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SCORM at a Glance

10 questions you've googled about SCORM courses

Introduction

Even though SCORM has been around for a while and is widely used in the eLearning world, we know it still raises a ton of questions, even for experienced course developers.

So we put together this no-fluff cheat sheet to help you get clear answers, from what SCORM actually is to how to publish a course and test it properly – all in one place.

If you find this guide helpful, feel free to share it with your team or post the link on social media – chances are, someone out there is looking for the same answers too. 😊

Quick Search

The four common eLearning formats

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There are four main standards you'll run into when working with online training content. Each was developed at a different time, with a specific purpose in mind – and each has its pros and cons depending on your goals.

01. **SCORM** (both 1.2 and 2004)

Developed in 2000, SCORM is still the most widely used standard in the industry. It allows eLearning courses to communicate with an LMS, tracking things like course completion, time spent, and quiz results.

- ☺️ Broad support across authoring tools and LMSs
- 😟 Tracks relatively basic learning activities and requires an LMS to function

02. **xAPI** (TinCan)

Introduced in 2013 as SCORM's modern successor, xAPI was designed to track learning experiences wherever they happen – inside or outside the LMS. It records learner activity using flexible statements and stores them in a Learning Record Store (LRS).

- ☺️ Ideal for mobile, offline, real-world, or immersive learning
- 😟 Requires additional infrastructure (LRS) and a clear data strategy

03. **cmi5**

Released in 2016, cmi5 builds on xAPI and fills the gap between SCORM's structure and xAPI's flexibility. It defines how xAPI content should behave when launched from an LMS – making it easier to implement than "pure" xAPI.

- ☺️ Combines LMS compatibility with advanced tracking
- 😟 Still relatively new; adoption is growing but not yet universal

04. AICC

One of the earliest standards, created in 1988 for airline industry training. AICC content communicates with LMSs via a simple protocol, but it lacks the depth and modern capabilities of newer formats. The standard is no longer maintained.

☺️ Sometimes still required for legacy systems

☹️ Technically outdated and increasingly unsupported

Learn more:

📕 SCORM vs. xAPI →

📕 SCORM vs. cmi5 →

📕 SCORM vs. AICC →

What is SCORM?

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SCORM (Sharable Content Object Reference Model) is a technical standard that allows eLearning content to communicate with a learning management system (LMS).

It defines how courses are packaged and launched, and how learner data (like progress, scores, and time spent) is tracked and reported. Developed in 2000, it replaced older standards like AICC and quickly became the industry default.

A SCORM course is typically exported as a .zip package that includes all the necessary files and metadata. Once uploaded to an LMS, the course runs in a browser and sends tracking data back to the LMS during the learner's session.

📕 SCORM 101: A complete guide for learning professionals →

SCORM 1.2 vs. 2004

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There are two SCORM versions still widely used today: SCORM 1.2 and SCORM 2004. While both allow LMSs to track learner progress, time, and scores, there are some important differences in how much control and detail each version offers.

What both versions can track

- **Lesson location** – lets learners resume where they left off
- **Lesson status** – whether the course is complete or passed
- **Session time and total time** – time spent in the course
- **Raw score** – the learner's final score
- **Mastery score** – the score required to pass

What's unique to SCORM 2004

- **Separate completion and success statuses.** Allows tracking when a course was completed but not passed (or vice versa).
- **Interaction tracking.** Captures how learners answered quiz questions and interacted with the course.
- **Sequencing and navigation rules.** Enables complex learning paths (e.g., blocking access to the final test until all lessons are completed).
- **Higher suspend data limit.** Stores more learner data (64,000 characters vs. 4,096 in SCORM 1.2).
- **Supports multiple SCOs (sharable content objects) per package.** Lets you include and manage several content items in one course.

SCORM 2004 vs. 1.2: What's Different and Why It Matters →

Testing a SCORM course

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Before uploading your course to a learning management system, test it to make sure everything works as expected – especially if you're sending it to a client or using a new authoring tool.

What to check

- ☐ **Does the course launch and complete properly?**
  It should open in the browser, track progress, and show «complete» when done.
- ☐ **Is learner data tracked correctly?**
  Test quiz scores, completion status, time tracking, and resume behavior.
- ☐ **Do interactions work as intended?**
  Check that quizzes, buttons, branching, and media behave as expected.
- ☐ **Are there any errors or missing files?**
  Look for broken links, unresponsive buttons, or media that doesn't load.

How to test it

- → **Use a SCORM testing tool like SCORM Cloud.** Upload your package, run it in different scenarios, and view detailed tracking data.
- → **Test in your actual LMS.** If you know which platform your learners will use, it's worth uploading and testing there too – behavior can vary slightly between LMSs.
- → **Check multiple browsers/devices.** Especially if your course includes video, interactions, or mobile support.

