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Review

Nike+ FuelBand SE review - the active person's fitness tracker

Nike's second generation FuelBand SE improves accuracy, durability and is far more sociable, but still lacks a few features



📷 Nike+ FuelBand SE - the active person's fitness tracker gets a precision boost. Photograph: Nike



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The Nike+ FuelBand SE is the second iteration of Nike's attempt to get us all moving, healthier and data obsessed.

The FuelBand SE uses Nike's "Fuel" metric for tracking activity, which converts motion tracked by an accelerometer into an activity rating called Fuel. In doing so, Nike has made it possible to directly compare the performance of various sports and activities, allowing people who play different sports to compete against each other on an equal footing with Fuel scores.

Sports bangle



📷 Nike+ FuelBand SE review - positive encouragement is the FuelBand's secret. Photograph: Nike

The basic design of the FuelBand SE remains unchanged from the previous generation Nike FuelBand, just with some optional brightly coloured inlays to complement the matt black band.

The FuelBand SE is a thick, semi-rigid rubberised plastic band with a locking buckle in the middle that integrates a full-size USB connector for charging and syncing. The band, while narrow and only about the width of an index finger on your wrist, is quite thick. Unlike most watches that may be chunky on top of your wrist, the FuelBand's all-round thickness is not something that can be ignored.

The rigid oval nature of the band means it can't flex when resting on something hard, making it uncomfortable to wear at times. If you happen to be a computer user, for instance, the band's metal buckle rests on the desk as you type forming a hard lump under your wrist. It's something you can probably get used to eventually, and wouldn't be an issue if you weren't a desk dweller.

To adjust for different sizes of wrist, the FuelBand SE is available in three sizes - small, medium/large and extra large. Each band comes with two different link spacers too, providing a better fit by enlarging the band.

The top of the device hides a dot-matrix LED display next to a solid rubber button. The display cycles through the time, your activity and notifies you of any goals you may have hit.

Hidden display



📷 Nike+ FuelBand SE review - a bright and colourful LED display hides under the matt black rubber. Photograph: Nike

Using the Nike+ FuelBand SE is pretty straightforward after the initial setup. You simply wear it on your designated wrist all the time and let it do its thing.

Initial setup needs to be done via computer using the integrated USB connector, which charges the band in the process. It is worth noting that the setup procedure is browser-based, and that I had issues on one computer getting the Nike site to respond properly. That could be to do with the locked-down nature of the machine, as it worked fine on another computer, but it would be nice to have the option of setting up the FuelBand via the smartphone app rather than having to rely on a computer.

Once up and running, you can press the button to cycle through your readout, including calories burnt, steps taken and your Fuel activity rating. A quick double-press of the button instantly shows the time, which makes it relatively easy to use instead of a watch.

The display also lights up when you hit one of your activity targets, as well as hourly activity reminders if you've been a bit lax - apparently you should move for at least five minutes every hour for which the FuelBand declares you have "won the hour" and giving you a virtual pat on the back.

Nike has improved the accuracy of the accelerometer within the SE and introduced the ability to "tag" certain activities. When you are about to play sport, do the washing up, or anything that involves variously vigorous motions you can hold down the band's button for three seconds to bring up "Start". Press the button once more and you initiate a countdown to set you going. Once you are done with that particular activity repeating the button presses will tell the FuelBand SE it is over and mark the session ready for identification within the FuelBand app or on the Nike+ website.

The same activity tagging system can be used to track your sleep too, although the sleep tracking features of the FuelBand SE are very limited compared to most competing activity trackers like the [Misfit Shine](#) or Fitbit One.

Charging the FuelBand takes just over an hour via the USB connector, while Nike has improved the water resistance of the SE enough so that you can wear it without fear of breaking it with sweat or in the shower. You can't quite go swimming with it, but it should cope with almost anything else.

Nike has also reinforced the circuitry within the band so that it can take more abuse from your vigorous workouts or sporting activities without breaking compared to the original FuelBand.

