

By [Heidi Adkisson](#)

The reviews and analysis on the Apple Watch have been voluminous—no surprise given the general buzz around Apple and the intense anticipation for the Watch specifically. However, reviews have been a mixed lot—from [glowing](#) to [glowering](#) to [in-between](#). Having purchased an Apple Watch about a month ago and worn it daily since then, I decided it was time to toss my perspective into the ring, both as a user and a UX professional.

Clearly these are the early days

From my perspective, the Apple Watch is sort of the Palm Pilot of smart watches. The Palm was not a mass-market product but a precursor to what would become one (the smartphone). It had the right idea, and was revelatory at the time, but the technical limitations were obvious. I loved my Palm Pilot—it had many devotees—but it was a niche product.

Small things, done well

As a life-long watch wearer, I've been amused by people who've discovered it's handy to have the time on your wrist! Since I already had the watch habit, a win for me has been the watch face complications—information that I see every time I check my watch.



My personalized Apple Watch face.

My complications include the date, activity status, current temperature, and my next appointment. The best way I can describe this display is that it gives me greater situational awareness—a small thing perhaps, but useful in navigating through my day.

The aspect I was most worried about—distracting notifications—has not materialized. Granted, I spent time tuning my notifications upfront, but overall getting notifications as wrist taps has been enormously helpful. Like many women, I carry my phone in my purse where it is nearly impossible to hear it ring or feel it vibrate. Now, if I'm running errands and my husband messages me to pick something up, I know immediately and can reply instantly. I also get notifications when a contact I've designated as a VIP sends me an email. If I'm otherwise occupied I've not had a problem disregarding a notification until I'm in a position to review it.

And having a timer on my wrist—again, this would seem to be a small thing but daily I find it quite handy when cooking, doing laundry, or remembering to switch on the radio for a baseball game. With Siri, it is particularly quick and easy to set a timer.

Third-party apps

I've found third-party apps to be hit and miss. One problem is performance, since no third party apps run natively on the Watch ([yet](#)). Instead, they run over Bluetooth, tethered to the phone. Compounding the tethering requirement is that the first wave of apps was developed before developers could see how they performed on the actual Watch hardware. Developer Marco Arment, for example, [re-wrote the Watch app for Overcast](#) after only one day of using it on a Watch.

I've set up some of my favorite apps as Glances—quick views that are available by swiping up on the Watch face.

My Apple Watch Glances.

My Apple Watch Glances.

I will pop into my Glances when I have small corners of time so I've been attracted to apps that give me quick bites of information. Right now these include the following apps:

- Fantastical
- OmniFocus
- MLB at Bat
- Yahoo Weather!

Somewhat initially surprising to me was that not all apps have Glances. I can see now this makes sense if there really isn't a meaningful Glance for the app (for example there is no Glance for the 1Password Watch app).

What I'm missing

The main barrier for me in using apps is that there is no way to selectively "pin" an app to display after the watch goes to sleep. You can configure the watch to always display the Watch face on wrist raise OR always resume the previous app. The problem with this is that in most daily use I want to see the Watch face. However, if a baseball game is in progress and I'm not in a position to listen to it, I want to see MLB at Bat on wrist raise. Or if I'm listening to a podcast on Overcast, I want to see the Overcast app on wrist raise. Or running a timer... Sure I can go into my phone and change the setting back and forth, but that defeats the purpose of doing

something on my Watch in the first place. Luke Wroblewski [has also noted the difficulty in using apps](#), but presented a slightly different solution to this problem.

Not yet tried

I've not yet used my Watch on a trip, but I expect my Watch will be a helpful travel companion. I have Apple Pay configured, but we shop mostly in our city neighborhood where there are few opportunities to use Apple Pay.

Conclusions

Overall I've been pleasantly surprised with how the Watch has worked its way into my daily routines. However, I have made a concerted effort to learn the options and think about how they could fit into my life. It's not something that is just out-of-the-box useful. It takes some tinkering to find the things that work practically and those that don't. And there are new modes of interaction to master: force press and the digital crown.

But for me it's been worth the time investment—not only to have access to the functionality, but to also get a glimpse into what the future holds for having smart things strapped to our wrists.

Heidi works in Interaction Design and is a Partner at Blink. She divides her leisure time between classical music, cooking, and the Seattle Mariners.