What MCP Connectors Actually Cost

The connector is free. The room behind it is where the money goes. Twenty connectors, checked one by one, with the date on every row.

20 connectors, priced row by row
4 cost patterns — and how to tell which one you're looking at
5 traps, including the two that cost us money
Every row dated, and labelled with how we know

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The number on the pricing page is not the number on your card

Almost every MCP connector is free. That sentence is true, and it is also the reason people end up with a bill they did not plan for.

The connector is a doorway. What costs money is the room behind it — the plan of the product the connector reaches into, the metered operations it triggers, or the trial capacity it was built on before that capacity quietly shrank. This chapter covers twenty connectors. Three of them we pay for, or are about to: Canva Pro, Supermetrics, Windsor.ai. The other seventeen have never cost us anything, and most of them never will.

There are only four ways an MCP connector can cost you money. Learn to spot which one you're looking at, and the bill stops being a surprise.

The four cost patterns

Pattern 1 — Free, and it stays free

The connector rides on a product that is genuinely free for one person. Gmail, Google Drive, Google Calendar, Slack, Notion. You connect it, you use it, nothing happens to your card — ever.

The risk here is not financial. It's scope: these connectors touch your most personal data, and several support write access. That's Chapter 4's problem, not this one.

Pattern 2 — Free tier with a cliff

The connector is generous on day one and much smaller on day thirty-one. This is the pattern that catches people, because nothing breaks at signup — it breaks weeks later, when you've already built a workflow on capacity you no longer have.

Windsor.ai is the clearest example, and we watched it happen. The trial gives you ten data sources for thirty days. The permanent free plan that follows gives you **one**. We had four connected — GA4, Instagram, Pinterest and Facebook Ads — when the account flipped to Free overnight on 10 August 2026.

Nothing disconnected. All four sources were still listed as in use. Every query we sent still succeeded: no error, no exception, no warning field. What changed was the answer.

- **The numbers came back as zero.**
- **The date range was replaced rather than emptied.** Three different ways of asking for a month of history — a 30-day preset, a two-year preset, explicit start and end dates — each returned a single row, dated today.
- **The text fields contained an advertisement instead of a value.** Where a traffic source or a campaign name should have been, we got: "*Uh-oh! You've connected more accounts than your Free plan allows. Upgrade here...*"

That last one deserves a moment, because it is the part no pricing page prepares you for. An assistant reading that payload doesn't see a limit. It sees data. Ask it where your traffic came from and it will tell you, in a confident and grammatical sentence, that your top source is called "*Uh-oh! You've connected more accounts…*" and sent you zero visitors.

It is a threshold, not a proportion: at three sources against a one-source plan, the behaviour was identical to four. And at exactly one source, the very same query returned thirty days of real data, correctly labelled — direct, organic, referral, the lot. **The free plan works perfectly inside its fence. It simply doesn't tell you when you've stepped outside it.**

So the failure mode of Pattern 2 is not an invoice, and it isn't quite a broken workflow either — a broken workflow announces itself. It's a working workflow with wrong answers inside it.

Pattern 3 — Free connector, paid host

The MCP costs nothing. The plan you need in order to have anything for it to read costs plenty.

Supermetrics is the honest example: the connector is free, and the Starter plan we needed to keep using it is €59.78 per month with VAT. Canva is the softer version, and a harder one to pin down: the connector is free and works on the free plan, metered against a monthly AI-generation credit allowance that lives entirely inside Canva's own billing page — no tool the connector exposes can read it. We ran the same generate call across a plan downgrade, three days apart, and it kept succeeding, with the in-app tracker reading 30% used on the last check. That's not a limit we've found soft; it's a limit we haven't yet reached from the connector's side, on a meter the connector can't see.

The disguised version is worth naming, because it is the one that catches careful people. Perplexity's connector runs on the Sonar API, which is billed per use and entirely separate from a Perplexity subscription — paying $20 a month for Pro does not make the MCP free. Windsor's X Organic source does the same thing in reverse: it looks like one more source inside a plan you've already bought, and underneath it wants your own X developer credentials, which means X's pay-per-use meter. Neither vendor is hiding anything. But in both cases the connector sits inside a product you're already paying for, which is exactly why nobody thinks to check.

