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Best Running Watches of 2024

By [Jon Martindale](#)



Reviewed by [Marlo Jappen Porto](#)

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Running watches come in a range of shapes and sizes. What works for one runner may not work for another. Thus, we came up with a list of the best running watches that cover a range of brands and models to suit different tastes and budgets.

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Best Overall

Garmin Forerunner 265 »



PROS:

- ✓ Tracks a range of useful personal health information
- ✓ Large vibrant display screen
- ✓ Comfortable fit

CONS:

- ✗ Somewhat pricey
- ✗ Lacks full route mapping

[Buy From Amazon](#)

A top-tier running watch needs to tick all the basic boxes as well as provide comfort with a durable build quality. The Garmin Forerunner 265 fits the bill for many, as it’s comfortable to wear for long periods, syncs up well with your [phone](#) via Bluetooth and a range of useful accessories through ANT+ (a technology that makes it possible for different wireless devices to “talk” to one another), and offers a lot more than just basic navigation and heart rate monitoring. It can track your sleep, recovery, heart rate variations, exercise quality, and more, which you can access in real time or a morning health report.

The navigation in this watch isn’t its strongest feature and it could do with being a bit brighter during those quick glances after the watch has been inactive, but other than that, you get a lot of perks for your money. You can leverage all the data it tracks to give you an idea of how ready you are for a big event. Planning to run a marathon? This running watch can provide you with a training readiness score, race adaptive training, and personalized suggested daily workouts.

Specs

List Price:	\$449.99
Connectivity:	ANT+, Bluetooth
Battery Life:	Up to 13 days in Smartwatch Mode
Screen Size:	1.3 in.

[Buy From Amazon »](#)

Best Budget

Amazfit Band 7 »

**PROS:**

- ✓ Affordable price
- ✓ Strong water resistance
- ✓ Range of color options
- ✓ Supports 120 different sports modes
- ✓ Tracks a range of health metrics
- ✓ Supports Alexa voice commands

CONS:

- ✗ No automatic brightness adjustment
- ✗ Lacks internal GPS tracking and contactless payment options

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Who said you need to spend hundreds of dollars to get a great running watch? With the Amazfit Band 7, you get everything you need for tracking your next run. Despite its affordable price, it's still comfortable to wear and comes with a long list of color options for the wrist strap. You can purchase replacement bands in different colors if you want a variety to match your style.

Internally, this watch tracks your sleep, heart rate, blood oxygen level, recovery time, menstrual cycle, stress levels, and more. That’s a lot of metrics for such an affordable band! Sure, it doesn’t have some of the more advanced, modern features such as built-in GPS tracking. (It uses your phone.) It also doesn’t adjust brightness automatically, and it lacks any kind of near-field communications (NFC) for payments. However, it does support Alexa for voice commands. It’s a fitness band that works really well as a running watch, making it a very affordable way to get the data you need on yourself and your workouts.

Specs

List Price:	\$49.99
Connectivity:	Bluetooth 5.2 BLE
Battery Life:	Up to 18 days
Screen Size:	1.47 in.

[Buy From Amazon »](#)

Best for Beginners

Garmin Forerunner 55 »

**PROS:**

- ✓ Intuitive interface
- ✓ Affordably priced compared to higher-end models
- ✓ Compact utilitarian style
- ✓ Silicone wrist strap is strong and comfortable
- ✓ Works with Garmin Connect coaching
- ✓ Can track workouts and suggest daily fitness targets
- ✓ Tracks a number of important health factors

CONS:

- ✗ Screen is notably smaller than other running watches
- ✗ Battery life limited to 20 hours in GPS mode

[Buy From Amazon](#)

If you're new to running watches, starting with one that doubles as both a GPS tracker for running and a general [smartwatch](#) is a great way to get a

versatile tool you can use every day even if you aren't running every day. The Garmin Forerunner 55 has an excellent array of features with impressive specifications that make it a capable running watch and one that you'll be glad to wear day to day no matter what you're doing.

It has a comfortable and breathable silicone strap and a clear, bright screen that's easy to navigate while you're running. Its intuitive design is easy to pick up and learn, giving you access to powerful tracking features without the need to dig through menus or customize them in a specific way before you get started. The Garmin Forerunner 55 is a running watch you can just grab and go.

Specs

List Price:	\$186.99
Connectivity:	ANT+, Bluetooth
Battery Life:	Up to 14 days in Smartwatch Mode
Screen Size:	1.04 in.

[Buy From Amazon »](#)

Best for Marathon Training

Polar Vantage V2 »

**PROS:**

- ✓ Provides in-depth training and recovery insights
- ✓ Clean, minimalist design and look
- ✓ Wrist strap is robust and breathable
- ✓ Back-end app is impressively deep and broad in its capabilities
- ✓ Supports 130 sports profiles
- ✓ Works with a range of tracking accessories

CONS:

- ✗ Expensive
- ✗ Lacks ANT+ support

[Buy From Amazon](#)

Running a marathon is serious business, so you want a running watch that takes your training seriously, too. The Polar Vantage V2 tracks just about

everything you can think of when you're training, when you're not training, and when you're asleep. Together, these metrics paint a compelling picture of your fitness, overall health, and activity levels, which gives you lots of information to work with when it comes to planning your next marathon.

