

Apple Watch Series 5 vs. Apple Watch Series 4: Is it time for an upgrade?

By Simon Hill September 17, 2019 4:49AM PST - Digital Trends

Apple Watch Series 5 Hands-on Review

The new Apple Watch Series 5 is a minor update to Apple's smartwatch lineup, but it remains the best. The new always-on display is the cherry on top.

Last year's [Apple Watch Series 4](#) was so good, and so far ahead of the competition, that you could make a strong argument that [Apple didn't need to update it](#). Nevertheless, we have the Apple Watch Series 5. At first glance, it is identical to its predecessor, but a few upgrades are lurking within and we're about to explain exactly what has changed.

Specs

	Apple Watch Series 5	Apple Watch Series 4
Display size	1.57 inches/1.78 inches	1.57 inches/1.78 inches
Body size	40mm: 40 x 34 x 10.7mm 44mm: 44 x 38 x 10.7mm	40mm: 40 x 34 x 10.7mm 44mm: 44 x 38 x 10.7mm
Resolution	324 x 394 pixels/368 x 448 pixels	324 x 394 pixels/368 x 448 pixels

Touchscreen	40mm: 1.57-inch LTPO OLED Retina display w/ Force Touch 44mm: 1.78-inch LTPO OLED Retina display w/ Force Touch	40mm: 1.57-inch LTPO OLED Retina display w/ Force Touch 44mm: 1.78-inch LTPO OLED Retina display w/ Force Touch
Storage	32GB	16GB
Wireless interface	Bluetooth 5.0, Wi-Fi 802.11 b/g/n, NFC, LTE	Bluetooth 5.0, Wi-Fi 802.11 b/g/n, NFC, LTE
Depth	10.7 mm	10.7 mm
Accelerometer	Yes	Yes
Gyroscope	Yes	Yes
Ambient light sensor	Yes	Yes
Heart rate sensor	Yes	Yes
Barometer	Yes	Yes
GPS	Yes	Yes
Compass	Yes	No
Water-resistant	Yes	Yes
Battery life	Up to 18 hours	Up to 18 hours

Price	From \$400	From \$400
Availability	Apple	Apple
DT review	Hands-on	5 out of 5 stars

Design and display



[Julian Chokkattu/Digital Trends](#)

The measurements and design are almost completely unchanged from the Apple Watch Series 4. Which is to say the Apple Watch Series 5 looks exactly the same and comes in the same two sizes with the same size of display. However, the headline feature is the addition of an always-on display that allows the Apple Watch to show the time constantly, like a regular watch, without you having to tap it or raise your wrist.

You'll also be able to keep an eye on notifications and whatever else you like to have on [your Apple Watch face](#). The body of your Apple Watch Series 5 may look the same, but the aluminum version is now made from 100% recycled aluminum and there's a new titanium option if you really want durability and you're not afraid to pay for it. We're also glad to see the return of the attractive ceramic case as an option.
Winner: Apple Watch Series 5

Fitness and health-tracking features



[Julian Chokkattu/Digital Trends](#)

Whichever Apple Watch you choose, you'll enjoy excellent fitness and health-tracking. The Apple Watch can automatically recognize many exercises, it has workout plans for everything from yoga to hiking, and all of the data is beautifully presented in the Health app on your iPhone. Both

Apple Watch models also offer activity reminders to spur you into action if you've been sedentary too long or encourage you to breathe and take a minute if you're stressed. There's also built-in heart-rate tracking and the option to [conduct an electrocardiogram](#) (ECG). WatchOS 6, which is coming to both devices, will bring a period-tracking app called Cycle, a Noise app to measure how loud your environment is, and a dedicated App Store so you can find the [best Apple Watch apps](#) on your wrist.

There was speculation that the Apple Watch Series 5 might introduce sleep tracking, but it didn't.

Winner: Tie

Battery life



Julian Chokkattu/Digital Trends

Apple says you can expect up to 18 hours of battery life from the Apple Watch Series 5, which is the same as the stated battery life for the Apple Watch Series 4. You may wonder how it achieved that without increasing the size considering that there's an always-on display to power now. Well, the screen simply switches the refresh rate from 60Hz to 1Hz, so less power is needed. We also assume that the new S5 processor inside is more power-efficient.

Winner: Tie

Special features



[Julian Chokkattu/Digital Trends](#)

We've already covered the always-on display in the Apple Watch Series 5, but that's not all that sets it apart. The newer Apple Watch also has a compass inside to enable much more precise positioning and help you to navigate. While you can

press and hold the power button on the Apple Watch Series 4 to contact emergency services in the U.S. the Apple Watch Series 5 expands that to the wider world, enabling you to contact local emergency services wherever you are. One last thing to mention is that Apple doubled the storage capacity in the Apple Watch Series 5 taking it to 32GB, while the Series 4 has 16GB.

Winner: Apple Watch Series 5

Price and availability

The Apple Watch Series 5 starts at \$399 for the GPS aluminum model and goes up from there; it's \$499 if you want to add cellular, titanium starts from \$799, and ceramic starts at \$1,299. Apple has now discontinued the Apple Watch Series 4, but you can likely still find stock at various retailers and it's probably worth looking out for discounts.

Overall winner: Apple Watch Series 5

Naturally, the Apple Watch Series 5 is better than the Apple Watch Series 4, but it's a minor upgrade. There's the always-on display, more storage, the compass, and a couple of extra (very expensive) options for the body material. If you already have an Apple Watch Series 4, then you really don't need to upgrade. But if you're buying your first smartwatch, or upgrading from an older model, the Apple Watch Series 5 is the one to get.

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