

The Pixel Watch 2 might kiss Samsung chips goodbye to improve battery

All the first Pixel Watch had to do was not suck. That won't be good enough for its successor, which is rumored to debut later this fall and be called the Pixel Watch 2. Its one job is to last longer than 24 hours, which is why it's both surprising and not so surprising that the next-gen smartwatch will reportedly be leaving Samsung processors behind.

According to *9to5Google*, the Pixel Watch 2 will sport Qualcomm's Snapdragon W5 Plus chip. The 4nm processor was announced last summer and promises double the performance and enable multiday battery life. On the one hand, this makes a ton of sense. The current Pixel Watch runs on Samsung's last-gen wearable chip, the 10nm Exynos 9110, and its battery life stinks compared to the competition. When I reviewed it last fall, I got a paltry 12 to 15 hours if the always-on display was turned on. Without it, the watch *could* eke out roughly 24 hours if you babied the battery and made conscious, concerted efforts to save power whenever possible.

The dated processor was somewhat of a red flag, but realistically, performance was a bigger priority than multiday battery for the Pixel Watch. *Most* flagship watches last year got about that much. Expecting longer from the first-gen smartwatch right out of the gate? That's like Google expecting it could shame Apple into embracing RCS this decade. Plus, Wear OS had historically been hamstrung by horribly slow performance.

But 2023 is a different story. The Apple Watch Ultra can get

multiple days on a single charge, and that's before enabling low-power settings. The Samsung Galaxy Watch 5 Pro also gets multiday battery life. Sure, maybe Samsung would've been alright with Google using the soon-to-be-last-gen Exynos W920, but the Galaxy Watch 5's battery life wasn't so hot when it first launched. (It's since improved thanks to software updates.) The Galaxy Watch 6 is rumored to have a newer chip, but it'd be reasonable if Samsung might not want to share it with Google.

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The thing is, we don't know how reliable Qualcomm's battery claims for the W5 Plus are yet because there's only *one* smartwatch that has it right now: Mobvoi's TicWatch Pro 5. I just reviewed that watch, and sure enough, it does get multiple days on a single charge. However, it's impossible to tell how much of a role the W5 Plus plays in that excellent battery life. The Pro 5 has a secondary ultra-low power display that dominates the screen the vast majority of the time and a giant 628mAh battery housed in a honking 50mm case. That's simply not a tack I see Google taking when the first Pixel Watch is a delicate, slim 41mm.

I'm also skeptical because Qualcomm has been saying for *years* that its hybrid chip architecture leads to excellent battery life. The Snapdragon Wear 3100 chip had a processor and co-processor. Wear OS watches with the 3100 chip still had crappy battery life. The Snapdragon Wear 4100 chips also had a processor and co-processor. I present to you the Fossil Gen 6 Wellness Edition and its cruddy battery life. The Pixel Watch *also* had a co-processor paired with the Exynos 9110, and I already told you how bad that battery life was. Forgive me, then, if I'm not sold that the hybrid architecture alone is

the magic bullet Google needs.

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Song / The Verge

Another complicating factor is the fact that *9to5Google* reports the Pixel Watch 2 will sport similar sensors to the Fitbit Sense 2 – including the continuous electrodermal activity (cEDA) sensor used to measure stress and a skin temperature sensor. Continuous health tracking drains battery, plain and simple. The more advancements you pack into a watch, the greater the battery drain. That's one reason why you never see Apple budge from that 18-day battery life estimate year to year. It's not that Apple doesn't iterate and improve on battery life in terms of hardware and software. It does. It's just also continually adding more and more features into the mix.

Still, it's clear Google has taken feedback about the Pixel Watch's lackluster battery to heart. At Google I/O earlier this month, it announced Wear OS 4 would be coming this fall and that better battery life (*and* cloud backups) was coming along with it. All these factors together make me hopeful that the Pixel Watch 2 will last longer than its predecessor. I'm just not sure by how much.

<https://www.theverge.com/2023/5/30/23742793/pixel-watch-2-fitbit-sense-2-qualcomm-snapdragon-w5-plus>