

Smartwatches for Everyone by Tom Kreuzer

As a kid in the 1960 I was captivated by the Dick Tracy watch. That and more is available today. Smartwatches have exploded into our world in the last five years. They have evolved from just counting steps to provide many smartphone and health features. There are now watches for every age and lifestyle.

Most watches require a smartphone to do initial setup and connect to when using. A few watches have an option or come with built in cell phone connectivity that can function without a smartphone. The watch you buy will depend on the smartphone you own, features you need, and your budget. Apple watches only work with the iPhone. Fitbit, Garmin, Withings, Fossil and Michael Kors are compatible with both iPhones and Android phones. Samsung's Galaxy Watch 5 and Google's Pixel Watch are only compatible with Android devices.

Mainstream Watches \$300 - \$400

Mainstream watches are the best choice for most people, especially for health and wellness features. Some watches are more accurate than others. Watch features vary by model:

- Battery life, most need to be charged every day. Very few last multiple days under normal use.
- Exercise tracking (biking, swimming, walking, running).
- Water resistant (swim proof, shower, dive depth rating).
- GPS for tracking (distant, location, compass).
- Sleep tracking (Sleep duration, sleep stages).
- The ability to view/respond to phone calls and texts from your phone.
- Cellular connection without using a smartphone (LTE, 5G). Adds to price, monthly service fee of \$5-\$10, and drains battery. If you always carry your smartphone, you do not need it, it can connect and use the smartphone.
- Voice assistants (Siri, Alexa, Google Assistant).
- Blood oxygen saturation level (SpO2).
- Heart rate monitoring (HRMs).
- Electrocardiogram (ECG or EKG) tracking heart rhythm and electrical activity.
- Fall and car crash detection and notification. Emergency call contacts or 911. Great for seniors.
- Body temperature readings.
- Always-on screen (keeps the screen on even when the watch is idle).
- Timers, alarms, reminders, and notifications on your wrist without digging for your phone.
- Apple supports the largest number of high-quality apps. Others are catching up.
- Onboard storage for music if not connected to a phone.
- Contactless payments (NFC, Apple Pay, Samsung Pay).
- Camera for photos and video calls. Limited quality.
- Microphone and speaker for calls and voice commands.
- Find my phone.

The Apple Watch Series 8 \$399 features an always-on OLED screen that's 20% larger than the Basic Apple SE's and uses Apple's third-generation heart rate sensor to report blood oxygen, ECG, and heart rate data. A new temperature sensor provides more fitness metrics and can even track ovulation. Has fall and car crash detection and improved battery. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UfawgQJICU8>

The Fitbit Sense 2 \$299, slim, lightweight, comfortable design, Improved touch-screen responsiveness, 5-day battery life, large bright screen, excellent stress management features, and accurate body temperature data.

The Google Pixel Watch \$349, best for Pixel Phone Users, attractive design with stainless steel case, bright responsive screen, good app selection, secure band attachment system, Fitbit fitness tracking, and ECG app.

The Garmin's Forerunner 255 \$349 has more of a fitness focus, with built-in programs for triathlon and duathlon training.

Basic Watches \$30 - \$300

Basic watches include a few of the mainstream features, but not all. If you mostly want to see notifications on your wrist, make mobile payments, track workouts, this watch is the right choice. Also good for first-time buyers as well as older or younger users unless you know exactly what you need.

The second-gen Apple Watch SE \$249, It has the same software and apps, high and low heart-rate notifications, fall and car crash detection, and selection of exercise modes as the Series 8. It lacks an always-on smaller screen, ECG, blood

oxygen measurements and temperature sensor. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ux6zXguiqxM&t=1217s>

The \$229 Fitbit Versa 4 has many of Fitbit's most notable fitness features -- like active zone minutes, sleep tracking, built-in GPS and the daily readiness score (which requires a Premium subscription). You can also get phone notifications and access Amazon's Alexa on your wrist, and it'll soon support Google Maps and the Google Wallet. But you'll need the pricier \$299 Fitbit Sense 2 to get Fitbit's more sophisticated health capabilities, like sensors that scan for potential signs of stress, ECG and a skin temperature sensor.

The Samsung Galaxy Watch 5 \$279, best Android-compatible smartwatch on the market. It has competitive price, sleek design, bright durable screen, good app selection, battery life improvement over previous generation, and digital bezel for quick scrolling.

The Garmin Venu 2 \$249, offers a long battery life (an estimated 11 days) and many health and fitness features for the price (GPS, blood oxygen measurements and sleep tracking). But it doesn't have a speaker or microphone for taking calls, onboard music storage (unless you buy the \$299 Music Edition) or access to Google Play Store apps.

It's hard to find new smartwatches that cost less than \$200, although there are some options out there. If you want to pay less and don't necessarily care about using apps, you might want to consider a fitness tracker instead. (Fitbit also works with certain insurance companies to provide devices for members, so it's worth checking if your provider offers this benefit).

The Wyze Watch \$33, fitness, sleep, heart rate, SpO2, control Wyze smart home devices, large screen, and long battery life. Limited apps. This is what I currently have. Not the smartest watch, but the price was right.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D5CTTqm6HGE>

Premium \$400 - \$1000+

Premium watch are more rugged designs and additional features aimed at sports enthusiasts. Samsung Galaxy Watch 5 Pro \$499, Garmin's Fenix 7 \$699, Garmin's Epix Gen 2 \$899 are good examples. Premium fitness watches have better durability, longer battery life, more accurate location positioning, customizable buttons and extra features that target specific sports, like running, scuba diving or golf.

The Apple Watch Ultra \$799, has a 36-hour battery life compared to the Series 8 and SE 18-hour battery life, water resistance of 100 meters compared to the Series 8's 50 meters, a depth gauge with a water temperature sensor, dual-frequency GPS, a titanium build, a larger brighter screen and a programmable Action button. It sets itself apart for outdoor adventures like diving, climbing, hiking, swimming, and more. When you're on foot, it uses L1 and L5 GPS for better accuracy and has a built-in 86dB siren that is audible from up to 600 feet away. For underwater treks, the watch has an EN13319 certification and a depth gauge with a water temperature sensor. It also works for recreational dives at depths of up to 40 meters and can function as a dive computer with the Oceanic+ app. Cellular connectivity comes standard. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cy1adxM-CjM>

More Tips...

- Apple watches are the best choice for an iPhone user. Apple offers three versions: the standard Series 8, the entry-level SE, and the high-end Ultra. There are also older versions of Apple Watches available that might offer everything you need at a discounted price.
- A smartwatch isn't useful if you don't enjoy wearing it.
- Comfort is important if you plan to wear it all day long and when sleeping.
- Screen Size. Too small can be hard to see or use a touch screen, Too big is clunky and drains battery.
- Simple to elegant style mainly in choice of bands. Interchangeable and attractive.
- Do not buy just as a status symbol or "New and Shiny" factor.
- Many watches come with accessories and watch bands.

Additional Links and Information

Carondelet Tech Help Resources: <https://carondeletvillage.org/tech-help-resources/>

Questions or comments can be sent to: TCKreuzer@gmail.com

PC Mag article on smartwatches: <https://www.pcmag.com/picks/the-best-smartwatches>