



Kerry Wan/ZDNET

**F**rom the Apple Watch Series 10 to models from Google and Garmin, we've tested the best smartwatches for every wrist, phone and budget. Here are our top picks.

Once niche gadgets, smartwatches have transformed over the past five years into must-have accessories that blend style, comfort and an array of smart features. Whether Apple or Android, you're sure to find a smartwatch that fits your lifestyle and budget. If your needs are basic -- think exercise, notifications and sleep monitoring -- most smartwatches will do. But for those who want more advanced tracking, premium models with polished software and health tools like blood pressure

and sleep apnea monitoring may be the way to go. After a decade of reviews, I can confirm they're well worth it today. If you're looking to make the investment, here are our top picks for the best smartwatches.

## What is the best smartwatch?

The [Apple Watch Series 10](#) is our favorite overall smartwatch. It combines polished software with a wide variety of health tools and smartphone companion features. Ten years after the original Apple Watch set the stage for the modern smartwatch, the Apple Watch Series 10 adds even more health-tracking features including sleep apnea notifications and practical smartwatch tools like voice isolation for clearer calls. If you're an iPhone owner, the Series 10 provides the right balance of features for the price.

The Apple Watch Series 10 isn't perfect. Battery life still only lasts about one to two days with light use. Fast charging goes some way to address battery life, but it still means the watch is off your wrist more than you might like. Considering the health and safety tools, from fall detection during the day, to sleep apnea notifications at night, you are likely to want to wear the watch as much as possible. The Apple Watch Series 10 has the right balance of health tracking and everyday usability to make it the best choice.

## **Best smartwatches for 2025**

### **Best smartwatch**

#### **Apple Watch Series 10**

The Apple Watch Series 10 takes a winning formula and updates it for the Apple Watch's tenth birthday. It is slimmer and lighter than earlier Apple Watches, with two new case sizes: 42-millimeter or 46-millimeter. The wide-angle OLED screens make the watch brighter when looking at it off-axis. The LTPO3 technology also brings a ticking second hand to the always-on display. The Apple Watch Series 10 also comes with sleep apnea notifications, which can detect signs of this potentially dangerous condition over 30 days.

Battery life is still rated for 18 hours, though you can push it to a day and a half with lighter use. The Apple Watch Series 10 now has even faster charging though, which makes up for the battery life somewhat, able to charge to 80% in 30 minutes. Overall, it's an incredibly polished smartwatch and the best choice for most iPhone owners.

### **Best overall Android smartwatch**

#### **Google Pixel Watch 3**

Google's Pixel Watch 3 offers one of the most elegant round-screen designs you'll see on a smartwatch and now comes in two size options to suit more wrists. It also comes with a range of new tools, including AI-generated running workouts, the Morning Brief digest, and more applications for the Daily Readiness Score.

The Pixel Watch 3 is still missing some features you might expect on a Google-branded smartwatch, including Gemini support. Overall, if you're a runner and want more robust smartwatch features than on a traditional running watch, the Pixel Watch 3 won't disappoint.

### **Best fitness watch for Android and iOS**

#### **Garmin Venu 3**

The Garmin Venu 3's stellar battery life, a wide selection of health tracking features and workout types and comprehensive wellness metrics make it a top choice. The battery life alone is enough to make the Garmin Venu 3 stand out, with it lasting for about a week on a single charge according to CNET's review.

It isn't perfect. It doesn't feel as premium as some other watches of the same price, it doesn't have as many apps as the Apple Watch, and the software may not feel as intuitive as alternative watches from Google, Samsung or Apple. The Garmin Venu 3 makes up for that with useful wellness tools like the Body Battery, which tells you how

“recharged” you are based on activity, sleep and other factors. Best of all, Garmin doesn’t require a subscription to access such features.

## **Best do-it-all watch for iPhone**

### **Apple Watch Ultra 2**

The Apple Watch Ultra 2 is Apple's best smartwatch, with a tough titanium construction and an Action button to quickly start workouts or launch apps. It has the brightest screen of any Apple Watch at a maximum of 3,000 nits which makes it incredibly easy to see when adventuring in the great outdoors. For adventurers and athletes, it also has a built-in siren for safety and a dual-band GPS for accurately tracking your route. LTE is also onboard so you can venture out without a phone and still stay connected.

