

Digital radio vs streaming – what’s the difference?

Consumers have more choice in the way they listen to radio than ever before. You can tune in to your favourite stations broadcast through your kitchen radio, multi-room soundbar or portable radio or, when connected, you can stream radio via your computer or mobile device.

Often the same device, such as those in newer in-car entertainment systems or internet radios, offer a choice of listening via AM/FM, broadcast DAB+ digital radio or streaming. So what’s the difference?

While streaming is growing in popularity, the majority of radio listening - well over 90% - is done via a broadcast device due to the robustness and reliability of the signal and the fact it’s free to air.



Broadcast DAB+ is an upgrade on AM/FM radio. It provides great sound, is very easy to use and offers a wide choice of extra stations. These range from classic rock to chillout tunes, children’s programming, country music and dance stations.

Streamed radio connects to web-based stations over your broadband connection and can be accessed via apps, websites or internet radios.

Here are some of the features of both:

	DAB+ digital radio	Streamed radio
How does it work?	Digital radio is transmitted using digital signals instead of analogue (AM/FM), providing superior audio and added features to your listening experience	Internet radio connects to broadcasters via a broadband connection
What stations are available?	Your favourite local stations plus up to 30 free digital-only radio stations	Local stations and thousands of stations from around the world
Costs	Broadcast is free to air but does require a DAB+ radio or device	Streaming and data charges apply. Requires a connected device such as a computer, internet radio or mobile
Where can you get it?	DAB+ currently covers 65% of the population, with services in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide and Perth. DAB+ trials are on air in Canberra and Darwin	Where you have a good internet connection, mobile (3G/4G) connectivity or Wi-Fi wireless networking

In the car	30% of new cars in Australia come with DAB+ installed and after-market adaptors are available	Streaming radio in the car is an option when the car has Bluetooth connectivity or via a USB cable from your phone
Other features	Easy to set up and use, does not buffer or get congested	To find a station, use an app or website. Can drop out in mobile blackspots or when network is congested

In conclusion, DAB+ is free and reliable, and doesn't use your data like streaming does, so it's a good choice if you mainly listen to local radio. Streaming offers a convenient way to access radio through any computer, tablet or mobile device.

DAB+ and streaming are complementary technologies and make it easy for listeners to tune in to radio whenever they want, using whatever device they choose.

