

Apple Watch's six unmatched features

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The early reviews of the Apple Watch are pointing in one direction: It should save users a minute here and there, but the fact that many functions require an iPhone to be nearby cuts down on its usefulness.

The consensus may change as reviewers and consumers get to spend more time with the smartwatch, which Apple said Monday will go on sale April 24 at prices of \$349 to \$17,000 depending on the materials used. But for now, there are some Apple Watch features that do stand out, at least in comparison to other smartwatches. Here's a look.

APPLE PAY

The digital wallet system lets iPhone 6 users make purchases at stores without having a physical credit card anywhere nearby. Now, with the Watch, owners of an iPhone 5 or newer will be able to buy clothing, food and other goods without having their iPhone or [credit card](#) on their person. They'll just click a side button and tap the Watch on a payment terminal.

DIGITAL TOUCH

Consumers may end up enjoying causing a friend's Apple Watch to vibrate by sending them a digital poke or sharing their heart rate with someone by sending them pulsing-heart emojis. They can also draw and share a doodle much more easily than on other smartwatches. Apple calls the features new ways to communicate.

CROWN

Apple uniquely took advantage of a traditional watch feature - the dial on the side - by turning it into a scrollwheel. In introducing the Watch last year, Apple said users would like using the crown because trying to scroll by swiping a finger on the touchscreen would end up blocking so much of the tiny display. But whether users adopt what in early usage seems like a slower way to navigate is to be seen.

PHONE CALLS

Watch-wearers can answer calls from the Watch and then talk on the phone by talking to the Watch. Competing smartwatches typically allow phone calls to be answered, but the conversation has to happen on the smartphone because the watches don't have speakers. Talking to a wrist will make people look like special agents; the question is how many

social situations will it become acceptable for someone to do so. Apple's marketing materials note longer [phone calls](#) should be transferred to the iPhone, perhaps because calls are so draining on the Watch battery.

BATTERY

Apple claims its battery should last 18 hours, or about 90 checks of the wrist to deal with notifications along with a 30-minute workout and 45 minutes of app usage. The battery life is a selling point for the time being. The caveat though is other smartwatches that have promised day-long [battery life](#) haven't lived up to expectations, and they've been pounded in reviews as a result. Apple designed a beautiful charger that magnetically clasps onto the Watch, but few consumers would want to constantly worry about having another charger around.

HIGHER-QUALITY APPS

Companies that develop apps usually release them for the iPhone before making a version for Android devices. Because Apple controls both hardware and software, app-makers have to do fewer tweaks to ensure their program will work as intended on an Apple device. Android, which smartphone manufacturers can customize, sometimes requires more effort. The dynamic, plus Apple's strong brand, helps the company command attention from developers, and that focus has the potential to bring more refined apps to the Apple Watch than are available on competing smartwatches.

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