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GEAR

Pedometers catch up to the 21st century

Roy Wallack
Gear

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In the past, if you wanted to be sure to take 10,000 steps a day, you had to count them yourself.

That's because the decades-old mechanical pedometer never was very accurate and rarely worked in hills or if you broke into a trot. Enter the accelerometer, a gauge that flexes with acceleration and deceleration. It allows a new generation of electronic pedometers to be highly accurate no matter your speed or terrain or where you wear it.

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Wristwatch does double duty

High Gear VIA Wrist: Combination pedometer and wristwatch.

Likes: Wrist location is far more convenient, natural and easier to read than traditional waistband pedometers. Works as a regular watch when not used as a pedometer. Clock remains on-screen in pedometer mode. Button-activated night light stays on for 5 seconds. Includes an alarm and stopwatch. Good sports-watch looks.

Dislikes: None.

Price: \$50. (888) 295-4949; highgear.com.

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Counts steps and heartbeats

Oregon Scientific Pedometer with Pulse Meter: Combines a pedometer and a streamlined heart-rate monitor.

Likes: A low-hassle blend of two logical data partners. To get pulse, place a finger on the infrared sensor window. Measures steps, distance walked and calories burned, and stores them in memory for seven days. Includes elapsed time, an alarm and a motivating count-down timer. Has a backlight for night viewing.

Dislikes: Heart-rate monitors without chest straps are usually less accurate than those with them. Belt placement not as easy to read as wrist placement (i.e. High Gear, above).

Price: \$24.95. (800) 853-8883. www2.oregonscientific.com.

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Work out, then geek out by analyzing data

Omron Pocket Pedometer: Deluxe model that can download your workout information to a computer.

Likes: Viewing charts and graphs of your stats on your computer screen is highly motivating and fun. USB cable and software for inputting data included. Loads of valuable information: distance walked, calories and fat burned, number of aerobic steps (those at a pace of more than 60 steps per minute). The most recent seven days of data are displayed on the screen; latest stats are held in memory for 42 days. Can be set up for multiple users. Very convenient because it does not have to be worn on your belt; it works even while placed in a pocket or a bag.

Dislikes: Will overwhelm the technically challenged.

Price: \$49.99. (800) 634-4350; omronhealthcare.com.

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Simple model with popular features

Sportline 345: Basic flip-up, waist-belt ped with popular distance and calories-burned features.

Likes: Stylish. Simple, one-touch mode and reset buttons. Spring-loaded belt clip. Includes a clock. Will satisfy needs of most people.

Dislikes: Belt placement is harder to read than wrist display.

Price: \$24.99. (800) 338-6337; sportline.com.

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— Roy M. Wallack