

# Review: Small life enhancements come with Apple Watch

May 6 2015, by Anick Jesdanun

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In this April 10, 2015 file photo, a customer tries on an Apple Watch at an Apple Store in Hong Kong. Apple Watch won't give you revolutionary lifestyle changes. Rather, you get a collection of small enhancements that add up, along with conversation starters with friends and strangers. (AP Photo/Kin Cheung, File)

Apple Watch isn't so much a lifestyle revolution as it is a collection of

small enhancements that add up.

Apple's smartwatch has a wider range of apps than rival watches from Samsung, Motorola and others. In my few weeks with one, I've been following my favorite baseball team more closely. I've walked to places without staring at a phone screen for directions. I've even stepped away from my desk more often—despite my annoyance at the watch for nagging me to move.

You'll find ways to use it if you decide to spend \$349 or more on one, though that isn't saying you absolutely need one. Think of it as a Swiss Army knife with a collection of tools that don't seem necessary—until you find yourself using them.

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## INFORMATION SNACKING

Notifications are central to the watch experience, whether that's a new message, breaking news or a score change involving the New York Mets. In some cases, I can dictate a reply or select a pre-written response. The current temperature appears on my chosen watch face with Mickey Mouse. I glance at the watch throughout the day, but I need the phone for anything deep.

Though I like not having to constantly pull out my phone, I have to resist feeling that everything's urgent. When the watch dinged during a massage, I held out for just a few seconds before the temptation to check took over. It was easier to resist with the phone in the backpack. It's a tricky balance getting the watch to enhance your life, rather than take it over.

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In this Sept. 9, 2014 file photo, Apple Watches displaying various modes of its exercise tracker app, Activity, are on display during an event in Cupertino, Calif. Apple Watch won't give you revolutionary lifestyle changes. Rather, you get a collection of small enhancements that add up, along with conversation starters with friends and strangers (AP Photo/Marcio Jose Sanchez, File)

## PASSES AND PAYMENTS

With Apple Pay on iPhones, I'm able to leave my wallet in my pocket to pay at several chains, including McDonald's and Whole Foods. With the watch, I'm able to leave my phone in the pocket, too.

The watch can also generate barcodes for Starbucks' payment card, Fandango movie tickets and boarding passes for some airlines. I don't have to fish for paper or a phone while carrying luggage or popcorn. But if the merchant's scanner isn't hand-held or adjustable, you might have to twist your wrist to align the barcode with the scanner. Or your wrist

might not fit under the scanner at all.

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## STAYING HEALTHY ... AND BEING LAZY

While fitness trackers typically focus on counting steps, Apple Watch tracks calories burned and minutes of exercise. It also pushes you to stand up and move around throughout the day. Three colorful rings display your progress, turning fitness into a game. Apps from outside parties offer additional features, such as a record of the route you ran.

I was worried that promised battery life is just 18 hours, given that I tax the watch and its heart-rate sensor with heavy exercise. But I haven't had problems as long as I charge it overnight. It's not designed for sleep tracking, as dedicated fitness devices such as Fitbit do.



In this March 9, 2015 file photo, the Apple Maps app is displayed on an Apple Watch during an event in San Francisco. Apple Watch won't give you revolutionary lifestyle changes. Rather, you get a collection of small enhancements that add up, along with conversation starters with friends and strangers. (AP Photo/Eric Risberg, File)

Offsetting the health benefits: I can use the Remote app to control video on Apple TV instead of getting up to grab the physical remote. I can also control the phone's camera for selfies. Parents with kids can set timers remotely for Nick Jr. and PBS Kids—and end arguments over screen time and bedtime.

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## EXPECTATIONS RAISED

In many cases, I need to assemble features from multiple apps. For walking and driving directions, Apple's Maps taps my wrist when it's time to make a turn. But it doesn't do transit. Citymapper does, but lacks turn-by-turn navigation to get to the subway. It's back to Apple Maps for that.



In this Sept. 9 2014 file photo, an Apple Watch featuring a Mickey Mouse face is tried out during an event in Cupertino, Calif. Apple Watch won't give you revolutionary lifestyle changes. Rather, you get a collection of small enhancements that add up, along with conversation starters with friends and strangers. (AP Photo/Marcio Jose Sanchez, File)

There no Facebook or any Google apps yet, though you get notifications that normally go to the phone. Facebook's Instagram is available and lets you like photos, but limits commenting to 24 emoticons.

I'm continually learning about new apps, including Evernote for dictating reminders and other notes. It'll take time for app developers to write the capabilities and for me to discover them. It'll also take time to fully get used to all the gestures and controls, though I was much better at it after a few days.

I have to remind myself that the Apple Watch is a first-generation product that's giving me a lot I didn't have before. With other smartwatches, I'm happy just to get basic functionality. Apple Watch is good at the basics, so I'm now demanding more.

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