

GUIDE

Watermarks and free plans compared

Every AI video tool gates something on its free plan — a watermark, a clip limit, no commercial license or one-time credits. What the free tiers of five major tools actually give you, checked 2026-11-13.

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Free plans are the best way to learn an AI video tool, and the easiest place to get surprised. Vendors gate different things: some watermark the output, some cap clip length, some give one-time credits instead of a monthly allowance, and some reserve commercial use for paid plans. Here is what the free tiers of five major tools actually offered on their pricing pages, fetched 2026-11-13.

What each free plan gives you

Runway. The free plan is $0 and gives 125 one-time credits to explore the tools — not a monthly allowance. Once the credits are spent, you need a paid plan. Paid plans start at $15 a month ($12 billed annually) with 625 monthly credits; Pro is $35 a month ($28 billed annually) with 2,250.

Pika. The free plan is $0 with credit packs available and, per the pricing page's plan summary, no watermark. Paid plans start at $10 a month ($8 annually) with 600 monthly credits; the commercial license is listed on paid plans.

Luma. Individual plans start at $30 a month ($300 billed yearly) with 10,000 credits. The pricing page we fetched lists paid tiers; treat Luma as a paid-first tool for regular work.

HeyGen. The free plan gives 3 videos a month, watermarked, up to 1 minute each, with a selection of avatars and 30+ languages. Creator at $29 a month removes the branding limits; paid plans reach 175+ languages.

Synthesia. The Basic plan is $0 with 500 credits a month; videos carry a Synthesia watermark. Starter is $19 a month with 1,250 credits a month.

The four gates to check

1. **Watermark.** HeyGen and Synthesia watermark free output. A watermark on a client deliverable is usually fatal; on a test render it does not matter. Pika's free plan shows no watermark on its pricing summary.
2. **Clip length.** HeyGen's free videos cap at 1 minute. Generative tools often cap free clips at 5 to 10 seconds regardless of plan.
3. **Credit type.** Runway's 125 credits are one-time, not monthly — a free plan that expires after one afternoon of testing. Pika's free plan uses purchasable credit packs. Know which you are getting.
4. **Commercial use.** Pika's pricing page ties the commercial license to paid plans. HeyGen and Synthesia market their platforms at businesses, but the safe habit is to read each vendor's terms page for the exact clause on your plan.

A free-plan testing strategy

Free tiers are for learning the tool's grammar, not for production. A workable approach:

- Week one: make ten generations on the free plan. Learn what the prompts do and do not control.
- Week two: make the real project on the free plan, watermark and all, to see if the quality holds on your material.
- Decision point: if the output is good but gated, pick the cheapest paid plan that removes your specific gate — watermark removal, commercial license or clip length — not the biggest plan.

The trap is subscribing to the top tier before you know which limit actually matters. Start small, hit the real cap, then upgrade one step.

When free is genuinely enough

A free plan is enough when the videos are personal, internal or tests. It is not enough for client work, paid social ads or anything where a watermark or a missing commercial license creates liability. The commercial-use and copyright guide on this site covers the rights questions in more depth.

Frequently asked questions

Which free AI video plan lets me publish commercially?

It depends on the vendor. Pika's pricing page states paid plans include a commercial license and does not list one for free. HeyGen and Synthesia free plans watermark output. Read each vendor's terms before publishing.

Is a watermark-free free plan always better?

Only if the other limits fit. Pika's free plan has no watermark but uses credit packs; HeyGen's free plan is watermarked but gives 3 videos a month. Match the limits to your volume.

When should I stop using free plans?

When you need commercial rights, watermark-free output, longer clips or more than a handful of generations a month. At that point a $10 to $35 monthly plan is usually cheaper than the time spent fighting limits.

Sources

Runway pricing (fetched 2026-11-13) — https://runwayml.com/pricing
Pika pricing (fetched 2026-11-13) — https://pika.art/pricing
Luma pricing (fetched 2026-11-13) — https://lumalabs.ai/pricing
HeyGen pricing (fetched 2026-11-13) — https://www.heygen.com/pricing
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