

Gift Guide: Five fitness trackers offer wide range

December 16 2014, by Anick Jesdanun



Fitness trackers, from left, Basis Peak, Adidas Fit Smart, Fitbit Charge, Sony SmartBand, and Jawbone Move, are posed for a photo next to an iPhone, Monday, Dec. 15, 2014, in New York. (AP Photo/Bebeto Matthews)

There are several fitness trackers to choose from, varying in what they measure and how easy they are to use. Here are five, ranked from budget to sophisticated, to give you a sense of the range available. By no means are these the only good offerings out there.

The basic ones are going to feel more like bracelets the width of a bandage. The last two resemble watches and have larger displays for advanced features, including heart-rate tracking. But they also may feel big on smaller hands.

Read also: [Gift Guide: How to pick the right fitness tracker](#)

Budget tracker: Jawbone Up Move (\$50, or \$65 with wristband, free app for iOS, Android):

This device feels cheap—because it is. The Move comes with a clip to attach to your waist, but you have to pay extra for a wristband, including a slim-width version for women. The wristband isn't easy to secure, but you can't beat the price.

You get most of the features available with pricier Up models. That includes basics such as steps and distance traveled, calories burned and sleep patterns. Last year's Up 24 (\$130) is slimmer and more stylish, but I found the Move's performance to be about the same as the 24, at least when using the wristband. The upcoming Up 3 (\$180) will also have a heart-rate monitor and additional sleep tracking.

With many of these [fitness trackers](#), don't expect a high degree of accuracy. Because the Move and the 24 count steps based on arm movement, I got credited with a half-mile from heavy clapping during Act 2 of "The Nutcracker." They also logged a 5.5-mile run as more than eight miles. With a rival device, the Fitbit Charge, I also got extra credit for washing the dishes, even with my feet stationary. These devices are good for those new to fitness, but serious athletes will want more.

None of the Up models has a display, though the Move uses an odd

system of blinking lights to show how far you are toward your goal.

Basic, but functional: Fitbit Charge (\$130, free app for iOS, Android, Windows):

This device is for you if you're looking to do nothing. Well, you still need to get off the couch, but the device automatically counts your footsteps and rewards you for hitting various milestones. For instance, you get a virtual Penguin March badge once you hit 70 miles—the distance emperor penguins make annually to their breeding grounds. The Charge also automatically detects how long you sleep and looks for signs of restlessness during the night. Many other devices, including the Ups, require you to manually switch to night mode for this analysis.

The Charge doesn't go too far beyond the basics. But coming soon: a \$150 Charge HR model will have heart-rate tracking, while a \$250 Surge model will also have GPS for more accurate distance logging. The Surge will also offer music playback controls and text notifications, while all three show you who's trying to call you when paired with a nearby phone.

Phone companion: Sony SmartBand (starts at \$100, free app for Android only):

Sony's fitness devices work with the company's Lifelog app, which is available only for Android.

The app isn't as clean or friendly as what you get with Jawbone or Fitbit, but it's great for those who are data hungry. The app tracks not only your

[fitness activities](#) but also your phone interactions—not that you really need a reminder that you checked the weather at 1:01 p.m. Relive your day by pressing a "play" button. The stick figure starts walking or running, for instance, as the app scrolls through those parts of the day.

The SmartBand Talk (\$170) lets you make calls from your wrist and see bits of texts and other message notifications that come to your phone. The regular SmartBand (\$100) lacks calling and messages and has no display. Everything gets viewed on the app. Sleep analysis is automatic on the Talk.

More sophisticated: Basis Peak (\$200, free app for iOS, Android):

Everything's automatic with the Peak, as with the Fitbit devices. A heart-rate monitor logs your pulse continually during exercise. Sensors even measure skin temperature and perspiration. The catch is the device needs to be snug around your wrist, or it won't work right.

The Peak skirts the distance-accuracy issue by showing only footsteps taken—not an estimated distance. My running pace is presented as steps per minute rather than the usual miles per minute. That information isn't very useful for me. Its app also annoys me in breaking up fitness activities into several segments whenever I take a short break—to cross the street, for instance.

But when I do find my various segments, I can get more details by tapping on the various charts and using my fingers to expand them. Apps for many other devices tend to be more limiting in what they present.

As with most consumer heart-rate monitors, readings will be off here and there. These devices are best used for tracking patterns over time.

The Peak tries to keep you motivated by rewarding you for habits such as getting eight hours of sleep at least twice a week. The Peak is supposed to offer message notifications, too, with a software update coming soon.

Personal coach: Adidas Fit Smart (\$199, free app for iOS, Android):

Nothing's automatic with this device. You need to manually start and stop tracking—which makes it more accurate, but also more work on your part. Unfortunately, the interface is clunky, and everything seems to take more steps than necessary.

Distances were inaccurate at first, but the Fit Smart makes it easier than most to calibrate. I told the device what the distance of a given run should have been, and readings have been fairly reliable since then. It's also automatic if you do a 12-minute assessment workout while carrying your phone.

The power of the Fit Smart is in Adidas' free companion workout programs. You set that up through the miCoach app. With running, you enter your goals and the date of your upcoming race. The app's calendar then fills up with training runs and strengthening exercises to do. A voice coach will guide you on your pace if you run with your phone. Otherwise, data from the Fit Smart syncs with the app, which then tells you how well you did meeting targets.

More information: Read also: [Gift Guide: How to pick the right fitness tracker](#)

Citation: Gift Guide: Five fitness trackers offer wide range (2014, December 16) retrieved 11 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2014-12-gift-trackers-wide-range.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.