INSIDE STLC

AUTOMATION DECISION CHECKLIST 2026

Before you write a Playwright test, answer two questions: How often will this check run - and how painful is failure?

1. FREQUENCY

High: runs every sprint, regression, release or daily pipeline.
Low: one-off, exploratory, rare or rapidly changing.

2. RISK / PAIN

High: failure blocks revenue, access, core workflows, compliance or critical data.
Low: cosmetic, low-impact or easily spotted manually.

	LOW RISK	HIGH RISK
HIGH FREQUENCY	**SELECTIVE AUTOMATION** Automate only if it saves meaningful time and is stable. Keep the suite lean.	**AUTOMATE HERE** Best candidates: critical journeys that repeat often and give fast, valuable feedback.
LOW FREQUENCY	**KEEP MANUAL** Usually not worth automation cost. Explore or check when needed.	**INVESTIGATE FIRST** High impact, but infrequent. Consider targeted automation, monitoring or a manual release check.

GOOD FIRST PLAYWRIGHT CANDIDATES

- Login / authentication
- Checkout / payment path
- Account creation
- Critical permissions / access
- Core CRUD journey
- Stable regression checks run repeatedly

USUALLY KEEP MANUAL / EXPLORE

- One-off exploratory ideas
- Rapidly changing prototypes
- Visual nuance / subjective UX
- Low-risk copy or cosmetic checks
- Rare edge cases with high setup cost
- Anything cheaper to check manually than maintain

BEFORE YOU AUTOMATE, CHECK: [ ] Repeats often [ ] Failure matters [ ] Behaviour is reasonably stable [ ] Expected result is clear [ ] Test can run independently [ ] Automation will save more time than it costs to maintain

LEARN PLAYWRIGHT IN THIS ORDER
1 test -> make it stable -> add a few valuable journeys -> feel the duplication/maintenance pain -> then introduce Page Objects, data, Git and CI/CD.

THE RULE
Do not automate because you can.

Automate because the feedback is valuable.

Use this as a decision aid, not a rigid rule. Context, regulatory needs, observability, testability and team economics can change the right automation choice.