

## People are wearing their Apple Watch on their ankles. Here's why

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(Image credit: Apple)

For anyone confused, I can confirm that the [Apple Watch](#) is designed to be worn on the wrist. It's a watch, not an ankle monitor for the probation service. But it seems some users beg to differ.

It's being reported that increasing numbers of people (perhaps around 10) have started wearing their Apple Watch on their ankles instead of on their wrists. A fashion fad, you may think. But it turns out that there's a more technical reason

behind the unconventional use (see our guide to [Apple Watch generations](#) for an overview of the different models).

A lot of people buy Apple Watch's because of the fitness tracking features, from step counting to heart rate and respiratory rate monitoring. But some users have reported inaccurate step counts, which they ascribe that to the Watch being on their wrist.

There's some logic to it. A wrist may not be the ideal place to detect and track movement of the feet. Over on Apple's own [community forum](#), an Apple Watch Ultra 2 user reports phantom steps being counted while he drove a vehicle with a manual gearbox and even while sitting at a desk, presumably because of arm movement.

In contrast, some chefs have reported low step counts despite walking around a kitchen all day and suspect it's because they had things in their hands. Other users report that steps go uncounted if they push a stroller or lawnmower while they walk and while using some treadmills. In theory, wearing the device on your ankle should mean that it will detect movement when you walk or run, and not when you're only moving your arm.



The Apple Watch Series 10 how it's supposed to be worn (Image credit: Apple)

Others issues cited in a report by the [New York Times](#) (yes, this is serious news) include tattoos, which Apple has confirmed can stop the Watch's heart rate sensor from picking up data correctly, skin conditions and small wrists. Meanwhile, healthcare workers who can't wear a watch on their wrist have also adopted the ankle position as a solution, apparently.

So should you wear you Apple Watch on your ankle? Apple hasn't commented on whether this provides any more accuracy, and may not have even tested it. It's just as possible that ankle wearing could reduce the accuracy of features like heart rate and calorie-tracking since these are calibrated based on the assumption that the Watch will be wristbound.

## How do smart watches and phones count steps?

Most devices combine several sensors and algorithms to estimate how many steps you take. An accelerometer measures acceleration to detect rhythmic patterns while a gyroscope can track orientation to detect rapid changes in direction. GPS data provides information on distance. Many devices also have an altimeter, which can measure small pressure differences to know if you went up stairs.

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