The build quality is excellent with a strong and comfortable wrist strap design. It's proprietary so replacement options are limited, but the ones you have are attractive and varied. While the battery life isn't the longest available on the market, you can get up to 100 hours in GPS mode with the battery-saving features enabled, which is more than most other smart running watches.

Specs

List Price:	\$499.95
Connectivity:	Bluetooth BLE
Battery Life:	Up to 7 days
Screen Size:	1.2 in.

[Buy From Amazon »](#)

Best With Advanced Features

Garmin Fenix 7X Pro Sapphire Solar »

**PROS:**

- ✓ Impressive route tracking and mapping
- ✓ Includes expansive local storage for media, maps, and tracks
- ✓ Supports solar charging

CONS:

- ✗ Very steep price tag
- ✗ Heavier design may not be suitable for slender wrists

[Buy From Amazon](#)

More than just a running watch, the Garmin Fenix 7X Pro Sapphire Solar does what other running watches do and much more. It has multiband GPS support, a comfortable fit (albeit a heavier one), masses of local storage, incredible battery life boosted by solar charging, and a built-in flashlight for nighttime excursions. The active-matrix organic light-emitting diodes (AMOLED) display is pretty bright, too, ensuring that you can view it no matter what weather you're running in.

Mapping and route tracking with this device is excellent, with access to shaded relief maps giving you greater insight into the topography of your runs. That's where the 32 gigabytes of onboard storage really shines

because you can download highly detailed maps of the area where you’re running. If you pay for a subscription to Outdoor Maps+, you can access an even greater array of satellite imagery for the maps. It tracks your health metrics in great depth, too, giving you detailed training and recovery recommendations and long-term analyses of your fitness and health goals.

Specs

List Price:	\$899.88
Connectivity:	ANT+, Bluetooth, Wi-Fi
Battery Life:	Up to 37 days with solar charging
Screen Size:	1.4 in.

[Buy From Amazon »](#)

Best for Route Navigation

Polar Grit X Pro »

**PROS:**

- ✓ Komoot-powered navigation is detailed and intuitive
- ✓ Track Back support gets you back to where you started
- ✓ Route profiles help you visualize elevation and distance
- ✓ Extreme durability with military-grade testing

CONS:

- ✗ Expensive
- ✗ Screen is a little dull

[Buy From Amazon](#)

To have a full understanding of your runs, you need to know where you've been, where you're going, and where you are currently. Few smartwatches can offer the tracking capabilities of the Polar Grit X Pro presented in such a comprehensive fashion and with such a robust and durable device. It's built for military-grade durability and gives you access to incredibly detailed tracking information. Coordinates, compasses, and other tools are just a

swipe away, and you can also access detailed route profiles to understand the cadence of the trails or track you’re pounding along.

It supports multiband GPS so wherever you are in the world, you’ll know it. Plus, with Track Back support, you can get back to where you started with little difficulty. This device’s on-screen instructions are intuitive and easy to read, though the limited brightness on the screen can make it harder to read on sunny days. The in-depth fitness and health tracking help you to maximize your workouts and recovery periods for the best results.

Specs

List Price:	\$529.95
Connectivity:	Bluetooth BLE
Battery Life:	Up to 7 days in Watch Mode
Screen Size:	1.2 in.

[Buy From Amazon »](#)

The Bottom Line

“The most important feature of a running watch is its accuracy in tracking distance and pace, crucial for training effectiveness,” says certified trainer at Workout Healthy Chris Pruitt. “The investment in a running watch varies, but quality options offer extensive features beyond running, justifying higher prices.”

We chose the Garmin Forerunner 265 as our top pick because it can work for many individuals. It tracks a range of health metrics and offers a large screen and a comfortable fit.

Things To Consider When Buying Running Watches

Size and Fit: Some people like to wear a big and chunky watch, and some people don't. That can relate to your wrist and hand size, but often it's just a case of personal style and taste. You can get a good idea of how big a running watch is by its screen size, but your best bet is to check the dimensions. Compare them with another watch you've worn before and see how that might look and feel on your wrist.

Battery Life: Battery life for running watches varies wildly not just between models but also depending on how you use them. The best running watches will have batteries that last for 30 days or more without needing a recharge, but that tends to be restricted to those with additional solar-charging capabilities or those functioning in lower power modes. When even the best running watches are in GPS mode with the screen brightness on high, music playing, and Bluetooth enabled, you'll find the battery doesn't last as long.

"Battery life is critical," says Pruitt. "[High-end running watches] ensure a balance between comprehensive features and battery longevity, typically offering a full day of use, making them versatile for runners' needs."

