

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

How Assistive Listening Apps Are Changing Accessibility for the Deaf Community

Our Friends · Monday, February 10th, 2025

Technology has made communication easier for everyone, but for the deaf and hard of hearing, it's been life-changing. The days of relying only on hearing aids or written notes are long gone.

Now, mobile apps are stepping in to bridge the gap. These apps do more than just amplify sound—they turn speech into text, connect users to sign language interpreters, and even help with phone calls. With so many options, it's worth exploring how they're making everyday life more accessible.

Speech-to-Text Apps: Real-Time Conversations Without Barriers

Talking to someone in a noisy place is tough for everyone, but it's even harder for those with hearing loss. Real-time transcription **apps fix that problem.**

They listen to spoken words and turn them into text on a screen. This makes conversations smoother, whether it's a casual chat with a friend or an important work meeting.

Apps for hearing impaired like Nagish and Live Transcribe are great examples. Ava creates live subtitles for group conversations, so users can keep up without asking people to repeat themselves.

Live Transcribe, built by Google, does something similar but also lets users type back responses. It even works offline, which helps in places with poor internet. These apps aren't perfect, though. Background noise and strong accents can sometimes lead to mistakes.

But for most people, the accuracy is good enough to follow along. Many apps also learn over time, getting better at understanding specific voices. For someone who struggles with lip reading or prefers reading over listening, these tools are game changers.

Amplification and Noise Reduction: Turning Phones into Hearing Devices

Not everyone with hearing loss wants or needs hearing aids. Some just need a little help in certain situations, like understanding a lecture or watching TV. That's where sound amplification apps come in. They use a phone's microphone to pick up sounds, boost the volume, and reduce

background noise.

Petralex and Sound Amplifier are two solid choices. Petralex works like a customizable hearing aid, adjusting sounds based on individual needs. It can amplify quiet voices or make speech clearer in noisy places. Sound Amplifier, another app from Google, does something similar by filtering out unwanted sounds. These apps work best with headphones, so they're great for one-on-one conversations or watching TV. They're not perfect replacements for hearing aids, but they're a cheaper and more flexible option. Some even allow users to fine-tune frequencies, making it easier to hear high-pitched voices or specific tones.

Sign Language and Video Interpretation: Breaking Down Language Barriers

Sign language is the primary way many deaf **individuals communicate**, but not everyone understands it. This creates problems in everyday situations like doctor's visits, job interviews, or customer service calls. Video interpretation apps solve this by connecting users to live sign language interpreters in seconds.

Rogervoice and Convo are two of the best options. Rogervoice is designed for phone calls. It automatically transcribes what the other person says and lets the user type or sign back. Convo takes it a step further, offering real-time video interpretation with human interpreters. This makes it possible for deaf individuals to handle phone calls without needing a friend or family member to help.

Some newer apps are even using AI to recognize sign language through a phone camera. This technology is still developing, but it has huge potential. Imagine an app that could translate sign language into text in real time, making it easier for deaf users to communicate with those who don't sign. While this isn't fully reliable yet, it's a glimpse into what the future holds.

Captioning for Calls and Video Meetings: Making Work and Socializing Easier

Phone calls and video meetings are some of the biggest challenges for those with hearing loss. Audio quality varies, people talk over each other, and there's no way to lip-read. Captioning apps help by transcribing conversations in real time, making calls and meetings more accessible. CaptionCall and InnoCaption are two popular choices. CaptionCall provides real-time captions for phone conversations, making it easier for users to follow along.

InnoCaption does the same but adds AI and **human-assisted captions** for better accuracy. It works with video calls too, so it's useful for remote work and online classes. Some video conferencing apps, like Zoom and Microsoft Teams, now have built-in live captioning. These aren't always perfect, but they're improving

The best part is that they remove the stress of missing important details. Whether it's a work meeting, an online class, or a casual chat with friends, these tools make conversations smoother.

Challenges and the Future of Assistive Listening Apps

Even with all these advancements, assistive listening apps still have room to grow. One big

challenge is accuracy. Speech-to-text apps can struggle with fast talkers, heavy accents, or technical jargon. Sign language recognition is still in its early stages, and not all services are available worldwide.

Another issue is privacy. Many of these apps rely on cloud processing, which means conversations get stored temporarily on servers. Some users worry about sensitive information being recorded. Companies are working on better security features, but it's something to keep in mind when choosing an app. Despite these challenges, the future looks promising. AI is improving at recognizing speech and sign language, and developers are finding ways to reduce background noise more effectively.

Some companies are even experimenting with augmented reality (AR) to display live captions in a user's field of vision. Imagine wearing smart glasses that show subtitles in real time—this could make communication even more seamless.

Final Thoughts

Apps for hearing impaired individuals are making a huge difference in accessibility. Whether it's transcribing speech, amplifying sound, or connecting users to interpreters, these tools are changing how people interact with the world. They aren't perfect, but they're getting better every day. As technology improves, expect even more innovative solutions that make communication easier for everyone.

Photo by Christian Wiediger via Unsplash

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Buy Bitcoin Cash With a Credit Card: Fast and Safe BCH Transactions

Our Friends · Monday, February 10th, 2025

Buying Bitcoin Cash (BCH) with a credit card offers a fast and secure way to enter the crypto market. This guide explains the benefits, steps, and key considerations for using a credit card to purchase BCH. Learn how to choose a reliable platform, manage fees, and ensure safe transactions.

Why Buy Bitcoin Cash (BCH) With a Credit Card?

Purchasing BCH with a credit card offers several benefits. Transactions are processed instantly, allowing buyers to receive their BCH within minutes. Credit cards provide easy access to cryptocurrency without requiring a bank transfer, making the process more convenient. Security is

another key advantage, as credit cards come with fraud protection and encryption to safeguard transactions.

Additionally, many exchanges worldwide, including [Kyrrex](#), support credit card payments, ensuring accessibility for users across different regions. This makes using a credit card a fast, secure, and efficient way to buy Bitcoin Cash.

Choosing a Reliable Platform for BCH Purchases

Selecting a trustworthy exchange ensures a smooth and safe transaction. Key factors to consider include:

- **Security** – Look for platforms with two-factor authentication and encryption.
- **Regulatory Compliance** – Choose licensed and regulated exchanges.
- **Transaction Fees** – Compare charges to avoid excessive costs.
- **Customer Support** – Ensure the platform offers reliable assistance.

Popular platforms for buying BCH with a credit card include Binance, Coinbase, and Kraken.