There is a third disguise, and HyperFrames is the specimen. The software underneath the connector is open source and free to run on your own machine; the MCP is a hosted product that spends credits from the vendor's plan. Same tool, two prices, and the free one is the one nobody mentions in the connector directory. When a connector wraps something that also exists as a download, ask what the hosted version is charging you for — sometimes it's convenience, which is worth paying for, and sometimes it's the only path anyone showed you.

When you evaluate a Pattern 3 connector, the question is never "what does the MCP cost." It's "what's the cheapest plan of this product that makes the MCP worth having."

Pattern 4 — Metered

You pay per unit, and the unit is invisible until it isn't. X's API is pay-per-use. Automation platforms — Zapier, Make — meter tasks or operations, and the meter moves every time a workflow runs, whether or not you were the one who triggered it.

Metered pricing is not bad pricing. It’s the only pattern where your bill is a function of how much you use it, which is fair. But it’s the only pattern where the bill can grow while you sleep, and that deserves a ceiling before it deserves your trust.

The table

Twenty connectors. Every row carries the date it was last checked, and how.

How to read the last column.

Tested — verified inside our own account, on that date.
Vendor — read on the vendor's own live pages on that date; not tested by us.
Vendor *(no date)* — documented and consistent with our testing; worth re-confirming when you read this.
Unverified — we have not checked it, and we are not going to pretend otherwise.

#	Connector	Pattern	What the free tier actually gives you	What it costs when free runs out	Checked
1	**Gmail**	1	Full connector access with a standard Google account	€0	Vendor
2	**Google Drive**	1	Full access; storage limits are Google's, not the connector's	€0	Vendor
3	**Google Calendar**	1	Full access with a standard account	€0	Vendor
4	**Slack**	1	Works on a free workspace	€0	Vendor
5	**Notion**	1	Works on the free personal plan	Team plan pricing Unverified	Vendor
6	**Canva**	3	Connector free; free plan caps AI generation credits per month, tracked only in Canva's own billing page — no MCP tool exposes it. Three `generate-design` calls across a plan downgrade (22→25 Aug) all succeeded at 30% tracker usage; ceiling behaviour itself not yet observed	Pro, €12/month	Tested 25 Aug 26
7	**Perplexity**	3 + 4	Nothing is free here. The connector runs on Perplexity's Sonar API, billed separately from any Perplexity subscription — a $20/month Pro account does not make the MCP free; it includes $5/month of API credit, and that is the whole overlap	Pay-per-use. Sonar tokens from $1/$1 per million, Sonar Pro at $3/$15, plus a per-request fee	Vendor 02 Aug 26
8	**Metricool**	1	Works on the free Metricool plan — your plan's own limits still apply after connecting. It's a custom connector, so on Claude Free it occupies your one custom-connector slot	€0 until you outgrow the free plan. Metricool prices per brand, from around $20/month	Vendor 02 Aug 26

