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# Review: Garmin Vivofit

While it isn't the most fully featured fitness band, the Vivofit is certainly the most motivating one we've used.



Rating: 8/10 ⓘ

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**WIRED**

**Year-long battery life means you never have to worry about charging. Comes in a variety of colors. Bluetooth and Ant+ compatible. Water resistant up to 50m.**

**TIRED**

**Garmin Connect app is subpar compared to other fitness apps. Display isn't backlit, making it hard to read in low light settings. Not the most comfortable fitness tracker to sleep in. Sometimes syncing takes multiple attempts.**

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**YOU COME TO** dread the blinking red bar on the Vivofit display. But that's precisely the point. It's there to highlight your inactivity – specifically, when you've been immobile for an hour. But as exasperating as this bar of shame can be, heeding its gentle prodding does have a measurable effect. Using the Vivofit, I got up from my chair more, took more walks, and, in general, felt better.

Getting you up off your tush and moving is, of course, the goal behind most wrist-worn step trackers. But the Vivofit's implementation is especially effective. When you've been sitting for long periods, the red bar appears. Shorter bars pop up next to it for each additional 15 minutes you've been stationary. The device doesn't vibrate, or beep, or otherwise interrupt your workflow. But should you glance down at your

wrist, it's an instant reminder to get up and save yourself from the inevitable death our desk jobs are delivering us.

On its slightly curved LCD display, the Vivofit can show you how far you've walked, how many calories you've burned, the time, date, your heart rate, your steps, and the steps remaining towards your daily goal. The latter is another thing that sets Garmin's fitness tracker apart: After starting with a default number of "goal" steps for the day – mine was 7,500 – the Vivofit starts to learn how often you walk around each day. It adjusts your goal accordingly, pushing you to be more active, but not unreasonably so. For example, after getting within 100 steps of my goal by the end of the work day, I was surprised to look down at the end of my daily commute to see that the number of required steps had been upped. I still exceeded that, and the next day, my goal steps were upped some more. The fitness tracker isn't a pitiless whip cracker though. If you have a few slower days, the step goal drops back down.

The Garmin Vivofit, like other fitness wearables, connects and communicates with your phone over Bluetooth. You tap and hold the device's singular button for about two seconds to sync with the accompanying Garmin Connect app, but it can conveniently store up to three weeks of data onboard.

Garmin's Connect app itself is pretty lacking, especially when compared to other fitness apps out there. Where others offer colorful graphics and options for tracking multiple facets of your health (Fitbit lets you track what you eat each day and your water intake), Garmin's app is pretty spartan in its functionality. It sticks with just your walking stats, an activity log, and your sleep. There's also a section where you can accumulate badges for fitness accomplishments, and a social space where you can see and compare stats with your friends. Personally, I

found no real need to visit the app unless I just wanted to see my step data charted out after the past day, week, month, or year, or look through my bike ride activities uploaded through Garmin Connect. None of this is a dealbreaker though – the Vivofit’s main purpose is to motivate you to get fit; the actual history of those movements is less important.

If you wear your Vivofit at night, the app graphs your movements while sleeping – not the most exact indicator of sleep quality, but an interesting stat, nonetheless.

In addition to syncing over Bluetooth, the Vivofit also connects with devices over Ant+, meaning it can display heart rate data from a heart rate monitor. During a gym workout, this was pretty handy, although my wrist did get sweatier underneath the band’s slightly rubbery, flexible plastic band. The moisture’s not a problem, though: the Vivofit is waterproof up to 50 meters, which means sweat, rain, showers, and swimming are all okay. It also ships with two different sized bands, so it’s sure to fit a wide variety of wrist sizes.

The Vivofit, while perhaps not the most fully featured wearable, is the most motivating one I’ve tried thus far. The fact that it doesn’t need to be charged daily or weekly is a huge plus over competitors – and if the battery does die before its promised year-long life is up, it’s just a pair of user replaceable coin cells. For those looking to make their workouts more targeted, or get more accurate calorie burning stats, its Ant+ heart rate monitor compatibility is a big bonus. Other than displaying the date and time, it doesn’t try to venture into smartwatch territory, and that’s fine. On top of that, it’s priced competitively with other trackers on the market. If I were getting a wearable for a family member or friend, this is the one I’d buy.