



Rating

TOP TEN FREE WEB PRODUCTIVITY TOOLS

1 File sharing

■ www.getdropbox.com

■ A great way to share files between home and office without having to carry a laptop around or email documents to yourself. With Getdropbox you can store any files you want to access from different machines in a drop-box folder on your desktop. These are then stored and synced on the web for access via other devices including Macs and Linux-based machines. Particularly useful for netbook users.

2 Project management

■ <http://basecamp.com>

■ Basecamp allows teams to track and organise all aspects of a project in one place on the web, allowing colleagues to communicate, store messages, share files, and collect input from other team members or even clients. It is free for 30 days making it a very useful freebie for that one-off project.

3 Google apps

■ www.google.co.uk

■ Already one of the best known and most popular web resources. For those accustomed to the functionality of MS Office, Google Docs' spreadsheet and word processing apps probably still need some work however. (But check out Thinkfree – see no.9)

■ Google Calendar, Google Gadgets, and Google Desktop are great though. Google Calendar is a natty, easy to use calendar-sharing device, with each contributor colour coded for clarity. Google Desktop is a must for combining desktop and web searches, while Google Gadgets can be used to build up a useful dashboard of news or RSS feeds. Watch out for unapproved widgets though, as they can offer a superhighway for Trojan horses.

4 Wicked Wikis

■ www.wetpaint.com

■ Wikis have had their fair share of bad press but, used properly, there is no doubting the power and usefulness of an online reference source that allows users to add, tailor, and edit content collectively.

■ Wikis from wetpaint.com are quickly becoming a user favourite because they allow a wide range of content – text, digital images, digital videos, YouTube clips and web links – to be added. An oh so cute animated tutorial makes it all look terribly easy. And frankly, it is.

As a trade off, this freebie features “contextually relevant” though acceptably low-profile advertising.

iQO: A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte is by:

A: Franz Marc
B: Georges Seurat
C: Paul Cézanne
D: Frédéric Bazille



5 A USP for URLs

■ <http://tinyurl.com>

■ Sick of posting web URLs in emails only to have them break once sent, leaving recipients to while away the hours joining them back up again? Go to the TinyURL site and this simple app will invite you to enter your unwieldy URL in a text field, where it is then converted into a much shorter (indeed tiny) URL that won't break in emails and that never expires.

■ Also a great resource for creating shorter URLs for your own business's existing web pages.

6 Task management +

■ www.rememberthemilk.com/

■ The classic "To Do" list app and then some, Remember-The-Milk (RTM) really is task management with bells on.

■ Useable on or offline, it lets you create, edit, and manage multiple lists of tasks; to add task 'locations' via an integrated Google Maps facility; and to integrate jobs with services like Google Calendar and iGoogle (via which you can add, edit, postpone, and check items off).

■ RTM even makes you feel guilty by keeping a running total of the number of times a job has been put off or postponed!

■ Twitterers (who isn't these days?) can add the RTM Twitter account to their watch lists, to 'message' tasks to their lists (RTM can also send alerts to instant messaging accounts, email addresses, and mobiles via SMS), and for the true Web 2.0 convert, tasks can be organised by tags.

7 Making ends meet

■ www.dimdim.com

■ Dimdim is a great facility that allows you to host meetings of up to 20 people online, free.

■ Attendees can chat publicly or privately with other attendees, share presentations and other content and even their desktops, and link to the presenter or chair via video link. (All attendees can be liked up via video, but there is a charge for this).

■ There is also a useful recording facility and, unlike many similar alternative systems (even those for which you must pay) Dimdim doesn't require invitees to download anything.

8 Meebo cleans up

■ www.meebo.com

■ Desktop littered with instant messaging clients? Spring clean it with Meebo, an integrated instant messaging service that converges most clients on to a single page.

■ Compatible with IM networks including AIM, Yahoo!, MSN, Google Talk and Gmail, MySpace IM, Facebook

■ Chat, and more, Meebo brings it all together in one space with no downloads or installs needed – this freebie is supported by advertising inside the chats.

9 The Office

■ www.thinkfree.com

■ ThinkFree is an increasingly popular web-based productivity suite offering all the must-have features of Microsoft Office apps like Word and Excel via a familiar, easy to use interface.

■ A handy file-sharing device for MS Office users, Thinkfree's file extensions are all MS Office compatible, allowing you to download files to be worked on offline using Office applications and vice versa – as office-created documents can also be edited in ThinkFree online. It's also possible to email links to particular files rather than having to email the documents themselves, allow others to either view or co-author documents spreadsheets.

■ Thinkfree apps run on Windows, Mac, and Linux (and iPhone and iPod touch versions are available) and are provided with 1Gb of online document storage.

10 PDF Creator

■ <https://online.primopdf.com>

■ There are lots of good reasons for sending documents in PDF format, but stumping up for the full cost of Adobe isn't always a realistic or practical option for many low-end users.

■ So in security-sensitive situations where unalterable documents are preferable, or when you need the PDF format's cross-platform compatibility, or both, the online version of PrimoPDF – which does away with the need to download PDF converter software – can be an extremely useful option.

■ Just upload a file, enter your email address, and the PDF creator converts it to PDF and delivers it to your inbox. PrimoOnline can create PDFs from over 300 file types.