

The 8 best fitness trackers for each type of user



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It seems like every company makes a fitness tracker these days. Even Amazon has created one—and that's in addition to the seemingly endless stream of no-name brands offered on its website. Aside from some major names like Fitbit and Garmin, though, most consumers are unaware of what all is out there.

Smaller names like Oura and Whoop have drummed up some buzz for themselves by eliminating screens entirely and focusing on

very specific metrics, while the line between smartwatches and most other fitness trackers has become increasingly blurry.

I've strapped on just about every fitness tracker available, and I've sweated out at least my own weight-testing them. Below is the list of trackers worth your consideration, whether you're just starting your fitness journey or you're well along your way.

A note on testing

No one fitness tracker is best for every user. We all value different things, so these picks are sorted by their differing strengths. The best fitness trackers for most people are typically relatively inexpensive—around the \$200 mark. They last about a week between charges, have built-in GPS, support blood oxygen monitoring, offer music storage, and give free (not paywalled), actionable health data.

The short(er) version

- The two **best fitness trackers** for the widest range of people are the Apple Watch SE and Garmin Venu Sq. The newer Venu Sq 2 doubles the original's battery life but comes at double the cost of its predecessor. Simply put, at the ~\$200 mark, the Apple Watch SE and Venu Sq provide the best bang for your buck. They both have built-in GPS, accident protection, music storage, the requisite heart rate sensor, and free, actionable health insights. The Venu Sq has a blood oxygen sensor, which the SE lacks, as well as six days of battery life, compared to the Apple Watch's single day. A big reason the Apple Watch made this list is watchOS 9's advanced running dynamics and swimming "swolf" scores (the Venu Sq lacks running dynamics but calculates swolf), among a handful of other tracking and activity expansions. Otherwise, the two devices pretty evenly matched. Both

can connect you to a library of various workouts; Garmin's is free and mostly text-based (though it includes demonstration videos), while Apple's carries a monthly subscription fee of \$10 for access to trainer-led videos and programs.

- The **runner-up** is Fitbit's Charge 5. It offers perhaps the highest value of any tracker on this list, packing in sensors for ECG, blood oxygen, heart rate, built-in GPS, and an always-on display—all for less than \$130. It also has a good amount of useful feature, like Sleep Profiles to help you understand your unique sleep traits and Daily Readiness, which not only assesses your readiness to exercise every day but suggests specific workouts, yoga routines, or mindfulness routines from Fitbit's own library of content. But that library, like a lot of features (including Daily Readiness and Sleep Profiles), is paywalled by Fitbit Premium, which comes free for only six months. Another potential drawback is Fitbit's past history of product quality concerns. The Charge 5 has only one confirmed connectivity issue that's affecting some users, and the company's fix seems to have reduced incidences, though not entirely. Still, for all it offers, especially for beginners, it could be a good fit for many.
- Our picks for the **most stylish** trackers include the Fitbit Luxe, which looks like jewelry in certain colors. It offers much of what the Charge 5 does but without an ECG sensor or built-in GPS. It also comes with six months of Fitbit Premium for useful health insights and workout suggestions, making it a solid fitness tracker for casual- or beginner-level tracking. Garmin's Vivomove Series has some of the coolest hybrid watch technology on the market. Its hidden display illuminates while the watch hands realign to deliver unobstructed alerts and menus to tap and swipe through. Bolstering its value is Garmin's deep suite of free metrics and health insights. The Vivomove series has a small range

of devices to choose from for different needs, but they all pull off a more traditional and formal watch look.

- Fitbit's Inspire 3 is the **best tracker under \$100**. You won't find built-in GPS or music storage at this price point, but the Inspire 3 delivers high value for beginner/casual fitness enthusiasts, particularly because of its inclusion of six months of Fitbit Premium. The sleep and exercise insights—paired with a library of exercise and mindfulness content (more than 200 of each)—are great tools for new exercisers to learn and stay engaged. Even better, Fitbit's Daily Readiness feature recommends workouts from this library every day. That helps this tracker punch way above its weight class.
- The **best running, cycling, and swimming watches** are within Garmin's Forerunner Series. They deliver advanced running and cycling metrics (certain running dynamics require a chest strap heart rate monitor), GPS, music storage, heart rate monitoring, blood oxygen readings, and uniquely helpful training features. You can map and navigate runs or bike rides on your wrist, use tailored workout suggestions to train for a specific race on your calendar, and keep track of your training progress and impacts (aerobic, anaerobic, recovery) with easy-to-understand and meaningful proprietary metrics. Garmin's suite is my favorite toolbox for training on the market, and the Forerunner 955 and 255 build on that with a new Training Readiness feature and refined and expanded training tools. The 945 LTE even adds a cellular connection to enhance emergency service safety features. If you're a runner, cyclist, or swimmer, there's a Forerunner watch that can help you train more efficiently.
- If you're a **hiker, skier, seafarer, or outdoor adventurer** of any kind, Garmin's Fenix, Epix, and Quatix watches offer the best mix of high-end, sport-specific features and hardware. These highly ruggedized watches

have all of the best features discussed in the Forerunner series and build on them with solar charging, more robust materials like titanium, and even LED flashlights in some models. Multi-frequency GPS, boating- and sailing-specific tools, 10 ATM water resistance, and on-device topographic maps of roads, trails, and ski resorts are among the feature highlights you'll find in these series of watches. Battery life ranges from two weeks to a month in regular modes, but advanced power modes and solar options can extend that even further.

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