

Garmin Forerunner Series 2003-2023: 20 Years of Evolution

Updated: October 1, 2023 by Ryan Jones

Picture this: it's 2003, and the idea of wearable tech is still a far-off dream for most. But Garmin, a pioneer in the world of GPS technology, takes a bold step and releases the Forerunner 101, marking the beginning of what would become a legendary series of smartwatches for runners and triathletes.

Fast forward nearly two decades, and the Garmin Forerunner Series has evolved into a diverse range of watches, each packed with advanced features that cater to athletes of all levels.



Garmin Forerunner 101

In this article, we'll dive headfirst into the world of Garmin Forerunner watches, exploring the series' incredible evolution from its humble beginnings to its current state of sophistication.

We'll take a close look at each model and the innovative features it brought to the table, as well as the fascinating trends and shifts in technology that have shaped the Forerunner Series over the years.

So, strap on your running shoes and let's hit the ground running as we journey

through the remarkable story of Garmin's Forerunner watches!

No.	Model	Release Year	Display	GPS	Battery Life	Water Resistance	Wrist HRM	Music Storage	Triathlon Features
1	Forerunner 101	2003	Monochrome	Yes	15 hours	None	No	No	No
2	Forerunner 201	2004	Monochrome	Yes	15 hours	None	No	No	No
3	Forerunner 301	2005	Monochrome	Yes	14 hours	None	No	No	No
4	Forerunner 205	2006	Monochrome	Yes	10 hours	IPX7	No	No	No
5	Forerunner 305	2006	Monochrome	Yes	10 hours	IPX7	No	No	No
6	Forerunner 50	2007	Monochrome	No	1 year (coin cell)	30 meters	No	No	No
7	Forerunner 405	2008	Monochrome	Yes	8 hours (GPS), 2 weeks (watch)	IPX7	No	No	No
8	Forerunner 60	2009	Monochrome	No	1 year (coin cell)	30 meters	No	No	No
9	Forerunner 110	2010	Monochrome	Yes	8 hours (GPS), 3 weeks (watch)	IPX7	No	No	No
10	Forerunner 210	2010	Monochrome	Yes	8 hours (GPS), 3 weeks (watch)	IPX7	No	No	No
11	Forerunner 410	2010	Monochrome	Yes	8 hours (GPS), 2 weeks (watch)	IPX7	No	No	No

No.	Model	Release Year	Display	GPS	Battery Life	Water Resistance	Wrist HRM	Music Storage	Triathlon Features
12	Forerunner 610	2011	Monochrome touch	Yes	8 hours (GPS), 4 weeks (watch)	IPX7	No	No	No
13	Forerunner 910XT	2011	MIP Monochrome	Yes	20 hours (GPS)	50 meters	No	No	Yes
14	Forerunner 10	2012	Monochrome	Yes	5 hours (GPS)	50 meters	No	No	No
15	Forerunner 220	2013	Color	Yes	10 hours (GPS), 6 weeks (watch)	50 meters	No	No	No
16	Forerunner 920XT	2014	MIP Color	Yes	24 hours (GPS)	5 ATM	No	No	Yes
17	Forerunner 230	2015	MIP Color	Yes	16 hours (GPS)	5 ATM	No	No	No
18	Forerunner 235	2015	MIP Color	Yes	11 hours (GPS)	5 ATM	2.gen	No	No
19	Forerunner 630	2015	MIP Color	Yes	16 hours (GPS)	5 ATM	No	No	No
20	Forerunner 735XT	2016	MIP	Yes	14 hours (GPS)	5 ATM	2.gen	No	Yes
21	Forerunner 30	2017	MIP Monochrome	Yes	5 hours (GPS)	5 ATM	2.gen	No	No
22	Forerunner 35	2017	MIP Monochrome	Yes	9 hours (GPS)	5 ATM	2.gen	No	No
23	Forerunner 935	2017	MIP	Yes	24 hours (GPS)	5 ATM	3.gen	No	Yes
24	Forerunner 645	2018	MIP	Yes	14 hours (GPS)	5 ATM	2.gen	Music version	No
25	Forerunner 45S	2019	MIP	Yes	13 hours (GPS)	5 ATM	3.gen	No	No