#	Connector	Pattern	What the free tier actually gives you	What it costs when free runs out	Checked
9	**Higgsfield**	3 + 4	Connector free; new accounts get starter credits. The size of that allowance is a rotating promotion — we found three different published figures inside three months	Every generation spends credits, priced by model and resolution. Cheapest paid plan around $15/month	Vendor 02 Aug 26
10	**Zapier**	4	Free tier, task-limited per month Unverified	Per-task tiers Unverified	Unverified
11	**Make**	4	1,000 credits/month, 2 active scenarios, 15-minute minimum interval between runs. The MCP server itself is included on every plan, free included. Building and activating a scenario costs zero — the meter only moves on runs, at one credit per module minus one	Core $9/month billed annually, $10.59 billed monthly, for 10,000 credits. No overage billing below Enterprise: when the credits run out, scenarios stop	Tested 02 Aug 26
12	**Airtable**	2	Teams trial, then Free: 500 AI credits per seat/month, 1,000 records per base, 1GB attachments per base, 100 automation runs per month	Degrades without charge — no card event. Team plan $20 per seat/month	Tested 26 Jul 26
13	**Shopify**	3	Official connector, OAuth, no extra charge. Admin API access comes with a paid Shopify plan	The store plan you were already paying for. Shopify has no permanently free tier, so there is no version of this row where the connector is genuinely free	Vendor 02 Aug 26
14	**Stripe**	1 + 4	Account and connector free	Per-transaction fees on what you process	Vendor
15	**X**	4	**Not in Claude's connector directory** — custom connector required. And nothing is free: X discontinued the free API tier for new developers in February 2026	Pay-per-use, no monthly minimum: around $0.005 per post read, $0.015 per post published, and **$0.20 per post containing a link** after an April 2026 repricing. The legacy $200 Basic tier is closed and its subscribers were migrated	Vendor 02 Aug 26
16	**Instagram (via Windsor bridge)**	2	Inherits Windsor's trial: works during the 30 days	Inherits Windsor's cliff — see row 19. Measured on the day the plan flipped: the same silent zeroes, on the same account	Tested 10 Aug 26
17	**Kit**	3	**Not in Claude's directory** — custom connector; MCP available on the free plan	Free plan works; email sequences are paid	Tested 23 Jul 26

#	Connector	Pattern	What the free tier actually gives you	What it costs when free runs out	Checked
18	Supermetrics	3	Trial, then paid	Starter **$55/month ($44 billed annually)** — €59.78/month incl. VAT on our invoice. The plan buys **one core destination**, chosen from Looker Studio, Sheets, Excel, Power BI, Claude, ChatGPT or Copilot — ours wasn't Claude, so chat access returns `DESTINATION_NOT_ON_LICENSE`. A second destination costs **+$62/month (+$49 annual)**, up to two. Includes 3 data sources, 3 accounts per data source, 1 user, and **Data API & MCP access up to 50,000 rows/month**	Tested 22 Aug 26 · Vendor 22 Aug 26
19	Windsor.ai	2	30 days: 1 user, 10 data sources, 15 accounts, 5 destination tasks, 30-day history	Day 31: **1 data source, 1 account**. Over that limit the connector keeps answering — zeroes, a single row dated today, and an upgrade ad sitting inside the text fields. Coming back under the limit means deselecting accounts, and that move is **irreversible without paying** — the counter goes down but not up. Basic $23/month (€20.70 on our invoice), 3 sources, 75 accounts; $19/month billed annually	Tested 10 Aug 26
20	HyperFrames (HeyGen)	3 + 4	Connector free. HeyGen's Free plan gives 3 videos a month, one minute maximum, and no credit allowance — credits start at the Creator tier. The renderer itself is Apache 2.0 open source and runs locally with no credits at all; the MCP is the hosted version of it	Renders spend your HeyGen plan's credits, and the MCP returns an upgrade link when they run out. Creator $29/month ($24 annually) for 600 credits, Pro $49 for 1,000. **HeyGen's own credit table does not price a HyperFrames render** — it prices avatar video, translation and Video Agent, and stops there	Tested 27 Jul 26 · Vendor 07 Aug 26

Three things worth reading off this table before the traps.

Fourteen of twenty cost nothing to a single user. The scare stories about AI tooling bills do not describe this stack. Most of what makes Claude useful is free.

The ones that cost money are the ones that produce business data. Analytics, reporting, commerce, distribution. That's not a coincidence and it's not a scam — it's where the vendor's own costs are. Budget accordingly instead of hunting for a free alternative that doesn't exist.

One limit in this table comes from Claude, not from any vendor. Rows 8, 15 and 17 are custom connectors — servers you add by URL rather than pick from the directory — and a free Claude account can hold only one custom connector at a time. Three of these connectors are free on the vendor's side and still can't all run together for free. It's the kind of ceiling that no pricing page will ever mention, because it isn't on anyone's pricing page.

Five traps

1. The day-31 cliff

You build during a trial, you plan around trial capacity, and the plan quietly stops being possible a month later. What that looked like on our own account is in Pattern 2. Two things about it generalise.