If something isn't working, start by checking your publishing settings in the authoring tool – many issues come from mismatched SCORM versions or settings like tracking preferences.

SCORM Testing Guide for Non-Techies →

Converting learning content to SCORM

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If you already have existing training materials – like presentations, documents, videos, or web content – you can convert them into SCORM packages that work with any SCORM-compliant LMS.

This allows you to keep using the content you've already created while adding tracking capabilities, learner progress data, and interactive elements.

Here are step-by-step guides on how to convert different content types into SCORM courses:

- Convert PowerPoint to SCORM →
- Convert Word to SCORM →
- Convert PDF to SCORM →
- Convert MP4 to SCORM →
- Convert HTML to SCORM →
- SCORM Wrapper: How to Turn PPT, Word, PDF, and MP4 Files into SCORM →

Creating a SCORM course

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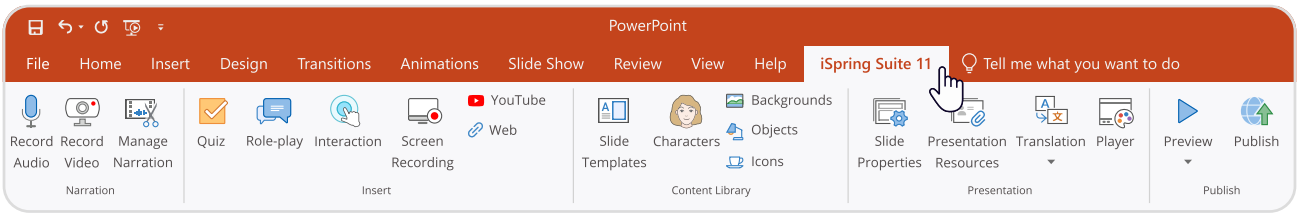
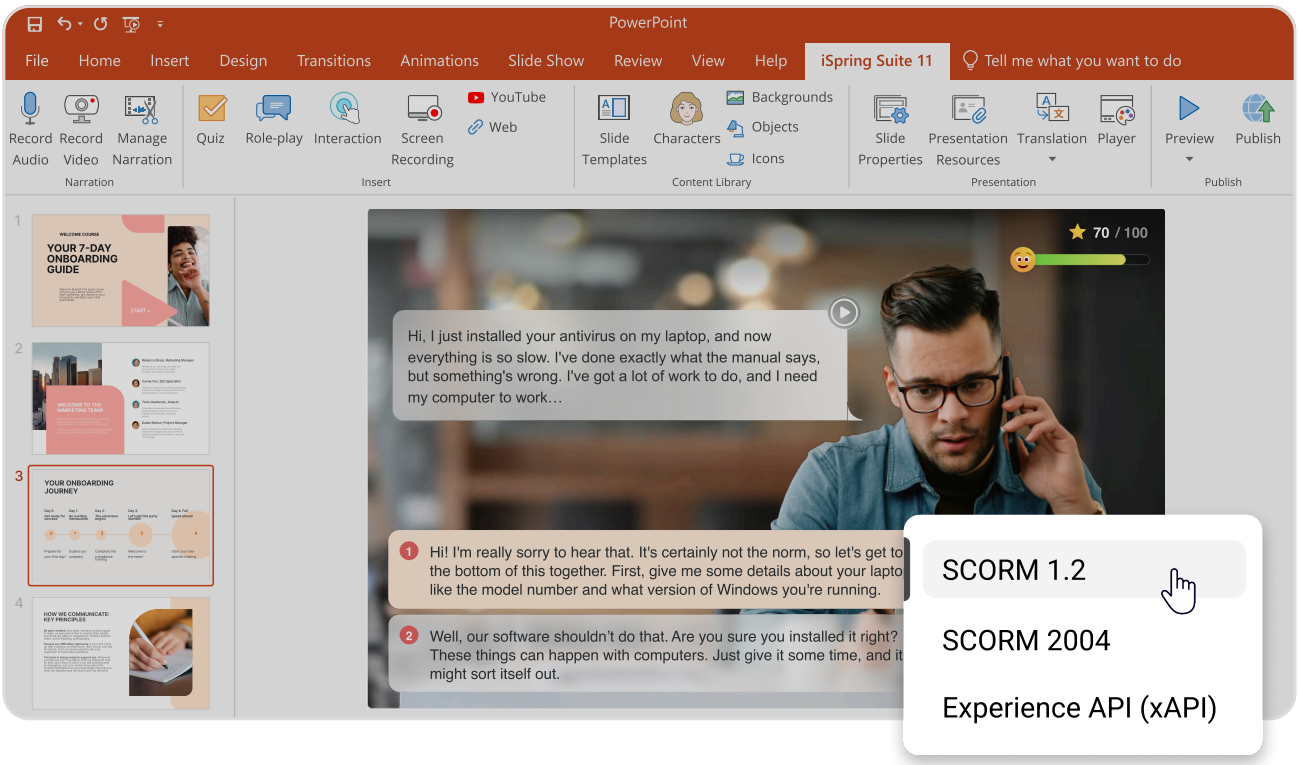
Creating a SCORM course from scratch may sound complex at first, but in practice, the process is straightforward and fast, especially when using intuitive authoring tools.

