

Apple Watch Series 12 Reviews Focus on More Frequent Health Tracking

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In brief

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The Series 12 and Apple Watch Ultra 4 after a week with both models. The site called the new health hardware one of the biggest Apple Watch health upgrades in years. Wareable published a separate report on Apple's heart rate accuracy study, adding detail to the company's claim that the new system is the most accurate in a wearable.

More frequent heart rate readings

Apple says the Series 12 can measure heart rate every five seconds throughout the day. Older Apple Watch models generally checked background heart rate every five minutes when the wearer was mostly stationary. The new system also measures heart rate while the wearer is moving, which can capture changes during ordinary activities outside a recorded workout.

That creates a denser record of the day instead of a handful of isolated readings. The redesigned sensor array uses larger green LEDs, a new photodiode arrangement, and electrodes with more contact area. The S11 chip handles the additional processing. 9to5Mac says the watch also measures heart rate variability, or HRV, as often as every five minutes at rest, compared with roughly every two hours on earlier models.

More readings give the watch more data to work with. The usefulness of any health conclusion still depends on the sensor, the software, and how a person interprets the results.

Apple's accuracy claim still needs outside testing

Apple's study included 1,460 adults across five locations in the United States and Malaysia. Wareable reports that 1,254 participants supplied usable paired measurements. The test compared the Apple Watch Series 12 with the Garmin Forerunner 970, Google Pixel Watch 4, Huawei Watch 5, Samsung Galaxy Watch 8, Whoop 5.0, and Oura Ring 5, using a Polar H10 chest strap as the reference.

The study covered running, cycling, HIIT, strength training, walking, desk work, cooking, and rest. Across 159 comparisons, the Series 12 was more accurate in 139 cases with 99 percent confidence. Eighteen comparisons were unclear, and two favored another device.

Apple conducted the study and selected the test design, so the results support its claim within that comparison. Wearable says it plans to test the Series 12 and Ultra 4 independently. That follow-up will show how the sensor performs outside Apple's controlled comparison.

Readiness gives the data a simpler form

The Series 12 turns recent activity, training load, sleep, and vital signs into a Readiness score from 0 to 10. The score can change during the day as new information arrives, and the watch explains which factors pushed it up or down.

Whoop and Oura have offered similar recovery or readiness scores for years. Apple is bringing the same type of summary into the Watch and Fitness apps, with a scale that labels the result as Recover, Pace Yourself, Ready, or Go For It. The reviewer had only one score after a week because the feature needs seven days of sleep data, so its usefulness is not settled yet.

What buyers should know

The Series 12 and Ultra 4 are available from September 18, according to Apple's announcement. The hardware looks familiar, so the upgrade case rests on health tracking, Readiness, faster charging, and the new S11 chip.

As reported by 9to5Mac, they considers the update most worthwhile for owners of the Series 9, Ultra 2, or older models. People with newer Apple Watches have a narrower choice: upgrade for the higher-frequency health data, or keep the current watch and wait for independent testing of the accuracy claim and the later software features.

References

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