Step-by-Step Guide to Buying BCH With a Credit Card

Follow these steps to purchase BCH securely:

1. **Choose a Trusted Exchange** – Register on a reputable platform.
2. **Complete Identity Verification** – Submit ID for KYC compliance.
3. **Select Payment Method** – Add your credit card details.
4. **Enter Purchase Amount** – Specify how much BCH you want to buy.
5. **Confirm and Pay** – Review details and complete the transaction.
6. **Receive BCH** – Funds are transferred to your wallet instantly.

Most platforms provide a simple, user-friendly interface for quick transactions.

Fees and Limits When Using a Credit Card for BCH

Credit card purchases involve various fees and restrictions:

- **Exchange Fees** – Typically range from 2% to 5%.
- **Credit Card Surcharges** – Some issuers charge additional processing fees.
- **Transaction Limits** – Daily and monthly purchase limits apply.
- **Currency Conversion Fees** – Extra charges if buying in a different currency.

Check platform policies to understand the total cost before proceeding.

Buying Bitcoin Cash with a credit card is a fast and convenient way to enter the crypto market. Choosing a secure platform, understanding fees, and following safety measures will help you complete transactions smoothly. Store your BCH in a secure wallet to protect your investment and enjoy hassle-free crypto trading.

Photo at top: [Aleksi Räisä via Unsplash](#)

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Which Foods Contain Probiotics?

Our Friends · Monday, February 10th, 2025

Probiotics are billions of tiny, invisible superheroes working tirelessly to keep your gut healthy and your immune system in top-notch condition. Probiotics have many benefits, and the good news is that they're available in a wide range of foods.

Probiotics play a crucial role in gut health and overall well-being. But why should they matter to women in particular? This guide explores [probiotics for women](#) and their unique health and wellness benefits.

What Are Probiotics?

Probiotics are live bacteria and yeasts that are good for your health, especially your digestive system. These friendly microbes help maintain a healthy balance of gut bacteria, supporting digestion and boosting your immune system. With various strains available, each with its own benefits, probiotics truly are the superheroes of the microbial world.

Yogurt: Creamy Cultured Goodness

Yogurt is the classic probiotic superstar! This creamy delight is made by fermenting milk with different bacteria strains, creating a rich source of beneficial probiotics like [Lactobacillus](#) and Bifidobacterium. With a smooth texture and tangy flavor, yogurt is a delicious snack and promotes gut health by enhancing digestion and supporting the immune system.

Kefir: The Versatile Fermented Drink

Kefir is another probiotic powerhouse, a fermented drink made from kefir grains and milk. Packed with multiple strains of bacteria and yeast, kefir boasts a tangy taste and creamy consistency. This bubbly beverage adds a refreshing twist to your day and provides essential probiotics that aid in maintaining a healthy gut microbiome.

Sauerkraut: German Tangy Crunch

Sauerkraut is a traditional German delight, a type of fermented cabbage that offers a crisp and tangy flavor profile. Fermentation transforms cabbage into a probiotic-rich dish brimming with Lactobacillus bacteria. A spoonful of sauerkraut supports gut health by fostering a diverse and healthy gut flora.

Kimchi: Spicy Korean Fermentation

Hailing from Korea, kimchi is a spicy fermented cabbage dish that steals the show as a probiotic-rich food. Bursting with flavors from garlic, ginger, and chili peppers, kimchi undergoes fermentation, yielding a pungent and tangy condiment. With its potential to enhance digestion and immune function, kimchi is a delicious and beneficial addition to your diet.

Miso: Umami Fermented Paste

A Japanese staple, miso is a fermented paste made from soybeans, salt, and a koji starter. This probiotic-rich ingredient boasts a deep umami flavor and a velvety texture, making it a versatile addition to soups, marinades, and dressings. Packed with probiotics such as *Lactobacillus*, miso enhances the taste of dishes and contributes to a healthy gut environment.

Kombucha: Fizzy Fermented Tea

Kombucha, a fizzy fermented tea, has gained popularity for its refreshing taste and health benefits. Made by fermenting sweetened tea with a symbiotic culture of bacteria and yeast (SCOBY), kombucha offers a tangy, effervescent drink filled with probiotics. Sip on kombucha to enjoy a bubbly treat that aids digestion, boosts energy, and provides a probiotic punch.

Apple Cider Vinegar: Tangy Gut-Boosting Elixir

[Apple cider vinegar](#), a pantry favorite, isn't just for salad dressings—it also serves as a probiotic-rich elixir. Made by fermenting crushed apples, it contains acetic acid and other beneficial compounds that support gut health.

Incorporating a splash of apple cider vinegar into your meals can add a tangy flavor. It also promotes optimal digestion and healthy gut flora.

Sourdough Bread: Fermented Bread Bliss

Sourdough bread undergoes a fermentation process that makes it a probiotic-rich choice. Sourdough bread develops its distinct tangy flavor and airy texture by employing wild yeast and beneficial bacteria during fermentation.

Indulge in a slice of sourdough bread, relishing its unique flavor while reaping the benefits of a probiotic-rich choice. This fermented delight offers a potential boost to digestion and supports a healthy gut microbiome. By incorporating sourdough into your diet, you can enjoy its taste and the nourishing impact it may have on your digestive health.

Embrace the Power of Probiotics!

From fermented favorites to vibrant fruits, vegetables, and even the convenience of probiotic supplements, there are countless ways to introduce these beneficial bacteria into your diet. Whether you're looking to improve digestion, strengthen your immune system, or simply boost overall health, probiotics offer a natural and delicious solution.

When you explore the diverse range of foods containing probiotics, you'll journey towards a healthier gut and a happier, healthier you. It all starts with the next delicious bite.

Photo at top: Nina Firsova via Canva

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Sondheim is Bourne Again: Matthew Bourne on Directing *Stephen Sondheim's Old Friends*

Ann Haskins · Saturday, February 8th, 2025

Headlined by Bernadette Peters, Lea Salonga, and a line up of British and American musical theater luminaries, the U.S. premiere of *Stephen Sondheim's Old Friends* is at the Music Center's Ahmanson Theatre, now through March 9 before going to Broadway.

After Sondheim's death in November 2021, producer Cameron Mackintosh recruited director/choreographer **Matthew Bourne** and gathered a cast of the composer/lyricist's close friends, who just happened to be stars of Broadway and London theater. The result was a one-night only, sold out gala and memorial tribute.