The way down is one-way. Once we were over the limit, deselecting connected accounts to get back under it worked cleanly — nothing was revoked, and the account list stayed populated. Selecting them again did not work. The counter refused to climb, and the popup explaining why offered a subscription instead. So the person who discovers the problem on day thirty-one does not get to choose what to keep: they get to come down to one, and what they give up stays given up until they pay. If a choice is going to be forced on you, make it while it is still a choice.

A footnote on vocabulary, because it cost us a minute of genuine confusion: on the same screen, the popup called our account a *trial*, the plan badge called it *Free*, and the API called it *FREE*. Three names for one state. Trust the counter, not the label.

And day thirty-one is not a fixed date. It's a date the vendor can move.

Our Airtable trial ran out on schedule. The workspace dropped to the Free plan on its own — no warning, no charge, nothing broken, just a small grey badge where the plan name used to be. Then, the same day, an email offering to extend the trial by fourteen days. We declined, because we weren't using the features. But the mechanism is worth naming: the cliff you diarised is not necessarily the cliff you get, and an extension resets the date in your head without resetting the risk. A deadline you've mentally filed under "handled" is more dangerous than one you're still watching.

Note also what the Airtable downgrade cost us, which was nothing. Two small bases, well inside the Free ceiling, still there and still working. That is the honest shape of this trap: it hurts in proportion to what you built on top of it. Someone running live automations wakes up to stopped automations.

What to do: the day you connect anything with a trial, write the expiry date somewhere you'll see it — not in the tool, which will be the thing that stops working. If the vendor extends it, move the date; don't delete it. Then answer two questions in advance: *if this drops to the free tier tomorrow, what breaks*? And: *if I could keep only one thing, which one*?

2. The free connector on a paid product

Pattern 3 in practice. You read "MCP included at no additional cost," you connect it, and the actual price of the setup is the subscription you now need to keep.

What to do: price the cheapest plan that makes the connector useful, not the connector.

3. Metered platforms: the meter counts steps, not work

Every guide to automation pricing tells you the same thing — one credit per module, and loops multiply it. We built scenarios in Make and read the counter after each run, and the rule that actually held was narrower, and cheaper, than the folklore.

Three things we measured, on the free plan, in August 2026:

Building costs nothing. Designing a scenario and switching it on moved the counter by zero. You can spend a weekend assembling something elaborate without spending a credit. The meter starts when the thing runs.

A run costs one credit per module, minus one. A six-module scenario charged five. The final step — the one that hands the result back to Claude — was free. So the number to estimate is not "how many times will this run," it's "how many steps does it touch, times how often."

The size of the job did not move the meter. We pointed a scenario at five records expecting the loop to charge for each one. We wrote the expected number down before running it — sixteen — because a prediction made after the fact is not a prediction. The counter moved by five. The loop step itself charged once, no matter how many items passed through it.

That last finding has a boundary we did not test, and it matters: our scenario looped over data it already had. We have not measured what happens when the step *after* a loop makes a real external call, one API request per record, which is the case where the multiplication everyone warns about would actually appear. Treat "loops are free" as unproven. Treat "the meter counts module executions, not megabytes" as measured.

One naming trap while you're here: Make renamed its billing unit from *operations* to *credits* in August 2025. Most articles you'll find — including, until recently, one of ours — still say operations. The accounting is the same; the vocabulary isn't, and it makes older cost estimates hard to compare.

What to do: before pointing Claude at a metered platform, open the canvas settings and turn on the per-module credit display — in Make it's off by default, which is a strange default for a product that bills by the module. Then run one small task and read the counter afterwards. You are not checking whether it works. You are calibrating what a sentence costs.

4. Pay-per-use without a ceiling

The X API is the version of this most people meet first. Usage-based, no natural stopping point, no built-in "that's enough" — and, since February 2026, no free tier to practise on.

Read the rate card for the thing you actually intend to do, not the headline number. Publishing to X costs around a cent and a half a post, which sounds like nothing until you notice that a post containing a link costs $0.20 — thirteen times more, after a repricing in April 2026. If your automation exists to share links, and most creators' automations do, you are not on the number you think you're on.

