

Apple Watch shopper's guide: What you need to know before buying

December 18 2019, by Jefferson Graham



The Apple Watch is far and away the best-selling watch in the world, at least according to Apple, and many are looking to put a new Watch under a certain tree this holiday season.

Starting at \$199 for the older Series 3 model (the lowest price ever for an Apple Watch), the device is a relative bargain in an Apple universe that sees top-line products like the iPhone, iPad Pro and the 16-inch MacBook Pro selling for huge price tags, like starting at \$649, \$799 and \$2,800.

But consumers just might have a lot of questions about which models and features are right for them before they purchase.

What you need to know.

You need an iPhone.

The Apple Watch is not compatible with Android phones like the Samsung Galaxy series. What about just using it as a plain watch? No dice. You still need an iPhone to set up the Watch, so if you're not in the Apple world, forget about it. And Apple is specific about which model you'll need. The Watch only works with iPhones dating back to the 6S, from 2014. So if you've held onto your old iPhone 6 or 5S, sorry, it's not compatible.

GPS edition or Wi-Fi/cellular?

The GPS editions of the Watch are \$100 cheaper, but they require you to have an iPhone on you when you're using the Watch for things like

receiving notifications, calls, streaming music, use apps, talk to the Siri personal assistant and the like. Spend the extra money, and you can do all of the above when out and about (like joggers or stand up paddlers might want to do), but again, you'll pay for it. You need to spring an extra \$10 monthly on your wireless service plan in addition.

Which models are available?

This year's Watch [edition](#) is Series 5. Apple has discontinued Series 4 from 2018, but it's still pretty widely available at Best Buy (\$349) and Amazon (\$329) for the GPS edition. Apple is selling Series 5, Series 3, a Nike-themed edition starting at \$399, a luxury Hermes branded edition and a titanium model called the "Watch Edition," that start at \$1,399. Series 3 is only available as a GPS model.

Series 3 vs. Series 5?

The earlier editions of the Apple Watch were stymied with a watch face that was dark much of the time. If you wanted to know what time it was, you needed to stir the watch to life. For this new perk, on the Series 5 Edition, you can pay for the privilege. This watch starts at \$399, or \$499 with the ability to connect to your wireless provider and make [phone calls](#), compared to \$199 and \$299 for the earlier [model](#).

Other features of the 5: a larger watch face at 44 millimeters, compared to 42 on the Series 3, thinner body (10.7 mm) an electrical heart sensor, compass and fall detection, which had been introduced on the Series 4 watch.

But if you do have an Android phone...

If you have an Android phone and want a smartwatch, you'll want to

look at armpieces featuring Wear OS by Google (which can work with Android phones as well as iPhones) from makers such as Fossil or Samsung with its Galaxy-branded watches. Samsung's own Galaxy watch line starts at \$179.

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