But once was not enough. With almost all of the original cast intact, the show had an extended London run, again directed by Bourne. Now Mackintosh and Bourne bring *Stephen Sondheim's Old Friends* to LA, again with an assemblage of 14 Broadway and West End names whose friendships and long work relationships with Sondheim lend an extra level of emotion and knowledge to the show. With a multitude of his dance theater productions having their U.S. premieres at the Ahmanson, Bourne's long and storied relationship with CTG may have helped nab the show for its U.S. premiere.



The company of Stephen Sondheim's *Old Friends*. Photo by Danny Kaan

Writer Ann Haskins recently spoke with Matthew Bourne about the one night gala that won't stop. The interview has been edited for clarity.

Haskins: My understanding is your ties with Center Theater Group and the Ahmanson go back to 1995, when CTG's artistic director Gordon Davison saw your ground-breaking *Swan Lake* in London and in 1997 brought your company to the Ahmanson. Since then, the Ahmanson has presented the U.S. premiere of your new works, and now *Stephen Sondheim's Old Friends*. It seems a special relationship.

Bourne: It is. 1997 was the first tour date we had anywhere outside of the UK. We've been coming ever since with my own company's dance shows as well as the musicals *Mary Poppins* and *My Fair Lady*. Choosing us in 1997 was taking a risk, actually a big risk, to put on a dance piece in a theater subscription season. We did New York a couple of years later with *Swan Lake* and other shows, yet the relationship has always been stronger with LA.



Matthew Bourne. Photo by Hugo Glendinning

Haskins: Why?

Bourne: The audience here has become educated in the sort of stuff that I do to the point where, rather than it being a problem that it's different, it is what they want. They know if it's *Cinderella*, or *Sleeping Beauty*, it's not going to be straightforward. They're not like, 'Oh, this isn't what I was expecting.' They want it to be different. The trust of an audience is an amazing thing to have. LA feels like my home in the US, definitely.



Matthew Bourne, Julia McKenzie and Cameron Mackintosh. Photo courtesy of the artists

Haskins: *Stephen Sondheim's Old Friends* is rooted in conversations that Cameron Mackintosh and Julia McKenzie had with Sondheim before he died. Mackintosh had produced prior Sondheim revues and while Americans know McKenzie as Agatha Christie's *Miss Marple* in the BBC series, she has a long career in original Sondheim casts and directing his shows. After Sondheim's death, how did those discussions take life as a show and at what point did you come into it?

Bourne: Well, you're absolutely right, Cameron and Steve talked about putting another revue together, and Stephen wanted it to be a show that celebrated him as a composer as well as the lyricist. Quite often, the revues and concerts have been the other way around. And Steve wanted as many people to see it as possible. He wanted to do a real popular revue. It was during COVID, during the pandemic lockdowns, so there were a lot of conversations. They had started to talk about a song list, and then sadly, Sondheim died. What was originally thought of as a show became the basis for a celebratory remembrance gala. It was kind of London's tribute to him. Steve had quite a strong relationship with London and the UK over many years, with lots of productions that he'd loved. The gala drew in people who'd worked with him in London and who loved him and who were friends with him. When the gala was arranged, I was asked to come in and direct it with Julia. I said to Cameron, "What? Why me? You know, I've never even met Sondheim. I've never even worked on one of his shows."

Haskins: What did Cameron Mackintosh respond?

Bourne: He says, 'Oh, no, that's rubbish. It's about staging.' Cameron felt I would represent Steve and him well. I resist calling him Steve, because I didn't know him. I always want to call him Mr. Sondheim, out of respect. But it's become the sort of shorthand now with so many involved in the

show knowing him and calling him Steve. So, Cameron and I have worked together a lot, and I think the answer to your question is he trusts me. I had a great time directing this show. It is very different from everything I've done before. I had never really been involved in musical theater until *My Fair Lady* and *Mary Poppins* with Cameron. The *Oliver* we just opened in London was the first time, actually the first time I directed, properly directed a full musical. I was always involved as choreographer or musical staging or co-director.

Haskins: Did not being friends or knowing Sondheim actually help you direct?

Bourne: Yes, I think so, because I come at it solely to represent the work. For the gala and ever since, Julia McKenzie who is in her mid-80s did not want the responsibility of directing it, but she literally was 'side by side' with me. She sat there feeding me information, little gems of knowledge, all sorts of tips and intentions in the lyrics that she knew from her long association with Steve. Also, for the gala, I had help from Maria Friedman, another long time Sondheim collaborator. After the gala, Maria went to do Sondheim's *Merrily We Roll Along* on Broadway which was a big success and won Tony awards. So for the gala, there were these two Sondheim experts and friends, plus my outsider's eye. I was not bringing a friendship, as with Julia and Maria and many of the cast. I had no relationship, really, other than being a fan. But that turned out to be okay. As a fan, I felt I knew a lot of the material inside out. In the end, I thought, I know this work, I know this material, and can view it as an outsider.



Gala cast of Stephen Sondheim's Old Friends

Haskins: How did the one-night gala turn into a show with an extended run?

Bourne: We did the gala, and then very soon afterwards, Cameron brought it up. I think he already knew what he was going to do. He said, 'I think we could make this into a show.' The key was getting Bernadette to do it. For me, she's the magic that threads the thing together. She has that direct connection with Sondheim. When she's on stage, you feel that very much, and those moments are magical. The goal was to surround her with the best talent, and that's what we've done both in London and here.



Bernadette Peters in Stephen Sondheim's *Old Friends*. Photo by Danny Kaan

Haskins: One of the London reviews praised your contribution as adding a gloss and sheen that connected with ordinary mortals who can't quote every lyric. Do you think that's true and how did you do that?

Bourne: It was important to Steve in the early conversations that this show not just play to the fans. It does play to the fans, but at the same time, my note to the company at the outset of rehearsal was that we assume nothing. We assume the audience knows nothing about Sondheim, nothing about the shows the songs are from, and that we tell our story to people who don't know the characters or what comes before or after this song. We tell the story in the moment of the songs. Many Sondheim songs are a little play, a complete story in themselves. What Steve wanted and what Cameron wants, is for these pieces to go on for a very long time, and for an audience, especially a young audience, to experience them and know it is a part of them, not some elitist work. I think Steve's work was often categorized as being too sophisticated or too intellectual. It's not actually. His songs are very clear. You don't need several degrees to understand what he's written. That's an important aspect of the show.



Bonnie Langford, Bernadette Peters, Lea Salonga and the company of Stephen Sondheim's *Old Friends*. Photo by Danny Kaan

Haskins: Does the success of revivals suggest Sondheim shows were just ahead of their time?

