

Summary

The article describes essential tips and tricks for using an Apple Watch. It covers topics such as mastering the digital crown and side button, utilizing gestures for navigation and notifications, and customizing the watch face and complications.

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Whether you've just unboxed a new Apple Watch or upgraded your old one to watchOS 26, these tips will help you get the most from your wearable wonder

Got a new [Apple Watch](#)? Or just keen to get the most out of your existing one? These essential tips and tricks will get you started, from learning the basics of how your Apple Watch works through to the ins and outs of the best

new watchOS 26 features.

Tip-top top tips

Got other Apple gear you want to master? Check out our [iOS 26 tips](#), [iPadOS 26 tips](#) and [macOS 26 Tahoe tips](#).

Get started with these Apple Watch tips

Button up

It's well worth learning all the various functions accessed by manipulating the digital crown and side button in different ways:



- **Digital Crown:** click to switch between your watch face and apps / double-click to open the App Switcher / press-hold for Siri / turn to view and scroll the Smart Stack (on the watch face) or scroll content elsewhere.

- **Side button:** click to open Control Centre / double-click for Apple Pay / press-hold for shutdown options and

Medical ID / hold for five seconds for Emergency SOS.

- **Action button:** only available on Apple Watch Ultra, this highly customisable button can also work in tandem with the side button. [Visit Apple Support](#) for an overview of its available functions.

Give it a shot

All Apple Watches will take a screenshot when you press the Digital Crown and side button together. However, this needs activating in the **Settings** app: **General** > **Screenshots** > 'Enable Screenshots'.

Use gestures

You don't always need to paw at your watch. In watchOS 26, twist your wrist, 'flicking' the screen away to dismiss alerts and return to the watch face. Double-tap your finger and thumb together to select or scroll; cover the display to mute; and raise the watch to your mouth for instant Siri. (*Note: double-tap and wrist-flick require SE 3, Series 9, Ultra 2 or newer.*)

Think simple



Liquid Glass is certainly less in-your-face on an Apple Watch than on other gear but it's still worth taming – use Settings > Accessibility > 'Reduce Transparency'. Add further clarity in Settings > 'App View' by switching the chaotic grid to a basic list.

Cut the noise

Stop constant wrist buzzing by pruning notifications in the iPhone Watch app ('My Watch' > Notifications). Back on the watch, turn on 'Sound & Haptics' > 'Automatically Adjust Volume' in Settings so the volume matches local ambience. You can silence things entirely in Control Centre – and, on iPhone, assign different watch faces to Focus modes, to cut down on visual noise or surface relevant complications.

Lock it down

Set a four-digit unlock code in Settings > Passcode. Want something more complex? Turn off 'Simple Passcode' first. Hide the data in complications on a locked always-on display by disabling 'Show Data When Locked'. In the iPhone app, use Passcode > 'Unlock with iPhone' to auto-unlock your watch when it's being worn and your phone is unlocked.

Pause your rings

Under the weather but don't want to lose your exercise streak? Open the Activity app, tap your rings and you can then opt to pause them for the day, or until a custom date up to 90 days into the future.

Power up comms



Improve messaging

Thread backgrounds now carry over from your iPhone Messages. You can also use Live Translation and Polls on your wrist. But the real magic is Smart Actions, which pop up when you need them, such as 'Share Location' when someone asks where you've got to.

Screen calls

Similarly, new iPhone app features are mirrored on your watch, so you gain access to call screening and hold assist. Ideal for avoiding awkward chats and support queues.

Take care



Score your sleep

Strap your Apple Watch on at night and you'll wake up to a sleep score in the Sleep app, based on duration and quality. Skip this Apple Watch tip if obsessing over bad nights keeps you awake.

Get a buddy

Need motivation but can't afford a personal trainer? Turn on Workout Buddy, which works with runs, walks, cycling, HIIT and more. You'll need to download a voice first – and if it turns out that the voice later bugs you, swipe right during a workout and mute it.

Make it your own



Edit Smart Stack

The Smart Stack surfaces widgets based on context, like location. To refine it, scroll your watch face until you see Edit. Tap that, then pin, add or remove widgets to define what you want to see.

Tweak Control Centre

Click the side button to open Control Centre. Scroll down and tap Edit. Tap '+' and then add alternative buttons from Apple's apps or others.

Change your face

Long-press your watch face to enter edit mode. Tap Edit to adjust a face's appearance and complications, or scroll right and tap '+' to add a new one, perhaps from watchOS 26's added styles. And, as mentioned earlier, you can manage faces in the iPhone Watch app too.

Note it down



Read recents

Open Notes and you'll see collapsible sections: Pinned, Today, 'Last 7 Days', 'Last 30 Days' and then older months. Tap a note to read it. Images appear and some links work; hashtags do nothing for now.

Create a note

You can't edit a note on your watch, but you can create a new one by tapping the button at the bottom-right and then dictating (unless you like tiny keyboards). Notes sync via iCloud, so you can tidy everything up later on another device.

- Now read: [The best Apple Watch apps that we're actually using](#)

About

I'm a regular contributor to Stuff magazine and Stuff.tv, covering apps, games, Apple kit, Android, Lego, retro gaming and other interesting oddities. I also pen opinion pieces when the editor lets me, getting all serious about accessibility and predicting when sentient AI smart cookware will take over the world, in a terrifying mix of Bake Off and Terminator.

Areas of expertise

[To view the original source article, please click here.](#)

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