

# Why Your App Should Target Smartwatch Wearables

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It's no secret that the popularity of mobile phones has been growing aggressively since Apple introduced the iPhone in 2007. Today, 83 percent of the U.S. population has a mobile phone, and the number is still growing. Apple is now the most popular choice as the leading mobile phone vendor, with close to 46 percent of U.S. mobile phone subscribers using an iPhone, followed by Samsung in second place with a 25 percent market share.

Smartwatch wearables were made popular by Samsung when it introduced its Samsung Galaxy Gear in 2013. Apple took notice and quickly started its own R&D, which introduced the Apple Watch in 2015.

Smartwatch wearables are now seeing the same trend as mobile phones in popularity, with a projected increase from over 66 million units sold worldwide in 2019 to over 105 million sold units in 2023.

## The importance of making your app available for smartwatches

Apple and Samsung are the market leaders in smartwatch sales with a combined market share of over 61 percent. Apple holds a 48 percent market share, and Samsung owns just over 13 percent.

Apple shipped 106 million units worldwide in 2019 and 30 million in only Q2 of 2020. Even though iPhones are Apple's main revenue generator, their smartwatches currently account for more than 10 percent of revenue.

Having those numbers in mind, you don't want to underestimate the importance of targeting both iOS and Android mobile phones and smartwatches when you develop your app, or you risk losing part in an aggressively growing market.

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## **How to build apps for smartwatches**

When it comes to building your app for a smartwatch, it's important to understand how users are going to interact with your app, both from a user experience standpoint and a technical standpoint.

Knowing the possibilities and limitations for each specific watch model is important so you don't end up with an app that people can't figure out or don't want to use. Also, make sure to take advantage of every feature the smartwatch offers (for example, virtual assistants, health tracking and the ever-growing addition of new hardware inclusions). The process of building a smartwatch app is otherwise similar to mobile app development.

## **Is your app suitable for a smartwatch?**

You're sold on the idea of the importance of targeting the smartwatch market, how do you know if your app is a good candidate for it? To answer that, you have to think from a user's viewpoint.

First and foremost, your app must bring convenience to the user – and it has to be better than your phone at it.

The most popular smartwatch app category is fitness. The reason? Convenience. Not having to carry the phone when running outside or lifting weights in the gym is a huge plus for many people.

With the smartwatch, you are still able to listen to music, record your progress, track your health, read incoming messages and even take a phone call. All without the inconvenience of lugging the phone around, the risk of dropping it or it getting stolen.

But there are plenty of other categories where smartwatches shine, including communication, contactless payments, health and medical, navigation and streaming audio.

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## **Smartwatch advantages over mobile phones**

We are used to mobile phones making the daily grind of tasks easier, and mobile phones can perform most of the tasks you can do with a smartwatch. But there are a lot of things you just can't do on a mobile phone because phones don't have the advanced hardware that's embedded in smartwatches.

The most popular smartwatches include technology to monitor your vital body signs such as heart rate, blood oxygen level, ECG and blood pressure. That, combined with a gyroscope, barometer, GPS and accelerometer offer features not available on a mobile phone.

Armed with that information, apps can help with a multitude of tasks, including engaging people with a healthier lifestyle or even saving lives with features like Apple's smartOS dialing

9-1-1 if it detects the watch's wearer has fallen and his or her heartbeat is dropping.

Think about what distinct smartwatch features your app could take advantage of.

## **User interaction with your app**

One of the most important things to consider is the user interface (UI) and user experience (UX). A smartwatch screen is very small compared to a mobile phone, and the information should be presented both legible and limited. The gestures (swiping and clicking) must be intuitive to avoid confusion or even app deletion.

Some screens are almost square, some are round, and some are long and rectangular. Your app must be designed for the device(s) it is targeting. Use minimal text and intuitive navigation, focus on the meat of your app, and get rid of less important/filler content.

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## **A smartwatch app can't do everything**

While hardware technology is evolving rapidly and the line between what mobile phones and smartwatches can do become blurrier, smartwatches and their apps are still not capable of the same as their big brother.

Smartwatches are mostly limited by battery life and their smaller CPUs, so for more processor-intensive tasks, you still need a mobile phone companion. However, in tandem, they are a strong pair and supplement each other greatly.

# Include smartwatches when building your app

There's no doubt smartwatches are the wearable of today and the future. Don't underestimate the importance of frustrating your app's users due to a lack of smartwatch support if your app's purpose warrants it. Instead, embrace the technology and start thinking about what conveniences you can offer your audience.

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