Bourne: I think that's true. His shows were very unlike other work being done around at that same time. So they stood out and were considered intellectual, hard to understand, or the music was difficult, and that he couldn't write tunes. All that is rubbish. He writes the most beautiful melodies. This show is there to say and demonstrate that those critiques are not the case.

Haskins: Video clips of both the gala and the London shows look different from a lot of revues or concert presentations where everyone's just all dressed up with a minimal prop or two. The clips indicate while not a full theatrical production, there are costumes, set pieces, projections, and props. How did you make choices on when to have those theatrical elements yet keep the show moving?

Bourne: It was difficult to decide how far to go with each thing. The cast each has a basic costume that maybe changes in each half. We add things but their basic costume reflects what each person's featured moments are to come. We do add some props and some costuming, just what is needed to characterize the song while retaining the revue feeling. That way, the cast can switch from one thing to another very quickly. Fortunately, the Ahmanson is very adaptable and changeable. The projections suggest things the audience needs to know about where we might be. Some songs have more of a production. Other times it's more like a traditional revue. However, other than Bernadette's greeting to the audience explaining what we're there for, there's no other talking during the show. It's all singing. It is quite unique in that way, yet very elegant and very sophisticated, and in many ways just one showstopper after another. I always describe it as an embarrassment of riches. It's that sort of show.



Lea Salonga and Jeremy Secomb in Stephen Sondheim's *Old Friends*. Photo by Danny Kaan

Haskins: There's a choreographer credit for Stephen Mear, who worked with you on *Mary Poppins*. You are a celebrated choreographer, why bring in another choreographer?

Bourne: When we did the gala, there was such a lot to do in one week. We brought in Stephen where it really goes into dance, while I did the staging. I staged sections like *Weekend in the Country* from *A Little Night Music* and the *Into the Woods* section. Where it goes into more Broadway show biz movement in *You Could Drive a Person Crazy* from *Company*, *Everybody Ought to Have a Maid* from *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*, as well as the opening and the closing numbers, Stephen choreographed those. It was an evenly shared responsibility.

Haskins: How has the show evolved for the U.S.?

Bourne: We spent a lot of time auditioning and seeing if we could bring over some of our British casts as well as adding Americans, which we've done, combining the two. We have one new number that Bernadette was keen to do, a little known number from one of Steve's last shows called *Bounce*. She says she's stood in the wings and enjoyed a number in a show that she was in and wanted to do. So she is doing numbers people expect but also some surprises. For example, Bernadette was the Witch in *Into the Woods*, but wanted to do *Little Red Riding Hood*. And she does it brilliantly.



Bradley Jaden and Bernadette Peters in Stephen Sondheim's *Old Friends*. Photo by Danny Kaan

Haskins: Among the things that Julia McKenzie or the others said to you about their experiences with Sondheim, was there any particular thing that sticks with you?

Bourne: Julia used to say the answer is always there in his lyrics. Whenever you are stuck, the answer is always in the lyrics. Delve a bit deeper into those lyrics and they will tell you what to do, and also tell you what not to do as well.

Haskins: Were there any particular songs where you did that?

Bourne: There was one in particular song, *Leave You* from *Follies*, which is a great song, which we turn on its head a little bit having it sung by a man about a male partner. The new approach to the song worked very well. For me as a movement based storyteller, the fascination with words became a bit of an obsession, which I really enjoyed. It was something I'd never done before. It's always about telling the story. In this show, what is the story of the song? On one level, it's not different than creating dance works without words. On another level, it's very different, because it doesn't rely totally on the physicality. I still want the physicality because that's what I've always done. With a musical, I tend to get up and do things a bit more, and I'm sort of on the move, and I feel them. I have to feel the music, as I do with when I'm creating a dance piece, but with the added thing of the lyric as well. Interpreting music has always been very important to me with the composers I've interpreted or worked with on in my dance pieces. And the same here, I've got a very good ear for when it's off a bit, not on the right rhythm, or not just about words.



Stephen Sondheim. Photo courtesy of the artist

Haskins: Anything else LA should know?

Bourne: After the terrible time here with the fires, we were a little nervous about coming with what is quite celebratory when there was such ongoing bad news. I just hope we can bring some joy and can be a healing thing. My company was here to open *Car Man* on 9/11. We opened a day or two later and offered free tickets to anyone who wanted to come. That sort of coming together of people seemed very healing. This show grew from Sondheim's friends and their desire after his death to celebrate his life and work. That effort gave his works new life in this show, and now we're bringing it to LA. It is very much about friendship. It's about Cameron's friendship with Steve. It's about Bernadette's friendship with Steve. It's about people coming together to celebrate something they love.

Stephen Sondheim's Old Friends presented by Center Theatre Group at the Music Center, Ahmanson Theatre, 135 N. Grand Ave., downtown; Sat., Feb. 8, – Sun., March 9, official opening Thurs., Feb. 13, then Tues.-Fri., 8 pm, Sat., 2 & 8 pm, Sun., 1 & 6:30 pm, \$25 – \$195.50. [Center Theatre Group | Los Angeles, CA.](#)

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Jesse Eisenberg

Elisa Leonelli · Thursday, February 6th, 2025



Jesse Eisenberg © HFPA

As a journalist I met and interviewed [Jesse Eisenberg](#) in person several times during the past 20 years, and last October via Zoom at a press conference exclusive for Golden Globe international voters about *[A Real Pain](#)*, a movie that he wrote and directed, co-starring with [Kieran Culkin](#).