Ease of Use: Running watches are mostly designed to be easy to use since they have limited forms of interaction compared to larger devices like phones and [tablets](#). However, the way individual watches work can be quite different depending on their operating system and input options, so look at individual reviews to make sure the watch you're interested in is intuitive. That said, if you're quite tech-savvy and don't mind learning a new proprietary system, you may not need to worry about ease of use quite so much.

"The most important feature of a running watch is functionality," says running coach Will Baldwin. He recommends a watch with a split button – a feature that separates intervals – for serious runners. "You hit this button when you stop or start any intervals or segments so you can view its stats separately from the others," he says. "If you're running an interval workout, you need to be able to see the paces of each individual segment. What gets measured gets managed."

Navigation: Most running watches outside of the most basic models offer some form of navigation. Cheaper running watches will use the GPS signal from your phone to triangulate your position, which is just as good as your phone is, so quality will vary from person to person and device to device.

The best running watches, however, support multiband GPS. That's when they support the U.S. GPS as well as the equivalent satellite navigation systems from elsewhere in the world like the EU's Galileo or Russia's Glonass systems.

Some running watches offer intuitive navigation, too, with on-screen turn prompts or audio prompts about where to go, which can make running routes you don't know a lot easier.

Music Integration: Running watches can offer pure navigation, mapping, and health tracking with no music interaction, but that's quite rare. Most will have some form of music player that you can use to listen to your favorite songs, podcasts, or audiobooks while on the go. In some cases, these devices pull those tracks from your connected phone, but some can store music and other audio locally. That lets you go for a run without a phone at all – just your watch and your [headphones](#). (Don't forget your running shoes, though!)

Advanced Features: Some fun advanced features that you might want to consider paying extra for include solar charging, which can enhance battery life; a brighter AMOLED screen with greater contrast and vibrant colors for enhanced readability; advanced training data for tracking your runs in greater depth; extra exercise modes so you can use your running watch for swimming, cycling, or a range of other workouts; and, in some cases, integration with health tracking ecosystems so you can utilize your running data to build a better profile of who you are as an athlete.

Some running watches can support a wide range of accessories including more comprehensive heart rate and oxygen monitors, weighted systems for improving resistance, and torches and other safety equipment. These watches can integrate trackers, sensors, and equipment into your overall running experience in a more comprehensive fashion.

Style Options: Almost all running watches come with a choice of colored bands, but there are some that have color options for the face, too. This is arguably the least important part of a running watch when it comes to functionality, but nobody wants

to wear a watch they don't like the look of. Check if your watch has standard silicone bands because those can be easily replaced with a wider array of third-party alternatives.

The more high-end running watches may also come with a choice of materials. That often relates to the type of glass used on the watch face but can also factor in the wristband materials. Some are metal rather than silicone, though that's not common. This plays into the functionality and durability of the running watch as much as its style, so consider all factors carefully if you find the aesthetics of your running watch an important part of your purchasing decision.

How We Chose the Best Running Watches

Our contributor, Jon Martindale, spoke to several running watch owners and experts: [Beacherpa](#) founder Hamza Ben, who is a long-time running watch owner and travel gadget guru; professional running coach [Will Baldwin](#); certified trainer at [WorkoutHealthy](#) Chris Pruitt; and running enthusiast and owner of [halfmarathons.net](#) Michael Mazzara, among others.

Martindale also researched user reviews to consider the opinions of general users and performed a deep dive into the specifications and features of popular running watches. He considered factors like the running watches' display type and size, weatherproofing, fit and size, tracking and navigation, battery life, music integration, and charge speed.

WHY YOU SHOULD TRUST US

[Jon Martindale](#) is a tech journalist with 20 years of industry experience. He has written for DigitalTrends, Forbes, PCGamer, and many other publications. Having interviewed many analysts and experts over the years, he prides himself on being able to distill complex topics into easily digestible recommendations. To Martindale, the best running watches are affordable and offer robust navigation and media support.

FAQ

What's the difference between a running watch and a fitness tracker? +

Are running watches waterproof? +

What type of running watch is most durable? +

Can a running watch help to improve my performance? +

About Our Team



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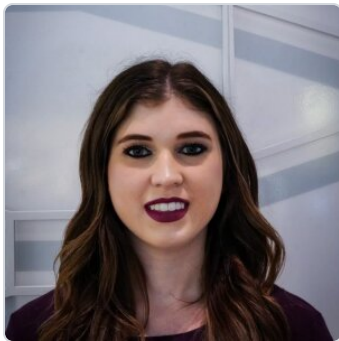
Jon Martindale is an author and tech journalist with 20 years of industry experience. He's written for a number of major publications, including U.S. News, Forbes, DigitalTrends, and PCGamer, among others. He prides himself on being able to distil complex information down into digestible formats that entertain as much as they inform. He is an avid PC builder and gamer, and enjoys tinkering with the latest generations of a

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