

Semrush vs Ahrefs

Software comparison report

A practical side-by-side comparison of pricing, free plans, strengths, limitations, and best-fit use cases. Data comes from the current WiseTechList tools database.

QUICK COMPARISON

At a glance

Compare	Semrush	Ahrefs
Starting price	\$117.33/mo billed annually	Starter \$29/mo; Lite \$129/mo
Free plan	No	Yes
Free trial	Yes	No
Difficulty	Medium	Medium
Best for	SEO, keyword research, competitor analysis, and content marketing.	SEO research, backlink analysis, keyword research, competitor analysis, and website auditing.
Last checked	Oct 2026	Oct 2026

KEY DIFFERENCES

Where each tool stands out

Semrush

Key strength: Very complete SEO and competitor research toolkit.

Main limitation: Can be expensive for small businesses.

Ahrefs

Key strength: Excellent backlink and competitor research with one of the largest web crawlers in the industry.

Main limitation: Full SEO plans are expensive for small websites and solo users.

USE CASES

What can you use them for?

Semrush

- Keyword research
- Competitor analysis
- Site audit
- Content research
- PPC competitor research

Ahrefs

- Keyword research
- Backlink analysis
- Competitor research
- Site audit
- Rank tracking

PROS AND CONS

Trade-offs to consider

Semrush

What we like

- + Strong keyword and competitor research
- + Very complete SEO toolkit
- + Useful site audit features
- + Good competitive intelligence data
- + Combines SEO, content, PPC, and market research tools

What to consider

- More expensive than many alternatives
- Can feel overwhelming for beginners
- Many advanced features are unnecessary for simple websites

Ahrefs

What we like

- + Excellent backlink database
- + Strong competitor research
- + Useful keyword research tools
- + Good site audit capabilities
- + Clear SEO data and reporting

What to consider

- Full plans are expensive
- Some advanced features have usage limits
- Can be more than a small website needs

BEST FIT

Who should choose each tool?

Semrush

Best fit: Choose Semrush if you need a complete SEO and competitor research platform and regularly work with keyword research, content, site audits, or digital marketing campaigns.

Skip it if: Skip Semrush if you only need basic SEO features or manage a very small website with a limited software budget.

Ahrefs

Best fit: Choose Ahrefs if competitor research, backlink analysis, and deep SEO data are important to your work.

Skip it if: Skip Ahrefs if you only need basic SEO monitoring or have a small software budget.