Not every metered product behaves this way, and the difference is worth checking before you worry. Make sells no overage below its Enterprise tier: when the month's credits are gone, scenarios stop until the cycle resets. That's a hard stop, not a bill — annoying on a Tuesday morning, but it cannot surprise you at the end of the month. The API you need to cap is the one that will happily keep serving you past the number you had in mind.

What to do: set a spending cap in the vendor's dashboard before the first call. Not after the first bill.

5. Auto-recharge — the cost that isn't on any pricing page

This is the one we learned the expensive way, on our own account, in July 2026.

Credit-based billing systems frequently ship with auto-recharge **enabled by default and no cap set**. The balance never runs out, so nothing ever fails, so nothing ever tells you that consumption has changed. The mechanism designed to prevent an interruption is the same mechanism that prevents you from noticing.

What to do, before you connect anything metered: open billing settings, turn auto-recharge off, and set a hard monthly limit. If you'd rather leave auto-recharge on, set the cap anyway. Ten seconds of setup, and it's the single highest-value thing in this chapter.

The cost that isn't money

One row in this table cost us more than any of the paid ones, and none of it appeared on a card.

We connected HyperFrames on 27 July to see whether an assistant could produce a publishable short video from a conversation. Three renders, an hour and a quarter, and nothing we could put out. The connector worked. The account was free. The invoice was zero. What it consumed was the only budget we cannot top up, which is an evening.

This is not an argument against trying things — that evening produced an article, and this row. It is an argument for pricing the attempt before you make it. A connector that costs €0 and forty-five minutes of your attention, twice a week, is more expensive than a €12 subscription that saves you an hour. The four patterns in this chapter cover what leaves your bank account. They do not cover this, and there is no dashboard that will warn you about it.

What to do: give a new connector a fixed budget in minutes before you open it, the same way you would set a spending cap, and stop when you reach it. The tool will still be there next month, probably cheaper and definitely better documented.

Three stacks, three monthly bills

The solo creator — €0/month Gmail, Drive, Calendar, Notion, Slack, Canva Free. Everything Claude needs to draft, organise, schedule and file. The only reason to spend here is Canva Pro at €12/month, and only once you're hitting the AI generation ceiling often enough to notice.

The micro e-commerce operator — cost of the store, nothing more The above, plus Shopify and Stripe. Both connectors are free; you're already paying for the store, and Stripe takes its cut per transaction. No new subscription enters your life because of MCP.

The marketer who needs reporting — $23 to $55/month The above, plus one data layer. Windsor Basic at $23/month — €20.70 on our invoice, billed monthly — or $19/month if you commit annually, or Supermetrics Starter at $55/month — €59.78 on our invoice with VAT — or $44/month if you commit annually. We took the monthly price on purpose: the annual plan buys twelve months of certainty with a business that has zero months of revenue, and that trade only looks cheap. This is the point where "my AI setup is free" stops being true, and it's worth knowing in advance that the jump is caused by analytics, not by Claude.

The one rule

Before connecting anything, answer two questions:

1. Which of the four patterns is this?
2. What happens on day thirty-one?

If you can't answer the second one, you haven't finished evaluating the tool.

Where this chapter comes from

This is one chapter of **The Claude MCP Playbook**, which we are writing one chapter at a time and testing as we go. The rest of the book is the part a table can't carry: the decision tree for choosing between an MCP connector, a Claude Skill and neither; one comparable card per connector; four complete stacks built for a specific kind of business; a security chapter written from our own mistakes; and a changelog that moves when the MCP spec moves.

> **The waitlist is open at toolrevealed.com/mcp-playbook.** Founding price is $19 for the first twenty readers, $29 afterwards. One email when it's ready — that's the whole commitment.

How we work. No vendor sees or approves our guides before they go live, and this chapter contains no affiliate links. Where we say we tested something, there is a measurement behind it, taken on the date in the last column of the table. Where we haven't tested something, the row says so — row 10 is the one to look at if you want to check that the labels mean anything.

Prices change, and this document does not. Every row carries the date it was checked, which is the only honest way to publish a price list. If you are reading this months after August 2026, treat the dated rows as a starting point and the four patterns as the part that still holds.

Found something we got wrong? That is genuinely useful to us — contact@toolrevealed.com.