No.	Model	Release Year	Display	GPS	Battery Life	Water Resistance	Wrist HRM	Music Storage	Triathlon Features
26	Forerunner 45	2019	MIP	Yes	13 hours (GPS)	5 ATM	3.gen	No	No
27	Forerunner 245	2019	MIP	Yes	24 hours (GPS)	5 ATM	3.gen	Music version	No
28	Forerunner 945	2019	MIP	Yes	36 hours (GPS)	5 ATM	3.gen	Yes	Yes
29	Forerunner 745	2020	MIP	Yes	16 hours (GPS)	5 ATM	3.gen	Yes	Yes
30	Forerunner 55	2021	MIP	Yes	20 hours (GPS)	5 ATM	3.gen	No	No
31	Forerunner 255	2022	MIP	Yes	28 hours (GPS)	5 ATM	4.gen	Music 4GB	Yes
32	Forerunner 955	2022	MIP	Yes	40 hours (GPS)	5 ATM	4.gen	Yes 16GB	Yes
33	Forerunner 265	2023	Amoled	Yes	30 hours (GPS)	5 ATM	4.gen	Yes 8GB	Yes
34	Forerunner 965	2023	Amoled	Yes	50 hours (GPS)	5 ATM	4.gen	Yes 32GB	Yes

1. Forerunner 101 (2003)



Garmin Forerunner 101 | Source: Reddit

Let's rewind to March 2nd, 2003, when the **Garmin Forerunner 101** made its grand debut. This clunky, brick-like device was the very first in the Forerunner Series, paving the way for future generations of smartwatches for fitness enthusiasts. Although the Forerunner 101 looks archaic by today's standards, it was a trailblazer in its time, offering runners and triathletes an innovative way to track their performance.

The Forerunner 101, despite its bulky appearance, packed a decent punch for its time. It came equipped with built-in GPS, maps, various training features, and even

a modest grayscale display. However, it was far from perfect. The FR 101 required two AAA batteries to function, and with a mere 14-15 hours of battery life, users found themselves constantly changing batteries or investing in rechargeable ones. Additionally, the watch lacked essential features we now take for granted, such as a heart rate monitor and water resistance.

Looking back, it's hard not to chuckle at the Forerunner 101 and its primitive design. Yet, it's essential to remember that this watch was a groundbreaking device in its time, setting the stage for the wealth of advanced features and sleek designs we enjoy in modern Garmin Forerunner watches. The 101 may have been a far cry from the sophisticated wearables we know today, but it was a necessary first step in the evolution of the Forerunner Series, and its legacy still resonates in the wearable tech world.

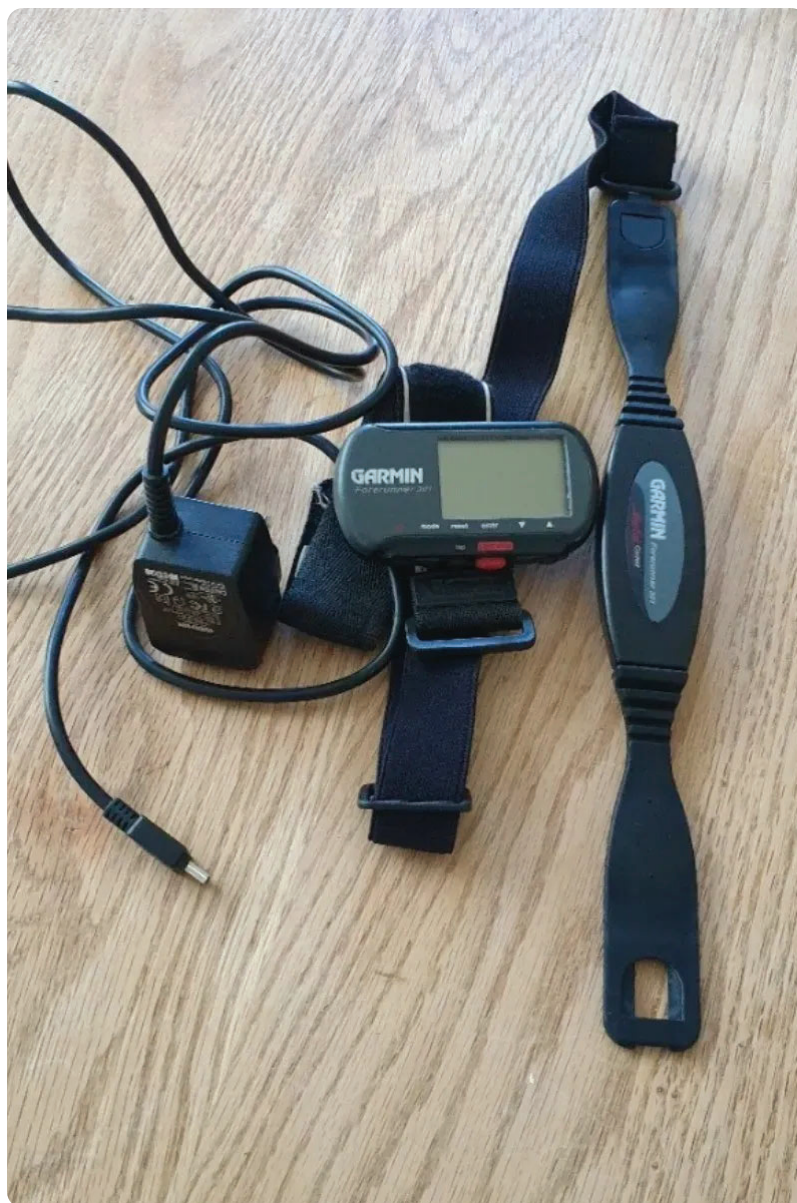
2. Early models: 201, 301, 205, 305 (2004-2006)



