Interactive Video Player: Build-vs-Buy Checklist

A one-sitting decision aid for learning teams. Tick what is true — the more boxes you check in a section, the more it points that way.

A. Take playback from a library — never rebuild it

- [ ] Adaptive streaming (DASH/HLS) comes from Shaka or hls.js, not your code
- [ ] DRM playback uses the browser's EME — you never decrypt frames yourself
- [ ] Cross-browser playback quirks are absorbed by Video.js or Shaka
- [ ] Default fullscreen, volume, and seek controls come from the player

B. Build the interaction layer when

- [ ] Custom interaction types are your product's differentiator
- [ ] You need your own learning-data pipeline and warehouse
- [ ] Per-seat vendor pricing would cap your growth
- [ ] You require native xAPI delivered to your own Learning Record Store
- [ ] You need full control of overlay, branching, and resume logic

C. Buy a commercial SDK when

- [ ] Speed to launch matters more than owning the layer
- [ ] Standard quizzes, hotspots, and chapters are enough
- [ ] A monthly fee beats building and maintaining it yourself
- [ ] Bundled hosting, transcoding, and CDN is a real plus

D. Don't ship without

- [ ] Choosing the tracking standard (xAPI) before the player
- [ ] Confirming the player emits xAPI, not only quality-of-service metrics
- [ ] Debounced seeks and true completion computed from watched segments
- [ ] Keyboard-operable controls and captions (WCAG 2.1.1 & 1.2.2, Level A)
- [ ] Overlays inside the fullscreened container; tested on a real iPhone



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This checklist splits playback, which you take from a library, from the interaction layer you build or buy. Our seven-volume handbook covers the whole video stack; start with Volume 3 for players, ABR, subtitles and DRM, then Volume 1 for encoding and Volume 4 for audio and accessibility.

WHAT YOU WILL FIND INSIDE

- Players, ABR and stall recovery (Vol. 3)
- Captions and accessibility for audio (Vol. 4)
- Subtitles, DRM and trick play in the player (Vol. 3)

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Vol. 1 · Video Encoding — pixels and color to H.264, HEVC, AV1, quality metrics and AI

Vol. 2 · Video Streaming I — network transport, contribution and ingest, HLS, MPEG-DASH, CMAF

Vol. 3 · Video Streaming II — ABR, CDNs, players, WebRTC, DRM and the economics of delivery

Vol. 4 · Audio for Video I — PCM, codecs, loudness, accessibility, real-time voice processing

Vol. 5 · Audio for Video II — jitter buffers, lip sync, Atmos, quality metrics, neural codecs

Vol. 6 · AI for Video I — models and inference, computer vision, speech, search, generative video

Vol. 7 · AI for Video II — real-time pipelines, agents, serving, cost, compliance, verticals

Deciding whether to build your interactive player layer or buy an SDK?

We will compare build and buy for your interaction types, xAPI needs and seat count and give you a cost and timeline for each path. 250+ video products shipped since 2005.

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