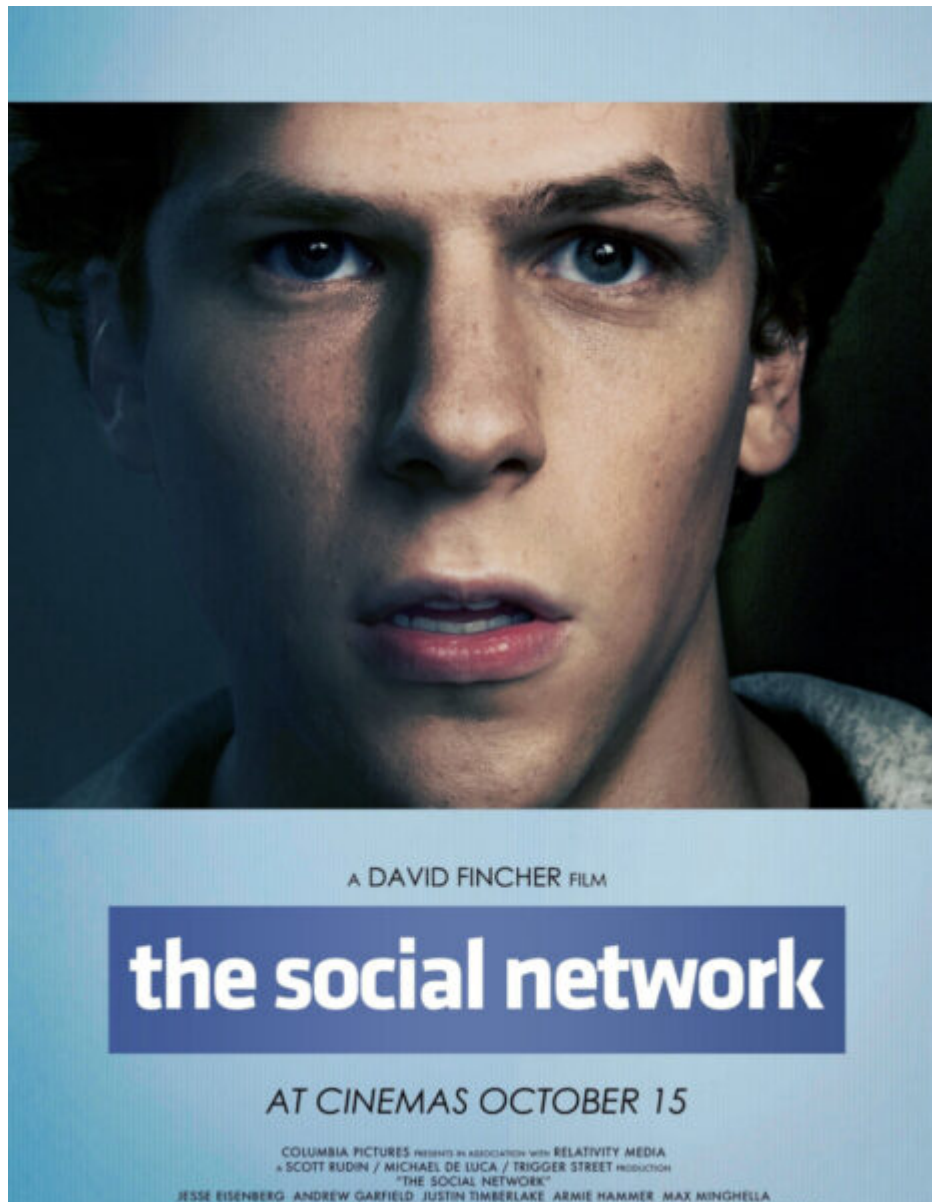
The film tells the story of two Jewish cousins who travel from New York to Poland on a Holocaust tour to visit the childhood home of their late grandmother in Krasnystaw, near Lublin, and other landmarks of Nazi Germany's genocide during World War II, including the [Majdanek concentration camp](#).



Eisenberg said that the script was based on his family's history, and the grandma was actually his great aunt Doris, who left Poland in 1939 to escape the Nazi invasion. She was his closest friend and mentor, and died at the age of 107, so he was interested in learning more about her early life. He was trying to compare the pain of his own emotional struggle with mental health, against the much more horrible pain endured by his ancestors. For him it was like therapy, not a commentary on third generation Jewish-Americans.

I remember seeing a play about a similar subject, *The Revisionist*, that Jesse Eisenberg wrote and performed in 2013 with Vanessa Redgrave, about a young American writer who visits his elderly Jewish cousin Maria, a Holocaust survivor, still living in Poland.

Eisenberg wrote the screenplay for *A Real Pain* in 2022, so before the brutal Hamas attack of October 7, 2023, that caused a violent military reaction on the part of the Israeli government lead by Netanyahu, with horrifying consequences for the Palestinian population of Gaza.



Eisenberg had received Golden Globe and Academy Award nominations as an actor, for playing Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg in *The Social Network* (2010) directed by David Fincher from a screenplay by Aaron Sorkin. For *A Real Pain* he was recognized as an actor with a Golden Globe nomination and also as a screenwriter, with both Golden Globe and Academy Award nominations.

Eisenberg wondered January 24 on “Real Time with Bill Maher,” when asked about Zuckerberg and the other tech billionaires supporting Trump, Jeff Bezos and Elon Musk, why don’t these rich and powerful men spend their days helping rather than hurting people, doing good things for the world.

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SASE vs SD WAN: What's Right for Your Business?

Our Friends · Thursday, February 6th, 2025

SASE and SD-WAN are two architectures that are similar in their ability to provide secure network access. However, they differ in terms of deployment, security, connectivity, and other factors.

SD-WAN enhances network operations and traffic routing by integrating software-defined networking concepts with conventional WAN technology. SD-WAN is a virtual network that operates on top of an existing physical network, and it is developed and operates as an overlay network. SD-WAN's deployment is contingent upon the infrastructure of the underlay network; however, it transfers network functions from the underlay to the overlay.

A single cloud service that operates closer to terminals and distributes traffic more quickly than traditional network services is the result of the SASE architecture, which integrates an organization's network and security functionalities. SASE is designed to streamline network and security administration by consolidating an organization's essential network and security services, including secure web gateways, firewall as a service, and more, into a single platform.

SASE incorporates cloud-based security functions with SD-WAN to offer a dynamic network security solution that transitions the perimeter to cloud-native capabilities. In contrast, SD-WAN utilizes software-defined networking principles to establish secure connections between users across multiple locations, with the primary objective of connecting branch locations to a centralized private network.

In this post, we compare SASE and SD-WAN technologies. Also, we summarize the following topics.

- How Does SASE Improve Security Over SD-WAN?
- Is SD-WAN Still a Good Option for Businesses?
- Who Should Choose SASE Over SD-WAN?
- How Do SASE and SD-WAN Support Cloud Adoption?
- What are the Key Benefits of SASE vs. SD-WAN?
- Is SD-WAN still relevant?

What is the Difference Between SASE and SD-WAN?

SASE (Secure Access Service Edge) and SD-WAN (Software-Defined Wide Area Network) are both networking solutions; however, they serve distinct purposes and address distinct requirements in contemporary IT infrastructure. **SASE vs SD-WAN** comparison is summarized below.

- **Security:** Basic security features are provided by SD-WAN; however, sophisticated protection frequently necessitates the use of supplementary tools. On the other hand, SASE provides end-to-end protection by explicitly integrating sophisticated security into its architecture.
- **Architecture:** SD-WAN is predominantly deployed at the network's periphery and concentrates on the connectivity between cloud applications, data centers, and branch offices.

SASE is a cloud-native service that prioritizes secure connectivity for users, devices, and applications, irrespective of their location.

