

Smartwatches

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Remember the old Dick Tracy comic strip and his futuristic watch? Watches used to simply tell time, either with an analog display (hour/minute hand) or with digital displays, perhaps with an “alarm” function. Now we have smartwatches: “wearable” portable devices worn on the wrist.

Features on smartwatches vary widely. One of the most popular uses for many people are fitness/health tracking: counting steps, active time exercising, heart rate monitoring, resting heart rate, and sleep time/quality. More advanced smartwatches have additional features: Internet connection, GPS, waterproof, fall detection, heart arrhythmia detection, make/receive phone calls/texts, oxygenation level tracking, e-payment options, maps of your walk, breathing reminders, “get up and move” reminders, and much more.

Smartwatches aren’t completely standalone; they are designed to synchronize their data, usually via Bluetooth, with an app on a smartphone, though some will interface with a tablet or computer. Data is stored and analyzed in the “cloud”. Some higher-end smartwatches have an option to connect to a cellular network.

Smartwatch apps that run on Apple, PC, and Android devices are included in the purchase of the smartwatch. The apps enable analyzing data and tracking over time (daily, weekly, monthly). The fitness tracking apps usually include setting goals (steps, sleep, activity, heart rate), challenges with friends, notifications on activity, nutrition tracking, and more.

Major brands of smartwatches include Apple, Samsung, Fitbit (now owned by Google), Amazon, Fossil, Garmin, as well as many others. Prices vary widely, based on feature set desired. While smartwatches don’t have a “jewelry” look, watchbands can be purchased in a variety of styles and colors to be more fashionable and swapped to coordinate with clothing.

Links to more information can be found by doing Google searches on “best smartwatches for 2021”, “best budget smartwatch”, and “best fitness trackers” or at OTLC Tech Articles page on www.oakmont-learning.org.