

Best Free Software Downloads for Students

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Don't spend hundreds of dollars to get your computer ready for college. There are tons of free programs that you can download safely and easily online. Read on to discover the best free software downloads for students.



Calendars and Schedulers

Many computers come with free calendar programs, such as iCal ([Mac](#)) or Windows Calendar. Need more features? Check out:

- [Google Calendar](#) - Already use any of Google's other services, like Gmail or Google Docs? Google Calendar is built right in (and you can sign up for it separately, too). Use it to manage events and tasks, share calendars, send auto-reminders and even sync to your Android mobile device.
- [Remember the Milk](#) - The ultimate task-master, Remember the Milk allows you to manage and share tasks from anywhere. It can be accessed online, offline and through your phone. It also sends email, SMS and IM reminders.
- [CollegeRuled](#) - CollegeRuled is designed specifically for university students to help you track your class schedule. Other nice features include a class message board, task organizer and Facebook integration. (Note: you will need a .edu email address to use CollegeRuled.)

Homework

Microsoft Office is a very popular homework tool, but it comes with a steep price tag. Here are some alternatives to help you with your writing, note taking, collaborating, calculating and even [image editing](#).

- [Google Docs](#) - Docs is another popular (and free) product from Google. This Web-based office program includes documents, spreadsheets, presentations, fillable forms, a drawing program and the ability to share it all with your collaborators. Need to move between home and school computers? Not to worry, Google stores everything in the cloud, so it's available from any computer with an Internet connection.
- [OpenOffice](#) - Microsoft Office is expensive, but this suite of equivalent products is not. OpenOffice is an absolutely free open source program that's fully compatible with Microsoft Office documents. It includes a word processor, a spreadsheet program, a database maker, a presentation maker and more.
- [Zoho](#) - Like OpenOffice, Zoho is based on the Microsoft Office tools, but it offers an even more comprehensive suite of collaboration and organization products.
- [Stixy](#) - Working on a group project? Stixy is like an online white board that allows you and your collaborators to brainstorm and share ideas, images, links and much more. Its intuitive interface makes it ideal for planning individual projects as well.
- [Calcoolate](#) - This online calculator is great for math homework. It calculates, converts and shows a history of previous calculations. Calcoolate can be used over the web or downloaded for free in about three seconds.
- [Gimp](#) - Need to add a figure to a paper or prepare a digital image for art class? Gimp can do everything that Adobe Photoshop can do, at a fraction of the price - it's completely free.

Communication and Networking

Between e-mail, [text](#) messaging and the old-fashioned phone call, staying in touch these days is a breeze. Here are a few free tools that make life even easier:

- [Skype](#) - Skype allows you make free voice and video calls from your computer to another Skype user. It's also ideal for international calls: you can use Skype to dial a regular phone number from (and to) anywhere in the world for much less per minute than most calling plans.
- [Plaxo](#) - Having a hard time keeping track of all those contacts? Plaxo is a free tool that will sync all of your address books, from your email to Facebook to your mobile phone (and everything in between).

Finance

Unleashed into the newfound freedom of college, many students quickly go into consumer [debt](#). Don't let that happen to you - grab one of these free money managing tools and start budgeting now.

- [Mint](#) - This free money manager helps you track your spending, plan a budget, check bank balances, create a savings plan and much more. It even syncs to your bank and credit card accounts, and is available as a free mobile app.
- [PearBudget](#) - Looking for something a little simpler? PearBudget is a free budget and expense tracking service without any frills that's easy to use and fully exportable.

Browsers and Browser Add-Ons

Not satisfied with Internet Explorer or Safari? Here are a few popular alternatives.

- **Firefox** - The preferred browser for many students, Mozilla's Firefox is known for its security and speed. Numerous **Firefox add-ons** will help you customize your browsing experience and may even change the way you use the web.
- **Zotero** - One such add-on is Zotero, a wonderful Firefox extension for students. It helps you manage, collect and cite sources as you research and browse the Web.
- **Google Chrome** - Possibly the only Web browser faster than Firefox, Chrome offers lightening-fast browsing in an interface designed for people who spend their lives online. Soon Google will also be releasing Chrome as a Netbook-style operating system.

Security

Many colleges and universities offer free server space for backing up your important documents and a free subscription to anti-virus software for the duration of your time in school. However, there are also a number of free downloads for students who prefer to feel *very* secure.

- **Mozy** - Mozy offers secure online backup for important documents and schoolwork. You can store up to 2GB of data for free or get unlimited data storage for a small fee.
- **AVG AntiVirus** - This popular antivirus program is only available for Windows. It offers basic protection against viruses and spyware and scans files on demand. AVG also has rescue disks to help you recover from a major problem.
- **Zone Alarm** - This free firewall blocks hackers and keeps your system free of viruses and spyware by making your computer invisible to people on the Internet. It's also only available for Windows.
- **iAntivirus** - Although Mac viruses aren't as common, Apple users aren't invulnerable! Protect yourself with this free antivirus program for Macs made by the well-established PC Tools.

Software

Microsoft Office 365 for free: Although modern students may be a bit more accustomed to Google Docs, Microsoft aims to sway them with Office 365 Education at no charge. That version includes not only Word, Excel and PowerPoint, but also OneNote and Microsoft Teams (the latter potentially useful for organizing and executing group projects). All that's required is a valid school email address.

<https://www.cnet.com/how-to/the-best-cheap-and-free-perks-for-college-students/>

Paint.NET

A fantastic, feature-packed photo editor without the price tag

You don't have to be working on a design or photography course to need an image editing tool – they're incredible versatile pieces of software that can be used for screen grabbing, logo making, document scanning, photo retouching and so much more. As is so often the case, there is a bewildering choice in this software genre, and it can be near-impossible to find a free program that's powerful enough for demanding users. But Paint.NET is different.

Available for both PC and Mac, Paint.NET does great job of competing with the greats such as Paint Shop Pro – and even Photoshop – but remains delightfully accessible. From the offset, this is a powerful piece of software with a great range of tools for you to work with, but support for plugins – and there is a massive and growing selection available – means that it is possible to further extend the capabilities of an already incredible program.

<https://www.getpaint.net/>