MetaTrader 4 launched in 2005. Twenty-one years later, people still ask for it by name. That tells you something, because traders are not a sentimental bunch when money is involved. The reason is simple: it doesn't get in the way. You open it, the chart is there, the order ticket is there, and you're trading in about ten seconds. Newer platforms pile on widgets and social feeds and animated buttons, and half the time I just want to place a stop-loss without a tutorial popping up.



On desktop, the real strength is the clutter you can control. Templates save your whole layout, so one click gives you the same indicators, colours and timeframes you spent an evening tuning. Expert advisors run quietly in the background if you use them, and the custom indicator library is enormous, some of it brilliant, a lot of it junk. Test anything on a demo account first. I once installed a "holy grail" indicator that repainted every candle, and I only noticed after it had talked me into three terrible entries. Speed deserves a mention, though it's less about the software than the setup. Execution depends on the broker's servers and your connection, so a platform can feel snappy on one account and sluggish on another. If orders are slipping by several pips during calm markets, the problem usually isn't your laptop. Check the ping figure in the bottom corner of the terminal, which most people never look at. Mobile is where MT4 surprises people. The app handles charts, pending orders and trade history with nothing missing that you'd truly need, and it's light enough to run on an older phone. I've closed a position from a petrol station queue more than once. Is that healthy? Debatable. Is it useful when a trade turns against you while you're away from your desk? Absolutely. Push notifications are underrated. Set price alerts instead of staring at the screen, and your phone taps you only when something worth seeing happens. It cuts the compulsive checking, which is a bigger drain than any spread. One caution: the mobile screen is small, and small screens encourage rushed decisions. Do your analysis on desktop, then use the phone to manage what's already open. That split alone has helpful resources saved me from a few impulsive clicks. Reliability comes down to the habits around it. Keep the app updated, log in on both devices before a major news release so nothing surprises you, and don't rely on a single internet connection if real money is on the line. A mobile hotspot as backup costs nothing. MT4 isn't glamorous. That's sort of the point.