- **Goal:** SD-WAN is a technology that utilizes software-defined technology to optimize and manage Wide Area Network (WAN) connections. This technology is designed to efficiently route traffic across multiple links, such as MPLS, broadband, and LTE. It enhances flexibility, reduces costs, and improves performance for enterprise networks.

However, SASE is a cloud-based framework that integrates security and networking. It combines security services such as Zero Trust Network Access (ZTNA), firewall-as-a-service (FWaaS), secure web gateways (SWG), and cloud access security brokers (CASB) with SD-WAN capabilities.

In conclusion, SD-WAN enhances connectivity, whereas SASE integrates connectivity with robust security in a cloud-first approach.

How Does SASE Improve Security Over SD-WAN?

SASE (Secure Access Service Edge) enhances security over SD-WAN by incorporating networking and security into a unified, cloud-delivered framework. SASE improves network performance and connectivity between branch offices and cloud resources by directly implementing advanced security protocols into the network layer, whereas SD-WAN primarily concentrates on optimizing network performance and connectivity. SASE enhances security in comparison to SD-WAN in the following manner:

- **Zero Trust Principles:** SASE enforces Zero Trust policies, guaranteeing that users and devices are authenticated and authorized prior to accessing resources. In contrast to conventional SD-WAN solutions, this mitigates the risk of unauthorized access.
- **Comprehensive Security Features:** Secure Web Gateways (SWG), Cloud Access Security Brokers (CASB), Zero Trust Network Access (ZTNA), and Firewall-as-a-Service (FWaaS) are among the advanced security tools that are included in SASE. These capabilities offer safeguards against malware, phishing, and data intrusions, which SD-WAN alone is incapable of addressing.
- **Unified Management:** SASE simplifies and enhances visibility, which is frequently fragmented in SD-WAN deployments, by merging networking and security management into a solitary platform.
- **Cloud-Native Scalability:** SASE is cloud-based, which enables real-time threat intelligence updates and dynamic scalability. This offers superior protection for distributed environments in comparison to static SD-WAN configurations.

Consequently, SASE improves SD-WAN by integrating network efficiency with robust security.

Is SD-WAN Still a Good Option for Businesses?

Yes, SD-WAN (Software-Defined Wide Area Networking) continues to be a viable alternative for businesses in 2025 and beyond. It provides substantial benefits, particularly for organizations that are seeking to modernize their network infrastructure and support cloud-based applications.

SD-WAN offers centralized control, which allows businesses to prioritize traffic based on application requirements and administer their network more efficiently. This reduces latency and outages while simultaneously improving the efficacy of critical applications, such as SaaS

platforms or video conferencing. Furthermore, SD-WAN can decrease expenses by optimizing the utilization of various connection types (e.g., MPLS, broadband, LTE).

SD-WAN's capacity to securely connect branch offices and distributed teams is more pertinent than ever due to the ongoing rise of hybrid office models and remote work. Its appeal is further enhanced by its incorporated security features, including Secure Access Service Edge (SASE), which address contemporary cybersecurity challenges.

Nevertheless, in order to ascertain whether SD-WAN is the appropriate solution for their business, it is necessary to assess their specific requirements, including budget, security, and scalability. **SD-WAN continues to be an exceptional option for organizations** that have geographically dispersed operations or are significantly dependent on cloud services.

Who Should Choose SASE Over SD-WAN?

Secure Access Service Edge (SASE) and Software-Defined Wide Area Network (SD-WAN) are both networking solutions; however, they are designed to meet distinct requirements. The selection of SASE over SD-WAN depends on the specific organizational needs:

- **Distributed Workforce:** SASE's capacity to offer secure, direct access to applications without the need to backhaul traffic through a data center is advantageous for businesses with a substantial remote or hybrid workforce.
- **Security-Centric Requirements:** SASE is the preferred option when security is a primary concern. It integrates sophisticated security features, such as Secure Web Gateways (SWG), Zero Trust Network Access (ZTNA), and Cloud Access Security Brokers (CASB), with SD-WAN capabilities.
- **Cloud-First Organizations:** SASE should be taken into account by organizations that are significantly dependent on cloud applications (e.g., SaaS, IaaS). It guarantees secure access to cloud resources by combining security and networking in a single cloud-delivered solution.
- **Future-Focused Enterprises:** Organizations that prioritize long-term scalability and agility in their IT infrastructure may favor SASE over other options due to its capacity to accommodate emergent technologies and threats.
- **Simplified Management:** SASE is the optimal choice for organizations seeking to integrate networking and security into a unified platform due to its centralized management and effortless deployment.

Conversely, SD-WAN is more appropriate for traditional WAN optimization and cost-effective branch connectivity that do not necessitate extensive security measures.

How Do SASE and SD-WAN Support Cloud Adoption?

SASE (Secure Access Service Edge) and SD-WAN (Software-Defined Wide Area Network) are essential technologies that facilitate the adoption of cloud computing by addressing the scalability, security, and performance challenges that are present in contemporary IT environments.

SASE is a cloud-delivered service that combines networking and security functions. It integrates sophisticated security features, including secure web gateways (SWG), cloud access security brokers (CASB), zero-trust network access (ZTNA), and firewall-as-a-service (FWaaS), with SD-

WAN capabilities. This guarantees secure, direct access to cloud applications for all users, irrespective of their location, thereby enhancing the user experience and reducing latency.

SD-WAN streamlines the administration of wide-area networks by dynamically routing traffic over a variety of connection types (broadband, LTE, MPLS, etc.) in accordance with real-time conditions. It guarantees optimal performance for cloud applications by prioritizing critical traffic and reducing latency or packet loss.

Organizations can efficiently scale their networks as they migrate workloads to the cloud with the help of both SASE and SD-WAN. They ensure that remote users and branch offices have uninterrupted connectivity while adhering to stringent security protocols.

SASE and SD-WAN, when combined, establish a secure, high-performance foundation for cloud adoption, which is consistent with the requirements of digital transformation initiatives and hybrid work environments.

What are the Key Benefits of SASE vs. SD-WAN?

Secure Access Service Edge (SASE) and Software-Defined Wide Area Network (SD-WAN) are both contemporary networking solutions; however, they serve distinct purposes and provide distinct advantages. SD-WAN is primarily concerned with enhancing network performance and connectivity, whereas SASE integrates robust security features into the network itself, making it a superior option for organizations that prioritize secure cloud access and Zero Trust principles. A comparison of their primary advantages is presented below.

SASE's primary advantages include the integration of security and networking functions into a single cloud-based solution. This solution includes features such as Zero Trust Network Access (ZTNA), firewall-as-a-service (FWaaS), and secure web gateways (SWG).

