

# Why the cheap course platform plan is usually the expensive one

At 10,000 dollars a month in sales, Teachable's 29 dollar Starter plan nets you about 710 dollars less than its 69 dollar Builder plan, because of one fee the sticker price hides. Here is the math.

Published 2026-06-24 · A Mue guide

When you pick a course platform you compare the monthly plan prices. That is the wrong number. The one that decides your take-home is the per-sale transaction fee some cheap plans charge on top, and it flips the ranking the moment you have real sales.

## The setup

A 200 dollar course, 50 sales a month, so 10,000 dollars in gross sales. Card processing is the usual 2.9% plus 30 cents a transaction, which costs about 305 dollars here no matter which platform you choose. So the platform decision comes down to two lines: the monthly plan price, and any per-sale platform fee.

## The cheap plan that is not cheap

- Teachable Starter, 29 dollars a month, charges a 7.5% platform transaction fee. On 10,000 dollars that fee alone is 750 dollars. Take-home: about 8,916 dollars.
- Teachable Builder, 69 dollars a month, charges no platform fee. Take-home: about 9,626 dollars.
- The 69 dollar plan nets you about 710 dollars more than the 29 dollar plan, every month, because a 40 dollar price gap buys away a 750 dollar fee.

## Where the flip happens

The Starter plan only wins while your sales are tiny. The 7.5% fee overtakes the 40 dollar plan gap at just 533 dollars of gross sales a month. Above that, which is almost any course actually selling, the plan with no transaction fee is the cheaper one. The headline 29 dollars is a trap that springs the moment you succeed.

## The no-transaction-fee field

- Kajabi Kickstarter, 89 dollars a month, no platform fee: about 9,606 dollars take-home, and it bundles email, memberships and a community.
- Thinkific Start, 99 dollars a month, no platform fee: about 9,596 dollars take-home.
- Teachable Builder, 69 dollars: about 9,626 dollars. Within a few dollars of each other, so the choice becomes features, not fees.

## The point

Once you are past a few hundred dollars of monthly sales, a percentage transaction fee costs far more than a higher flat plan price, so compare take-home, not sticker price. The right plan is the cheapest one that still charges zero per-sale fee and has the features you need. Put your own price and volume in and read the take-home, because the crossover moves with both.

## Frequently asked questions

### Is the cheap course platform plan actually cheaper?

Usually not, once you have real sales. At 10,000 dollars a month, Teachable Starter (29 dollars, 7.5% platform fee) nets about 710 dollars less than Builder (69 dollars, no platform fee), because the 7.5% fee is about 750 dollars while the plan gap is only 40 dollars. The per-sale fee, not the monthly price, decides your take-home.

### What is a course platform transaction fee?

It is a per-sale cut some cheaper plans charge on top of normal card processing (about 2.9% plus 30 cents). For example Teachable Starter adds 7.5%, which on 10,000 dollars of sales is about 750 dollars a month; higher tiers like Builder drop it to zero. Card processing is roughly the same whichever platform you pick, so the platform fee is the line that moves your take-home.

### Is there a free alternative to Teachable?

Several platforms, including Teachable itself, offer a free or low-cost tier, but those tiers almost always carry the highest per-sale platform fee, which this breakdown shows is the line that actually decides your take-home once sales are real. A free plan can be the most expensive choice at volume. Use the calculator to compare each platform free and paid tier on your own sales numbers.

### Compare your own take-home across platforms

Free, no signup: [agent.mue.app/tools/course-platform-profit-calculator](https://agent.mue.app/tools/course-platform-profit-calculator)

[agent.mue.app/articles/course-platform-fees-cheap-plan-trap](https://agent.mue.app/articles/course-platform-fees-cheap-plan-trap)

