

MP4

Universal compatibility default

Best for: VOD downloads · uploads · single-bitrate files

Fatal flaw: Cannot stream live · no adaptive bitrate

Codecs: H.264 + AAC · H.265 + AAC · AV1 + Opus

fMP4 / CMAF

Streaming workhorse (2026 default)

Best for: All HLS + DASH · low-latency live (2–4 s)

Fatal flaw: Needs a packager and manifest — slightly more ops

Codecs: H.264 / H.265 / AV1 + AAC / Opus

MOV

Editing master / production

Best for: Final Cut · Avid · DaVinci · colour metadata

Fatal flaw: Not for delivery — re-encode to MP4 before shipping

Codecs: ProRes 422 / ProRes 4444 / DNxHR + PCM

MKV

Archive / personal library

Best for: Unlimited tracks · rich subtitles (SSA/SRT/PGS)

Fatal flaw: No native web playback · not fragmentable for ABR

Codecs: Any codec — H.265 / AV1 / FLAC common

WebM

Royalty-free web delivery

Best for: Chrome / Firefox / Edge / Safari 14.1+

Fatal flaw: Patchy hardware decode on older devices

Codecs: VP9 / AV1 + Opus (no H.264 / AAC)

MPEG-TS

Broadcast / IPTV / SRT ingest

Best for: Cable · satellite · contribution feeds · legacy HLS

Fatal flaw: 10–15 % packaging overhead vs fMP4

Codecs: H.264 / H.265 + AAC / AC-3

The 30-second rule

Editing → MOV. Archival → MKV. Live streaming → fMP4/CMAF.

VOD streaming → fMP4/CMAF. Download/upload → MP4. Broadcast/IPTV → MPEG-TS.

Royalty-free web bonus variant → WebM (VP9 or AV1 inside).