Web or iPhone app, but no Android



📷 Nike+ FuelBand SE review - the Nike+ FuelBand app is only available for the iPhone, but will sync in the background. Photograph: Nike

The desktop Nike+ experience is wholly through the NikePlus.com website, with data collected via a small connector app for Windows or OS X. Via the site you can tag your activities, see your progress and chart your Fuel usage over the day, week or month.

You can also share your activity with friends, compare your stats and set up competitions between fellow FuelBand owners.

A more convenient syncing and charting experience, however, can be had through the Nike+ FuelBand app, which is only available for the iPhone. Nike states that the poor state of Bluetooth 4.0 support in Android, which the FuelBand uses to sync to your devices, is the reason there is no Android FuelBand app. Google recently rectified that state of affairs with [Android 4.4 Kitkat](#), but it will take a while for widespread Android support of Bluetooth 4.0 low-energy communication protocols to develop, and therefore a FuelBand app for Android is unlikely to arrive anytime soon. You can forget about a Windows phone or BlackBerry app too, unfortunately.

The iPhone FuelBand app is fairly intuitive and will periodically sync in the background with your FuelBand SE as long as you have Bluetooth switched on. You can also force a sync for instant updates, and then view your activity on small interactive graphs to see how you're doing.

The FuelBand app goes beyond just the FuelBand SE too, really pushing some integrated social elements. For instance, you can snap photos of activities and post them to your Nike+ social network, and out to Facebook and Twitter too.

Within Nike+, groups of up to 150 people can be created, allowing activity competitions and group tracking, adding to the competitive nature of your fitness tracking as well as fostering an encouraging environment to help you hit your goals. Once one person hits their goal, whatever that might be, the rest of the group can be notified to pile on the praise.

Pricey

The Nike+ FuelBand SE comes in four colours, plain black or black with red, pink or yellow inserts, as well as three sizes - small, medium/large and extra large - all priced at £129.



📷 Nike+ FuelBand SE review - the metal buckle on the back hides the USB connector. Photograph: Nike

Verdict: Good for sport, but missing a few things

The FuelBand SE ticks a lot of boxes for an activity tracker. With the Fuel metric Nike allows players of different sports or activities to directly compare their performance offering competition and challenge between friends.

The social elements of the Nike+ service are its biggest advantage, but that does mean you need to persuade your friends to spend £129 on an activity tracker, which could be a tough sell.

The band itself is a solid fitness tracker, and is certainly well geared up for monitoring more energetic activities. However, it is uncomfortable to wear while typing at a desk - something that you might spend most of your day doing - only just fits under a shirt cuff, can't identify stair climbs, and its sleep tracking is poor.

The Nike FuelBand SE is an incremental improvement over the first generation FuelBand, fixing various bugs and small issues, as well as increasing tracking accuracy and durability. It is certainly a great gadget for tracking your overall sports performance, but for those looking for something that's more geared up for tracking walking or more sedentary activity during a working day, there are better alternatives out there for less money.

Star rating: 3/5

Pros: Water resistant, easy to use, robust, good for sports, great social elements

Cons: Poor sleep tracking, uncomfortable while working at a desk, expensive

At this dangerous moment for dissent

I hope you appreciated this article. Before you close this tab, I wanted to ask if you could support the Guardian at this crucial time for journalism in the US.

When the military is deployed to quell overwhelmingly peaceful protest, when elected officials of the opposing party are arrested or handcuffed, when student activists are jailed and deported, and when a wide range of civic institutions - non-profits, law firms, universities, news outlets, the arts, the civil service, scientists - are targeted and penalized by the federal government, it's hard to avoid the conclusion that our core freedoms are disappearing before our eyes - and democracy itself is slipping away.

In any country on the cusp of authoritarianism, the role of the press as an engine of scrutiny, truth and accountability becomes increasingly critical. At the Guardian, we see it as our job not only to report on the suppression of dissenting voices, but to make sure those voices are heard.

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I was thinking about getting one of these (or the other similar devices on the market) but they

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