With **iSpring Suite**, for example, you can create a SCORM course in a matter of minutes or hours (depending on the complexity of your task). The tool works right in MS PowerPoint, making the creation process familiar and comfortable.



You can start from scratch or use any of your existing presentations – add interactivity and export it as a SCORM file with a single click.

iSpring Suite enables course designers to create dynamic and accessible learning experiences with branching scenarios, advanced quizzes, role-play simulations, video lectures, and beautiful design – the built-in content library includes thousands of course templates, backgrounds, characters, and more.



Check out our expert guides on creating SCORM content:

- How to Create a SCORM File from Course Content →
- The Best SCORM Authoring Tools for Awesome Courses →
- What You Need to Know about SCORM on Mobile Devices →

Publishing a SCORM course

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Once your course is built, the final step is to publish it as a SCORM package – this makes your content trackable and LMS-ready. Here's what to keep in mind:

01 **Choose your SCORM version** (1.2 or 2004) depending on your LMS and tracking needs.

02 **Set completion and tracking rules.** Decide how the LMS will mark the course as «complete» – for example, when a learner finishes all slides or passes a quiz.

03 **Export as a .zip package.** This zip file contains everything your LMS needs to launch and track the course.

You can host SCORM packages in any SCORM-compliant LMS – or, if you're not using an LMS, you can use a SCORM player or SCORM hosting platform.

SCORM Hosting: How to Host SCORM Content →

The Best SCORM Players for eLearning Professionals →

SCORM players let you run and preview your course without a full LMS setup, which is useful for testing or delivering lightweight training.

How to export and edit a SCORM course

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Let’s say you’ve already uploaded a SCORM course to your LMS. Everything’s live, learners have started going through it – and then someone spots a typo. Or asks for an updated slide. Or you need to tweak the quiz scoring.

The thing is, you can’t edit a SCORM package directly in the LMS. Once a SCORM course is uploaded to an LMS, it's treated as a finished .zip package. Most platforms don’t let you open or change the contents from within the LMS interface.

Here’s what you can do:

- **Go back to the source file.** Open the original course in your authoring tool (like iSpring Suite or Storyline).
- **Make the necessary changes.** Fix the content, update quizzes, replace media – whatever needs to be updated.
- **Republish the course.** Export it again as a new SCORM package (.zip file).
- **Reupload it to the LMS.** In most LMSs, you can either replace the existing course or upload it as a new version (check whether your LMS supports version control or if learners will lose progress).

💡 Always keep your source files backed up, versioned, and stored in a shared location (e.g., a team drive or content repository). Think of your SCORM export as the final product – not the editable working file.

What does SCORM-compliant mean?

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When you hear that a course, tool, or platform is SCORM-compliant, it simply means that it follows the SCORM standard – so it can send and receive learner data in a way that other SCORM-compatible systems understand.

In practice, there are two main types of SCORM compliance:

SCORM-compliant authoring tools

These tools let you create content that packages everything correctly into a SCORM file (.zip). That includes tracking data like score, completion, and time spent.

Examples: iSpring Suite, Articulate Storyline, Adobe Captivate

SCORM-compliant LMSs

These platforms can receive SCORM packages, launch the courses, and track learner data according to SCORM rules.

Examples: iSpring Learn, Moodle, Docebo, TalentLMS

📕 SCORM-Compliant Explained: A Beginner's Guide →

📕 What's the Best SCORM-Compliant LMS? →

Is SCORM still relevant today?

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Despite being over two decades old, it remains the most widely used eLearning standard in corporate L&D. Recent data shows that SCORM still powers the vast majority of online training:

- According to Rustici Software, SCORM 1.2 and 2004 account for nearly 75% of all course launches across platforms they track.
- SCORM packages are launched millions of times each month – far more than newer standards like xAPI or cmi5. SCORM is stable, well-supported, and simply does the job.

It tracks all the essentials like completion, scores, and time spent, and it's supported by almost every LMS and authoring tool. For most organizations, it's the path of least resistance when creating, sharing, and updating learning content.

Many experts call SCORM a «workhorse» – not flashy, but dependable. It continues to meet the needs of compliance training, onboarding, and structured eLearning in thousands of companies around the world.

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