Garmin Forerunner 201

As Garmin continued to build on the success of the Forerunner 101, they introduced several new models in quick succession between 2004 and 2006. The 201, 301, 205, and 305 all retained the bulky design of the original, but each brought its own unique features and improvements to the table. While they still had their limitations, these early models were crucial stepping stones in the development of the Forerunner Series.

Introduction of heart rate monitor (Forerunner 301)



Garmin Forerunner 301 with HRM

In 2004, Garmin released the Forerunner 301, which was a game-changer for the series. One of the most significant innovations of the 301 was the introduction of a **heart rate monitor**, a feature that quickly became a staple in fitness wearables. With this addition, users could now track their **heart rate data** during workouts, providing valuable insights into their training and helping them optimize their performance.

Introduction of water resistance (Forerunner 205, 305)



Garmin Forerunner 205

In 2005 and 2006, Garmin launched the Forerunner 205 and 305, respectively, which brought another essential improvement to the series: water resistance. Although they weren't fully waterproof, these models could withstand splashes and sweat, making them more practical and versatile for a wider range of workouts. These early strides towards water resistance laid the foundation for later models to become fully waterproof, further expanding the capabilities of the Garmin Forerunner Series.

3. Transition to circular design and advanced features: Forerunner 50, 405, 60, 410, 405CX, 310XT, 110, and 210 (2008-2010)



Garmin Forerunner 50

The Forerunners 50 and 405 marked a significant shift in the series, as they were the first models with a round design. This change in form factor not only made the watch more visually appealing, but also provided a more ergonomic and comfortable fit on the wrist.

Enhanced GPS and battery life



Garmin Forerunner 405

During this period, Garmin worked on improving GPS technology and battery life

in their watches. Models like the 405, 60, and 410 featured better GPS accuracy and longer-lasting batteries, making them more practical for long runs and races.

Forerunner 405CX with advanced training features



Garmin Forerunner 405CX

The 405CX, an upgraded version of the 405, introduced more advanced training features, such as heart rate-based calorie computations and customizable data screens. These improvements catered to serious athletes who wanted to keep track of their progress and fine-tune their training.

Introduction of the Forerunner 310XT for triathletes

*Garmin Forerunner 310XT*

With the Forerunner 310XT, Garmin aimed to meet the needs of triathletes by offering a water-resistant watch with a longer battery life of up to 20 hours. The watch also included multisport features like the ability to track swim metrics and switch between sport profiles with the press of a button.

Simplified options with the 110 and 210



Garmin Forerunner 210

Garmin recognized the need for more accessible options for casual runners, which led to the introduction of the Forerunner 110 and 210. These models offered a simpler user interface, fewer advanced features, and a lower price point, making them ideal for beginners or those who wanted a no-frills GPS watch.

4. Advancements in display and connectivity: 610, 220, and 620 (2011-2013)



Garmin Forerunner 620

Color and touch displays

During this period, Garmin introduced touch screens in the Forerunner series, starting with the 610 model, and color displays starting with the 620 model. The

vibrant color displays provided better readability and aesthetics, while the touchscreens allowed for more intuitive navigation through watch menus and features.

Improved GPS accuracy and connectivity

Garmin continued to enhance the GPS capabilities of their watches. The Forerunner 220 and 620 both featured faster satellite acquisition and improved GPS accuracy. Furthermore, these models introduced Bluetooth connectivity, enabling easier syncing of data with smartphones and other devices. This advancement allowed runners to analyze their performance data, receive smart notifications, and access live tracking features.

