

AI Tool Selection Checklist

For solo operators: make the cost, proof, and stop rule explicit before you start a trial.

1. Problem	What exact job will this tool do? Write the current workaround and the measurable outcome you want.	■ _____ ■ _____ _____
2. Cost ceiling	Record monthly price, annual price, usage/credit limits, renewal price, taxes, add-ons, domain/email/storage, and switching cost.	Max first 90 days: \$ _____ Renewal date: _____
3. Evidence	Save the current official pricing/terms URL and the date checked. Separate published facts from your own test results.	Source checked: _____ Date: _____
4. Test design	Run the same 3–5 representative tasks. Log time saved, quality failures, exports, limits, and manual cleanup.	Tasks: ■1 ■2 ■3 ■4 ■5 Result log saved: ■
5. Exit rule	Define the stop date and the failure condition before paying. Cancel if the tool misses the outcome or the cost ceiling.	Stop date: _____ Cancel if: _____

Quick decision gate

■ Does it solve a repeated problem, not a novelty task?	■ Can I name the buyer-paid value in one sentence?
■ Is the full cost known for 90 days, including limits and add-ons?	■ Do I have a fallback if the provider fails or changes terms?
■ Is there a dated test result rather than a feature list?	■ Is the next review/cancel date on my calendar?

Decision: ■ Test free ■ Pay for a bounded trial ■ Keep current workflow ■ Stop / cancel

Rule of thumb: no clear problem, no written cost ceiling, or no stop date = do not start the subscription. Re-check current vendor terms before paying.