SASE is a cloud-native architecture that is specifically designed for cloud-first organizations, ensuring that cloud applications can be accessed securely and seamlessly from any location.

SASE's cloud-based architecture enables it to effortlessly expand in tandem with business expansion, thereby accommodating distributed environments and remote workforces.

SASE offers enhanced security. In contrast to SD-WAN, which frequently necessitates additional security tools, SASE incorporates built-in security measures that mitigate vulnerabilities.

Additionally, SASE has simplified management. The complexity and operational overhead are reduced by a unified platform for security and networking.

The main advantages of SD-WAN are listed below:

- *Improved Network Performance:* SD-WAN intelligently routes traffic across multiple WAN connections (e.g., MPLS, broadband) to reduce latency and enhance application performance.
- *Cost Efficiency:* SD-WAN can substantially reduce costs by employing lower-cost internet connections in place of costly MPLS circuits.
- *Deployment Ease:* SD-WAN is a suitable option for branch offices due to its simpler deployment process than traditional WAN solutions.
- *Application Awareness:* It guarantees consistent performance by prioritizing critical applications.

Is SD-WAN still relevant?

SD-WAN (Software-Defined Wide Area Networking) remains highly relevant in 2025 and beyond. Due to the increasing demand for secure, flexible, and efficient connectivity, it remains a critical component of contemporary networking, particularly as businesses transition to cloud-based applications and employ hybrid work models.

SD-WAN is adapting to cope with the emergence of peripheral computing, IoT, and 5G, thereby enhancing **SD-WAN's** relevance in the constantly evolving digital environment.

It is still crucial for guaranteeing the efficacy of mission-critical applications and assuring high availability in numerous instances. Hence, SD-WAN is one of the most dynamic segments in enterprise networking, with a substantial compound annual revenue growth rate anticipated.

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What To Do If A Nursing Home Violates A Loved One's Rights

Our Friends · Thursday, February 6th, 2025

Picture this: You visit your loved ones in a nursing home, expecting them to be safe and cared for. Instead, their room is messy, they look frail, and their once-bright personality seems dimmed. When you ask if they're okay, they hesitate—or avoid eye contact.

It's a heartbreaking moment no family should face, yet it happens far too often. According to WHO, 2 in 3 nursing home staff in Phoenix and beyond admit to committing abuse or neglect in 2023. That means countless elderly residents suffer on a daily basis.

But here's the thing: Just because it's common doesn't mean it's acceptable. If your loved one is showing signs of mistreatment, you can fight back. How? This article will walk you through the steps you can take to protect them and hold the facility accountable. Keep reading!

Understanding Residents' Legal Rights

Knowing your loved one's rights is the first step in protecting them. If you don't understand what they're entitled to, it's hard to tell when those rights are being ignored or violated.

Residents have the right to:

- Be treated with dignity and respect.

- Live in a safe, clean, and healthy environment.
- Receive proper medical care, nutrition, and hygiene.
- Voice complaints without fear of retaliation.
- See family, friends, and advocates freely.

All these rights are backed by federal and state laws, including **the Nursing Home Reform Act**. Additionally, the Elder Justice Act aims to prevent elder abuse. Meanwhile, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) ensures equal treatment for residents with disabilities.

Steps to Take

Now that you understand your loved one's rights, if you suspect any violations, act quickly. The longer you wait, the worse the situation can become. Here's what you can do to protect your loved one.

Speak to the Nursing Home Administration

Start by addressing the issue directly with the facility's administrator or director of nursing. Stay calm, but be firm. Explain exactly what you've noticed—whether it's poor hygiene, unexplained injuries, or a sudden change in behavior. Be specific about dates and details. If possible, bring photos or medical records as evidence.

Ask them what they plan to do about the issue. Request that they document your complaint and provide a written response. If they dismiss your concerns, make excuses, or refuse to cooperate, that's a major red flag.

Contact a Nursing Home Abuse Lawyer

If the facility ignores your concerns or the neglect continues, you may need legal help. For that, reach out to a nursing home abuse lawyer. They will file formal complaints with state agencies, ensuring the violations are investigated. If the nursing home refuses to take responsibility, your lawyer can negotiate for a fair settlement.

Or, if needed, take the case to court to fight for justice. They will also help you prepare legal documents and navigate complex paperwork. However, make sure you work only with **experienced nursing home lawyers in Phoenix** or your local area. This is because they understand the statute of limitations and specific state laws. They'll ensure that every document is filed correctly and that your case moves forward without unnecessary delays.

Report to the Nursing Home Ombudsman

You can also report the facility to your state's long-term care ombudsman. This program exists to protect nursing home residents and investigate complaints. You can file a complaint online or call their office directly.

When reporting, provide as much detail as possible. Include your loved one's name, the facility's name, and a clear description of the issue. If you have evidence, such as medical records or photos, submit those too. The **ombudsman authorities** can mediate disputes, push for corrective action,

and escalate the case if needed.

Relocate Your Loved One If Necessary

If the neglect continues or your loved one is in immediate danger, moving them to a safer facility may be the best option. Before making a decision, research other facilities in your area. Visit in person, speak to staff, and check for past violations.

If your loved one is hesitant about moving, reassure them that their safety and well-being come first. In some cases, a lawyer can help ensure the transfer happens smoothly. No one should feel trapped in an unsafe environment. If your gut tells you it's time to move, trust it.

Wrapping Up

Watching a loved one suffer in a nursing home is heartbreaking, but you don't have to stay silent. If their rights are being violated, take action. Start by addressing the issue with the facility, but don't stop there. If they refuse to listen, seek legal help, report them, and consider moving your loved one to a safer place. Stay informed, stay persistent, and never be afraid to fight for their rights.

Photo by Matthias Zomer via Pexels

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Are You Following California's Child Safety Seat Laws?

Our Friends · Thursday, February 6th, 2025

Parents typically have one thing in common. They all want their children to be safe at all times and tend to keep a close eye on them. But what about your child's safety when riding in a motor vehicle? Are you successfully [navigating California child safety seat laws](#)? Yep, there's more than one state law and parents must adhere to each one if they want to keep their children safe in a car, truck, or SUV.

California Laws Vary Depending on the Child's Age

You've probably already figured out that infants have different needs than toddlers. Older kids' needs also aren't the same as infants or toddlers. So, it just makes sense that the law changes to meet the different needs.