5. Expansion of the Forerunner line: 15, 920XT, 225, and 25 (2014-2015)



During this period, Garmin expanded the Forerunner lineup to cater to the diverse needs of athletes and fitness enthusiasts. The Forerunner 15 and 25 targeted those seeking a more basic, affordable option, while the 920XT focused on triathletes and multisport athletes, and the 225 incorporated a built-in heart rate monitor for more advanced tracking.

Introduction of built-in heart rate monitor (Forerunner 225)



Garmin Forerunner 225 with built-in heart rate monitor

The Forerunner 225 marked a significant milestone in Garmin's watch evolution, as it was the first model to feature a built-in heart rate monitor. This innovation

eliminated the need for an external chest strap, making it more convenient and comfortable for users to track their heart rate during workouts and races.

Triathlon features in 920XT



Garmin Forerunner 920XT

The Forerunner 920XT was designed specifically for triathletes and multisport athletes. It offered advanced features such as a multisport mode for seamless transitions between sports, open water swim tracking, and cycling dynamics analysis. Additionally, the 920XT featured a sleeker design and improved battery life, making it a popular choice among endurance athletes seeking comprehensive training data and performance analysis.

6. Further improvements and diversification: 230, 235, 630, 735XT, 35, and 935 (2015-2017)



Garmin Forerunner 735XT

During this period, Garmin continued to integrate built-in heart rate monitors into their Forerunner models. The 235, 735XT, and 935 all featured wrist-based heart rate monitoring, making it more accessible and convenient for athletes to track their heart rate without the need for an external chest strap.

Advanced training features



Garmin Forerunner 935

These models also introduced advanced training features such as recovery advisor, VO2 max estimation, and race predictor, enabling users to better understand their fitness levels and make informed decisions about their training. The 630, 735XT, and 935 models catered to more serious athletes with the addition of running dynamics analysis, providing insights into stride length, ground contact time, and vertical oscillation.

Introduction of the Forerunner 35 as a budget option



Garmin Forerunner 35

Recognizing the need for an affordable, entry-level GPS watch, Garmin introduced the Forerunner 35. This budget-friendly option offered essential features like GPS tracking, wrist-based heart rate monitoring, and smart notifications, making it an attractive choice for those who wanted to track their fitness without breaking the bank.

7. Music integration and premium models: 645 Music, 45/45S, 245/245 Music, 945, and 745 (2018-2020)



Garmin Forerunner 645

Garmin introduced music storage capabilities with the Forerunner 645 Music, allowing users to store and play their favorite tunes directly from their watch. The 245 Music followed suit, offering music storage and playback for those seeking a more budget-friendly option. Both models supported popular music streaming

services, enhancing the workout experience for users who enjoyed listening to music on the go.

High-end multisport features (Forerunner 945, 745)



Garmin Forerunner 745

The Forerunner 945 and 745 were designed to cater to serious athletes and triathletes, offering advanced multisport features, such as full-color mapping, multisport transition support, and advanced training analytics. These premium models also included extended battery life, Pulse Ox sensor, and Garmin's Body Battery feature, providing users with a comprehensive view of their performance and recovery.

Differentiation between budget and premium options

During this period, Garmin further differentiated their Forerunner lineup by offering distinct budget and premium options. The 45/45S provided essential tracking features at an affordable price, while the 245/245 Music, 945, and 745 models catered to users looking for more advanced training tools and features. This approach allowed Garmin to meet the needs of a wide range of athletes and fitness enthusiasts.

8. Recent models and innovations (2021-2023)

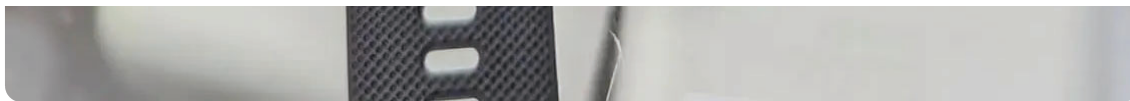


Garmin Forerunner 55

The Forerunner 55, released in 2021, boasted an enhanced battery life, providing up to 2 weeks in smartwatch mode and up to 20 hours in GPS mode. The watch also featured a 1.04" sunlight-visible, transfective memory-in-pixel (MIP) display, ensuring that users could easily view their stats even in bright conditions.

Forerunner 945 LTE: improved connectivity





Garmin Forerunner 945 LTE and Forerunner 255s

Released in 2021, the Forerunner 945 LTE brought improved connectivity options to the premium multisport watch, enabling users to stay connected with LTE support for safety and tracking features, even without a nearby smartphone. This advancement provided athletes with added peace of mind during their training sessions and races.

