ENGINEERING SOFTWARE TRIALS

Simulation Software Trial Scorecard

A practical worksheet for evaluating CAE, FEA, CFD and multiphysics software before you buy.

Vendor / Product:		**Version:**	
Evaluator:		**Date:**	
Primary use case:		**Trial length:**	

How to use this scorecard

Score each item from **1 (poor)** to **5 (excellent)**. Keep **trial friendliness** separate from **technical fit**: difficult licensing does not make a solver technically weak, and an easy free trial does not make the software right for your engineering work.

A. Trial & Evaluation Experience

Criterion	What to judge	1	2	3	4	5	Notes
Trial accessibility	How easily can you get meaningful hands-on access? Consider sales gates, installation, license servers and approval steps.						
Trial usefulness	Can you test real workflows, realistic model sizes and production-relevant solvers, or is access heavily restricted?						
Learning access	Quality and availability of tutorials, student editions, workshops, sample models and documentation.						
Pricing transparency	Can you understand likely production cost early enough to avoid wasting engineering evaluation time?						
Product clarity	Is it obvious which product, module, role, solver or package you actually need?						
Evaluation investment risk	How confident are you that the product, licensing model and workflow you are learning will remain the one you purchase and use?						

Trial Experience subtotal: _____ / 30

Before the clock starts

[ ] Trial duration confirmed	[ ] Required modules/solvers included	[ ] Commercial price requested
[ ] Proprietary-data rules understood	[ ] Compute/HPC limits understood	[ ] Roadmap / acquisition questions asked

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Technical Fit Evaluation

Use your own representative engineering problem whenever possible. Tutorial models are useful for learning, but they are poor substitutes for validating production fit.

Criterion	What to judge	1	2	3	4	5	Notes
Geometry / CAD import	Import fidelity, assemblies, cleanup, defeaturing, revision handling and supported formats.						
Meshing / discretization	Automation, controls, quality, refinement effort and ability to handle difficult geometry.						
Physics & solver fit	Does the software support the physics, material models, nonlinearities and coupling your work requires?						
Setup & usability	Boundary conditions, contacts, materials, solver settings, diagnostics and overall learning curve.						
Accuracy / validation	Agreement with test data, analytical solutions, benchmarks or previously validated simulations.						
Convergence / robustness	Ability to solve difficult real-world models without excessive manual tuning or hidden assumptions.						
Performance / scalability	Solve time, memory, parallelism, cloud/HPC scaling, queueing and ability to run design variants.						
Post-processing	Clarity of plots, animation, reporting, result comparison and communication to non-specialists.						
Automation / optimization	Scripting, parameter studies, DOE, optimization, reusable workflows and AI assistance where relevant.						
Workflow integration	CAD/PLM connections, co-simulation, APIs, data exchange and fit with existing engineering tools.						
Collaboration / data	Sharing, versioning, model management, access control, cloud security and export/archive options.						
Support / documentation	Documentation quality, support responsiveness, training, communities and availability of expert help.						

Technical Fit subtotal: _____ / 60

Validation record

Reference used	Expected / known result	Trial result	Acceptable?
			[ ] Yes [ ] No
			[ ] Yes [ ] No
			[ ] Yes [ ] No

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Commercial Fit & Final Decision

A technically successful trial can still fail commercially. Capture the licensing, deployment and roadmap conditions required to reproduce what worked.

Criterion	What to judge	1	2	3	4	5	Notes
License flexibility	Named user, floating, token, consumption, term/perpetual and ability to support occasional specialists.						
Production configuration	Can the exact solvers/modules/features used in the trial be purchased without unwanted extras?						
Total cost visibility	Subscription/license cost plus HPC, cloud consumption, storage, implementation, training and support.						
Deployment fit	Workstation, on-prem HPC, cloud, hybrid, browser access and IT/security requirements.						
Roadmap confidence	Acquisition, rebranding, platform migration, overlapping products and likelihood of forced workflow change.						
Vendor support fit	Quality of technical sales, support, onboarding, account coverage and ability to answer roadmap questions.						

Commercial Fit subtotal: _____ / 30

Overall Score

Score	Maximum	Your score
Trial & Evaluation Experience	30	
Technical Fit	60	
Commercial Fit	30	
TOTAL	**120**	

100-120	Strong candidate - proceed if validation and commercial terms hold up.
80-99	Promising, but resolve weaknesses before standardizing or purchasing.
60-79	Mixed fit - compare carefully with alternatives or negotiate around gaps.
Below 60	Weak overall fit unless one specialized capability clearly outweighs the drawbacks.

Decision

[ ] Recommend purchase	[ ] Continue evaluation	[ ] Compare another vendor	[ ] Do not proceed
Top strength:			
Biggest concern:			
Question still unanswered:			

Candidate Comparison

Compare up to four simulation products after completing an individual scorecard for each.

Quick comparison - up to four candidates

Measure	Vendor 1	Vendor 2	Vendor 3	Vendor 4
Trial Experience /30				
Technical Fit /60				
Commercial Fit /30				
Total /120				
Best differentiator				
Deal-breaker / risk				

Tip: Never let the total score override a failed validation test, a security requirement, or a true engineering deal-breaker. The score helps structure judgment; it does not replace it.