Car Seat Requirements for Children Under the Age of 2

All children two years old and younger must ride in a [rear-facing car seat](#). Nope, there aren't any exceptions to this state law. We know your child is probably going to start complaining about their lack of a view. Staring at a seat back isn't a ton of fun. However, the law's in place for an excellent reason dealing with your child's safety.

Rear-facing car seats provide extra support in the head, neck, and spine areas. These areas are always vulnerable to injuries regardless of your age, but especially so in infants and young toddlers. Their bodies are still developing, bones are strengthening, you get the general idea. So simply put, younger children need the added protection they get from a rear-facing car seat.

Child Safety Seat Requirements for Children Ages 2 – 8

By the time your child turns two, you're both ready to transition to a forward-facing car seat. Your child finally gets a view and you may get a bit of peace and quiet on car rides. However, before you strap your little one in a forward-facing car seat, the Golden State also has [height and weight requirements](#). Just because your toddler celebrates their second birthday doesn't automatically mean they're ready to move out of their rear-facing safety seat.

All children must weigh at least 40 pounds and measure 40 inches or more in height. If your child hasn't quite reached the height or weight requirements, they must stick with a rear-facing car seat. Sure, it can be disappointing for children but safety always comes first.

Older Children and Booster Seats

Just because your child turns 8 years old doesn't necessarily mean it's time to ditch the forward-facing car seat. Children can't switch to a booster seat until they've outgrown their forward-facing car seat. When this happens depends on your child's growth rate, along with the car seat's height and weight specifications. These can differ a bit by manufacturer so read the height and weight limits carefully.

When it's time to break out the booster seat, California has a bit of guidance. The lap belt must be securely fastened and should rest against your child's hips. Yep, the shoulder harness is a state requirement so buckle it up. Your child should stay in the booster seat until they outgrow it. Now, it's finally time to let them use the vehicle's built-in safety belt. While it's not state law, experts recommend keeping children in the back seat at least until they turn 13.

Potential Penalties For Violating California Child Safety Seat Laws

The Golden State isn't playing around when it comes to child safety in motor vehicles. California has some pretty strict penalties for not following all safety seat laws.

Fines are Possible

You may get lucky and only get a warning the first time you're pulled over for a possible safety seat violation. However, don't hold your breath. As we mentioned earlier, California is serious about child safety. Chances are, you're going to get a ticket and fines typically run around \$100.

Yep, fines increase for your second offense, around \$250. While these fines aren't exactly astronomical, they're also not cheap. These fines are also easily avoidable if you follow the law.

You May Get Points Added to Your License

Sometimes being given points is a good thing. Extra points can be the difference between winning and losing a game. Your child's safety isn't something to play around with and [points on your license](#) aren't beneficial.

If you get four points on your California driver's license within one year, the DMV automatically suspends your license for 6 months. Ending up with points on your license actually isn't too hard. Pretty much any traffic violation like speeding results in a point. Getting your license back after a suspension isn't as easy as asking the DMV to restore your driving privileges. There's a whole process you need to go through, and it's rarely cheap.

Expect Insurance Rates to Go Up

Even if you're sticking with the state's absolute minimum insurance requirements, monthly premiums aren't exactly low. The last thing you want is for your auto insurance rates to go up or worse your carrier drops your coverage.

Insurance companies tend to base their rates on driving records. So, if you have points on your license the insurer considers you a risky driver. Yep, failing to follow car seat laws can indicate you're not concerned with safety.

Your Child's Safety is the Best Reason to Follow Car Seat Laws

Sure, fines and other penalties are a great reason to follow all child safety seat rules. As a parent, your child's safety should be your primary concern. We know car seats can be pricey, even when you go with convertible models. You know the ones that transition from rear to forward-facing and finally into a booster seat.

Then there's the chore of installing a car seat and it's never as easy as it sounds. Did you know your child's pediatrician, the staff at the hospital, and even your local fire department are all here to help install a child safety seat? They'll even go over state laws to help ensure you're not in violation, all to ensure your child is safe.

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Australia: Rise of Online Gaming – Trends, Insights, and Responsible Gaming

Our Friends · Thursday, February 6th, 2025

Online gambling has been increasing over the past decade in Australia. Convenience, variety, and excitement are indeed what online platforms assure for Australians. Now, with the availability of mobile phones and high-speed internet, it is quite easier for players to access online casinos and sports betting sites from their homes or even on the way.

Outstanding sites like [Rocket Play Australia](#) come with a friendly interface, great variety in choosing games, and impressive measures of security that make this or another online casino appealing both for experienced gamblers and beginners. It also includes live dealers and the possibility of paying with cryptocurrency on the website for having entertainment in safety.

Key Trends of the Australian Online Gambling Market

More and more, Australians access mobile devices to make bets and to play casino games. The convenience of gambling through the use of mobile gambling apps is just that-nice and easy. Online slots, poker, and sports betting are available via smartphones and tablets while players are out and about or from the comfort of their own homes, making gambling even more accessible.

Live Casino Experiences

The live casino has brought a very different twist to online gambling. Online gamblers love to play games with the presence of real dealers. This addition enables players to feel the real action of a casino while sitting comfortably in their homes. Many players find this interaction after a live casino game very appealing since it allows for an added sense of authenticity and reality.

But some of the newer, perhaps more exciting trends in gambling are social gambling. Many online casinos now have the ability for playing multiplayer games, thus competing with others either in friendly competition or by simply cooperating with one another to meet the success of team-based games. Not only does this enhance the player experience, but it builds communities of like-minded individuals that return time after time.

Responsible Gaming: Protecting Players and Promoting Healthy Habits

While online gaming has many benefits, players must bet responsibly. The fun and great accessibility of casinos online are not all causes of problematic gambling behaviors. Many sites reduce these risks by enabling features responsible for gaming, such as self-exclusion tools, deposit limits, and time management reminders.

A Sneak Peek at Rocket Play Australia

While online gambling gains momentum in Australia, sites like Rocket Play stand out. Having a number of games, safe payment options, and care about player safety, Rocket Play makes sure various types of players enjoy gambling on its site. Its robust platform has made it a go-to option for Australian players seeking entertainment with security at one stop. Check out their website for a class-leading online casino experience.

Conclusion: Welcome to the Future of Gambling Online

The Australian online gambling scene keeps evolving with new developments that technology brings along, and so does the variety that keeps on evolving for gamers. This also includes trends in the field of mobile gambling, the use of cryptocurrency, and live casinos. From the look of things, with the likes of Rocket Play Australia, things are looking bright for online gambling in Australia. With responsible gaming and proper awareness, players can enjoy all the variety of entertainment and excitement that online casinos have to offer.

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