

Review: Apple Watch Series 3 has LTE to stay connected without a nearby iPhone

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Apple has conquered the smart watch market.

Don't believe me? Look around.

Apple watches are everywhere—even on my wrist—and I'm a guy who hasn't worn a watch in over a decade.

My wife bought me a Seiko watch the year before we got married, and I wore it for years, but when my cell phone got small enough to carry in my pocket, I stopped wearing the watch.

Skip ahead 20 years, and my wife decided to get me an Apple Watch for our 25th wedding anniversary, and I've been wearing it daily for two years now.

I'm a fan of the Apple Watch, but I'm not sure I use

it to its fullest potential.

I don't use it to track my workouts, I just wear it to tell time and let me see my phone, email and text notifications.

Same great look

Apple's watch has a very iconic design, which Apple designer Jony Ive must be really pleased with, as this year's Series 3 Apple Watch looks exactly like the first two models.

I've been wearing the Apple Watch Series 3 (\$399, www.apple.com) for a few weeks now, and I'm happy with how it's performed.

The original Apple Watch is a great smart watch, but it needed help with exercise monitoring and communicating.

The follow-up Apple Watch Series 2 added GPS and water resistance up to a depth of 50 feet, so you could take it on a run or bike ride, and it would track your route on a map without having to be tethered to an iPhone. You could also take it to the pool to swim laps.

The Series 3 watch adds a cellular radio to the feature set so you can leave the phone at home and still make calls and stream Apple Music to your Bluetooth headset.

There are also some pretty cool new watch faces, including several with Toy Story characters.

Making a connection

My Apple Watch Series 3 came from Verizon, paired with an iPhone 7. The first two iPhone models needed to be wirelessly connected to an iPhone to make or take phone calls, but the Series 3 has its own LTE radio and can be added to your cellular plan for \$10 per month.

Once activated, the watch can make and take calls using the same number as your phone.

The LTE radio can also stream Apple Music to a connected pair of Bluetooth headphones. This makes the Apple Watch Series 3 perfect to take on a run or bike ride.

The cellular radio can also be used for Siri, email and text messages, but be warned, using the LTE radio instead of a connection with an iPhone will significantly reduce battery life.

The Series 2 watch has Siri, but it used the screen to display answers. The Series 3 lets Siri speak her answers to your questions.

Laying off the LTE brought two days of battery life, while using the watch with LTE meant looking for a charger by mid-afternoon.

You can still use the watch alongside the iPhone, and it's a fine smartwatch that does everything a lot faster than its predecessors because of faster S3 chipsets.

Configurations

Apple released two configurations for the Series 3—one with LTE and GPS (starting at \$399) and one with GPS only (starting at \$329).

Those starting prices are for the aluminum models. There are more expensive stainless steel and ceramic models available as well as a wide variety of watch bands.

Apple is also still selling the original Series 1 Apple Watch starting at \$249.

Should you upgrade?

I might not be the target market for the Apple Watch Series 3. To me, it's largely the same as my original Apple Watch.

The Series 3 adds GPS, LTE and water resistance. Those things are not enough to get me to upgrade as long as my watch is still ticking (so to speak).

If you are really into exercise and the idea of LTE without an iPhone nearby makes you excited, then the Series 3 is for you.

I'm sure when my Series 1 watch kicks the bucket, I'll be lining up for the latest model, but for now, I'm happy with my anniversary present.

Pros: Fast, LTE built-in, water resistant

Cons: None

Bottom Line: Apple keeps making the watch better. Series 3 is the best yet.

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