

# Multi-DRM Cost Cheat Sheet

The cost formula · 2026 price ranges · the two real levers · DRM-to-device coverage

## The monthly cost formula

licenses/mo = subscribers × watch\_hours × licenses\_per\_hour  
 variable cost = licenses/mo × price\_per\_license  
 monthly total = variable cost + platform\_fee + integration/12  
*Same per-license bill for 1 DRM or 3 — CENC serves all from one encryption.*

## Worked example — 500k subs

500,000 subs × 20 h × 1 license/h = 10M licenses/mo  
 10M × \$0.02 = \$200,000 per-license fees  
 + \$500 platform + \$2,500 integration (/12)  
 = ≈ \$203,000/mo · \$0.41 / subscriber / mo  
*Per-license line ≈ 98.5% of the bill.*

## The levers that move the bill

### Lever 1 — persistent licenses

Cache the key in the CDM so a binge session = 1 request, not 6. Cuts licenses/hour to ~0.3. The biggest single saving for VOD.

### Lever 2 — volume commit

Negotiated price drops from ~\$0.02 retail to ~\$0.008. At 10M req/mo that is ~\$120k/mo.

### Non-lever — DRM count

Shipping 1 DRM instead of 3 saves \$0. Same encryption serves all three via CENC. Dropping a DRM only removes an audience.

## 2026 managed-DRM price ranges

- **Per-license (retail)**  
\$0.01 – \$0.05 · mid-point \$0.02
- **Per-license (commit)**  
\$0.005 – \$0.01 with volume contract
- **Platform fee**  
\$100 – \$2,000 / month, flat
- **Integration (one-time)**  
3–6 weeks; full iOS/Tizen/webOS test pass

## DRM stack vs audience coverage

DRM stack	Reaches	Leaves out
<b>Widevine only</b>	Android, Chrome, Linux	<b>Apple + TV/Xbox</b>
<b>FairPlay only</b>	Apple iOS/macOS/tvOS	<b>Android + TV/Xbox</b>
<b>PlayReady only</b>	Tizen, webOS, Xbox	<b>Apple + Android</b>
<b>Widevine + FairPlay</b>	Web + mobile + Apple	<b>Smart TV / Xbox</b>
<b>All three</b>	Every household device	<b>Nobody</b>

## Device → DRM (each device forces one)

- **Widevine**  
Android, Chrome, Firefox, Linux, Android TV
- **FairPlay**  
iPhone, iPad, Mac Safari, Apple TV / tvOS
- **PlayReady**  
Tizen, webOS, Vidaa, Xbox, Edge-on-Windows