SD-WAN vs. SASE: a plain-English explainer

What each one does, how they fit together, and how to decide what your locations need.

SD-WAN in one paragraph

SD-WAN is software that manages the internet and private connections at each location. It sends each type of traffic over the best available path, combines circuits for capacity, and fails over automatically when a line goes down, all managed from one dashboard.

SASE in one paragraph

SASE (secure access service edge) moves security into the cloud. Instead of a firewall stack at every site, users and locations connect to a cloud service that applies the same web filtering, firewall and zero-trust access rules wherever people work, including at home and on the road.

	SD-WAN	SASE
Main job	Performance and uptime between locations	Consistent security for every user and site
Where it runs	Appliance or software at each site	Cloud points of presence, plus a light site device
Best fit	Many branches, voice and video quality, multiple circuits	Remote and hybrid staff, cloud apps, replacing VPNs
Replaces	Single-circuit routers, much of legacy MPLS	Site firewalls, VPN concentrators, web proxies
Typical pricing	Per site, by bandwidth	Per user and/or per site

How they work together

SASE usually includes SD-WAN as its networking half. Many companies start with SD-WAN for uptime and add cloud security later; others buy both as one service from a single provider. Either path can work. The right answer depends on your contracts, staff locations and the security tools you already own.

Questions to ask before you buy

- ☐ How many locations, users and internet circuits do we have today?
- ☐ Which apps are in the cloud and which still live in a data center?
- ☐ When do our current firewall, MPLS and VPN contracts end?
- ☐ Do we need one provider for everything, or best-of-breed pieces?
- ☐ Who monitors the network and responds to security alerts at 2 a.m.?
- ☐ What does it cost to add a new location or remove one?

> We compare SD-WAN and SASE options from many providers side by side and handle ordering and cutover, at no cost to you.

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