers. And the application itself isn't quite as sophisticated as some of the more well-established options.

Still, Brightbook is a solid option for freelancers or independent contractors — specifically creative professionals. It's a little bare-bones, but it still covers a lot of bases that other options on this list might have stuck behind paywalls.

If you're looking for a comprehensive suite of accounting features and don't mind working with a relatively stripped-back program, consider checking Brightbook out.

Brightbook's Key Benefits

- Can be used for multiple companies
- Interface gives you solid visibility into most aspects of your business
- Full suite of features is free

Brightbook's Key Drawbacks

- Fairly bare-bones — lacking some more sophisticated features
- Can't be accessed via mobile
- Reporting features are limited

7. [Akaunting](#):

Best for Businesses Looking for a Truly One-Stop Free Accounting Software

Akaunting is a free, open-source accounting solution for small businesses and freelancers with a global reach and sizable user base. The program's full suite of features is available for free — making it one of the few "one-stop-shop" solutions on this list.

The platform is entirely online, meaning you can access it from any desktop, tablet, or mobile device anytime, anywhere. It offers resources that help you manage cash flow, track expenses, deal with invoicing, and set transaction categories.

It also features a client portal — allowing you to share the transactions and invoices with your clients and accept bulk payments. Akaunting boasts a base of over 270,000 users and is available in over 50 languages, making it one of the most popular, wide-reaching open-source solutions on this list.

Some users report trouble with Akaunting's support department's responsiveness. The application also seems to be one of the less accessible ones on this list when it comes to ease of use. But if you're in the market for a free, comprehensive accounting solution and are willing to tough those issues out, look into Akaunting.

Akaunting's Key Benefits

- Truly one-stop for free
- Accessible from anywhere

- Open source and secure
- Integrates with [HubSpot CRM](#)

Akaunting's Key Drawbacks

- Questionable support
- Potentially difficult to operate

8. [Zoho Books](#):

Best for Scaling Businesses

Zoho Books is a robustly featured accounting solution tailored to help small businesses. Its free plan is restricted to organizations generating less than \$50,000 in annual revenue, but if you qualify, Zoho Books can cover a lot of your bases.

The platform has end-to-end accounting resources to handle the more monotonous, frustrating elements of this side of your business — including invoicing and raising sales orders. The program also has a client portal to help you seamlessly connect with your customers.

With a user-friendly interface and a solid mobile application, Zoho Books is one of the more straightforward, accessible solutions listed here. But it still comes with its share of limitations, including a lack of payroll management resources. The free plan also only gives you access to email support — not chat or voice.

But apart from those issues, Zoho Books is a pretty sound application. If its suite of features covers your needs and your business meets its revenue requirements, consider looking into Zoho Books' free plan.

Zoho Books' Key Benefits

- End-to-end accounting features cover a lot of bases
- Accessible interface
- Solid mobile application
- Integrates with [HubSpot CRM](#)

Zoho Books' Key Drawbacks

- Support is restricted to email

- Only certain businesses qualify
- No payroll management resources

Free Accounting Software: Features to Look For

1. Accessibility

If you're in the market for free accounting software, odds are you're not an accountant. You're trying to grow a business, and if you want to make that happen, you need to focus on your long-term plans and day-to-day operations. You don't want to exhaust too much time and energy learning a convoluted, overly technical accounting software — at least not yet.

As your business expands, leveraging an accounting platform with an accessible interface and straightforward functionality is in your best interest. So when you're trying to pin down the right free accounting software for your company, prioritize accessibility.

2. Connectivity With Credit Cards and Bank Accounts

Manual receipt entry can be a massive time drain for businesses — particularly ones with a high transaction volume. So finding free accounting software that can connect with your credit cards and bank accounts to help automate that process is always a good call when exploring your options.

3. The Ability to Export Your Records

As your business expands, it's almost bound to scale out of your free accounting software's limited capabilities. When you see that kind of growth, you'll probably want to upgrade to a paid accounting application. But moving on from your free solution doesn't mean moving on from the data you accrued in it.

You need to maintain the historical records contained in your free program as you make the shift to a new application. Plan for that process ahead of time by leveraging a program that will let you seamlessly export and migrate those existing records to a paid platform.

4. The Specific Features You Need

At the end of the day, your business is your business — and you have specific needs and priorities that will dictate what you want out of an accounting solution.

When you're selecting yours, make sure you understand what those needs and priorities are, and seek out programs with the features required to accommodate them.

Free Accounting Software Limitations

1. Limited Number of Users

Many free accounting software solutions only allow you to grant access to a fixed number of users — and that "fixed number" is often one. If you need to have multiple people within your organization regularly leverage the solution, you might want to explore the possibility of leveraging a paid option.

2. Lack of Scalability

Several free accounting applications limit the number of transactions you can carry out or the number of records you're allowed to maintain — as your business scales, you'll likely be dealing with more of both. So in some cases, going with a free accounting solution might not be sustainable.

3. Difficulty Migrating Your Data

As I mentioned earlier, if you need to shift from one accounting application to another, your existing data will have to shift too. Some free accounting solutions make that process more convoluted and frustrating than others — bear that in mind when you pick your preferred platform.

4. A Lack of Access to a Fuller Suite of Features

Free accounting solutions are free for a reason. In many cases, they're offered in the context of a "freemium" model — they essentially provide the bare essentials as a preview for a fully fleshed-out application. When you're leveraging a free accounting program, you're likely settling for less until you can justify springing for the premium option.

When to Upgrade from Free Accounting and Bookkeeping Software

In many cases, free accounting solutions are designed to help get you off the ground. Upgrading from yours is something you need to feel out for yourself. If you find you're bringing on more clients or processing more transactions than your free program allows for, it's probably time to spring for a paid option.

And many of those options are thoughtfully tiered — offered at reasonable prices that are appropriate for your business's scale. So if you're finding you're hitting a wall with your free accounting solution, try to find an affordable program that suits your emerging needs.