Though it's designed to be an outdoor watch, the Apple Watch Ultra 2 is still a fantastic all-around smartwatch. Inside is the same S9 chip as found on the Apple Watch Series 9 which supports gestures like Double Tap and allows the watch to process Siri commands on-device. This means you can use Siri without being online and later in the year you'll be able to ask the voice assistant for health data. Like earlier Apple Watches, the Ultra 2 also comes with a blood oxygen sensor, electrocardiogram (ECG or EKG) app, fall detection and emergency SOS. The battery also lasts at least twice as long as all other Apple Watch models. It's only compatible with the iPhone, so if you have an Android phone, you'll want to look at another option on this list.

## **Best overall watch for Android**

### **Samsung Galaxy Watch 6 and 6 Classic**

Samsung's Galaxy Watch 6 is the best Android watch for most people. Both the Galaxy Watch 6 and 6 Classic have incredibly bright screens that hit a maximum of 2,000 nits, so seeing your watch in all lighting conditions is easy.

All the flagship features you would expect are included: an ECG, blood oxygen, body composition and temperature sensors. Note you do need a Galaxy phone to use the ECG, but all the other features work seamlessly with other Android phones. Like the Apple Watch Series 9, you'll need to charge the Galaxy Watch 6 every day, especially if you want to track sleep.

2023's Galaxy [Watch 5 Pro](#) remains in the lineup if you need the best battery life of any Galaxy Watch, lasting up to three days on a charge.

## Best no-compromises smartwatch

### Apple Watch SE (2022)

The Apple Watch SE retails for \$250 but you can regularly find it discounted to \$200 or less, which makes it an excellent choice for the budget-conscious buyer. Expect most of the same features found on more expensive Apple Watch models like the Series 9, including activity tracking, third-party apps and safety features like Emergency SOS. It does miss out on an always-on display and heart-health features like the ECG.

### Factors to consider when buying a smartwatch

**Consider last year's model:** Many new smartwatches offer incremental hardware updates over previous models, so you might want to look at the last generation's smartwatch to save some cash -- especially because software updates often bring new features to older models. For example, you could look at something like the Apple Watch Series 9 which is compatible with the latest WatchOS 11 update to get many of the same software features as the newer Series 9. Avoid buying smartwatches that are several years old, as they may start to feel sluggish.

**Buy at the right time of year:** Smartwatches usually go on sale during Amazon Prime Day, Black Friday and Cyber Monday, so it's a good idea to look out for discounts around those holidays. Knowing when new devices typically launch can also be helpful. After all, you don't want to purchase a brand new smartwatch only for it to feel out of date two months later. Samsung, Apple and Google usually release new smartwatches in the late summer and early fall time frame, but you can find more information on typical launch periods [here](#).



**Look at added costs:** Some smartwatches are moving toward a subscription model that unlocks certain features of your watch. Google's Pixel Watch, for example, offers a monthly \$10 subscription called Fitbit Premium that offers more in-depth sleep tracking metrics, workout programs and guidance on recovery.

### How we test smartwatches and wearables

We test smartwatches in the real world, focusing on key features from fitness tracking to connectivity that you'll use every day. Starting with the watch itself, we check overall performance and responsiveness. Is there any lag when navigating menus? Is



The iPhone 15 mounted on a bike.

Lexy Savvides/CNET

the touchscreen responsive? Do apps launch quickly?

Then we check if it has all the functionality you'd expect for the price. That could be everything from music playback controls to cellular connectivity so you can use the watch away from your phone or an always-on display. All smartwatches need to connect to a phone, so we also assess how easy the companion software is to navigate.

## Durability and design

Smartwatches are something you wear on your body, so we assess how comfortable they are to wear. We also know that everyone has a different-sized wrist, so we try to see how it fits and feels on a variety of people.

Then we look at how it stands up to wear and tear with daily life. Some smartwatches offer increased durability like dust resistance, or water resistance that's suited for activities like scuba diving and where possible we'll test this out for ourselves.

## Battery life



Google Pixel Watch 2 with the charger attached vertical James Martin/CNET

Battery life will vary depending on how you use a smartwatch, so we test battery life with a few standard tests. We see how long it generally lasts on a single charge with features that represent typical use, like the always-on display, sleep tracking and doing an outdoor workout with GPS.

## Fitness and health sensor accuracy

We test the accuracy of smartwatch sensors in a couple of different ways. For example, the heart rate sensor is compared against the readings taken from a chest strap, considered the gold standard in consumer heart rate tracking. We compare readings from the watch against the strap for resting heart rate, and heart rate during a variety of cardio-based activities like running or cycling. We check to see how long it takes to connect to a GPS signal when doing an outdoor workout.

Other health sensors, like a blood oxygen sensor, are compared against a pulse oximeter for spot readings where possible.

## OUR EXPERTS



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