Forerunner 255 and 255 Music: expanded options for runners

The Forerunner 255 and 255 Music, released in 2022, expanded the mid-range options for runners, offering advanced training features and an upgraded display. The 255 Music model also included music storage capabilities, catering to those who enjoyed listening to music during their workouts.

Forerunner 955 and 955 Solar: enhanced battery life with solar power



Garmin Forerunner 955 Solar

The Forerunner 955 and 955 Solar, released in 2022, took battery life to new heights. The 955 Solar model utilized solar power to extend battery life, providing up to 24 days in smartwatch mode and up to 120 hours in GPS mode without music. These innovations allowed athletes to go longer between charges and reduced the need for external battery packs during ultramarathons or multi-day adventures.

Forerunner 265/265s: advanced display technology



Garmin Forerunner 265

Launched in 2023, the Forerunner 265 and 265s featured cutting-edge AMOLED displays with optional always-on mode, providing users with a crisp, clear view of their stats and notifications. This advancement in display technology set a new standard for Garmin Forerunner watches.

Forerunner 965: cutting-edge GPS technology and display



The Forerunner 965, released in 2023, incorporated the latest advancements in GPS technology, offering SatIQ (AutoSelect) GNSS mode and Multi-Band support for improved accuracy and performance. Combined with its AMOLED display and an impressive battery life, the 965 provided athletes with a reliable and feature-rich option to enhance their training and racing experiences.

Future of Garmin Forerunner series: expected innovations and features

Continued improvements in battery life and energy efficiency

As technology evolves, we can anticipate further enhancements in battery life and energy efficiency for Garmin Forerunner watches. This may include the integration of more efficient processors, better energy management software, and improved solar charging capabilities.

Enhanced satellite connectivity and accuracy

The next decade is likely to see advancements in satellite connectivity and accuracy, with the potential for new satellite systems and improved signal processing. This could lead to faster location acquisition, better coverage in challenging environments, and overall improved performance for GPS tracking in the Forerunner series.

Integration of AI-powered coaching and training plans

Artificial intelligence and machine learning technologies could play a significant role in the future of the Garmin Forerunner series, with the potential for AI-powered coaching and personalized training plans. These features could analyze a user's performance, goals, and biometric data to create tailored workout plans and real-time coaching feedback.

Advanced biometric tracking and health monitoring

The Forerunner series may see the integration of more advanced biometric tracking and health monitoring features, such as hydration tracking, blood sugar monitoring, and improved sleep tracking. These advancements could provide users with a more comprehensive understanding of their overall health and well-

being, helping them make better-informed decisions about their training and recovery.

Augmented reality and heads-up display features

With the rise of augmented reality (AR) technology, the future may hold the possibility of AR and heads-up display features integrated into Garmin Forerunner watches. This could include real-time, on-screen navigation, visual cues for workouts, or even virtual race opponents to provide a more immersive and engaging user experience.

Customization options and modularity

Future iterations of the Garmin Forerunner series may offer greater customization options and modularity, allowing users to tailor their watches to their specific needs and preferences. This could include interchangeable bands, customizable watch faces, and the ability to add or remove features and sensors as desired.

Eco-friendly materials and manufacturing processes

As the focus on sustainability and eco-friendly practices increases, the Garmin Forerunner series may incorporate more environmentally-friendly materials and manufacturing processes. This could involve the use of recycled materials, biodegradable components, and a focus on reducing the overall carbon footprint of the production process.

Wrap Up

The Garmin Forerunner Series has come a long way since its inception in 2003. Over the past two decades, Garmin has consistently pushed the boundaries of technology and design to create a diverse range of running watches that cater to the unique needs of athletes and fitness enthusiasts alike. The series has evolved from basic GPS tracking devices to feature-rich, advanced multisport watches with music capabilities, improved battery life, and cutting-edge displays.

As we look ahead to the future of the Garmin Forerunner Series, it's clear that Garmin is poised to continue leading the way in innovation. The next decade promises to bring even more groundbreaking features and technologies that will further revolutionize the way we train, monitor our health, and experience the joy of training and racing.

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Ryan Jones is a USA Triathlon Level 1 Certified Coach, USA Cycling Level 3 Certified Coach. Since graduating college, Ryan has coached over sixty triathletes, runners, cyclists, and swimmers. He focuses on helping them select appropriate goals and guiding them towards achieving them.

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