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Fitbit Force Review

By [Jill Duffy](#)
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Our team tests, rates, and reviews more than 1,000 products each year to help you make better buying decisions and get more from technology.





THE BOTTOM LINE

The Fitbit Force takes everything we love about the Fitbit One and puts it into a secure wristband, making it an affordable alternative for users who don't need all the data that more expensive options like the Basis B1 provide.

MSRP \$129.95

Pros & Cons

- ✓ Sharpest display of any activity tracker.
 - ✓ Thoughtful design.
 - ✓ Comfortable and lightweight.
 - ✓ Comprehensive Web interface and mobile apps.
 - ✓ Tracks sleep and uses silent vibration alarm.
 - Relies on a proprietary charger.
 - No heart rate monitor.
 - Does not automatically differentiate between activities.
-

Editors' Note: On Feb. 20, Fitbit began voluntarily recalling Fitbit Force units due to a skin rash some users developed. The Fitbit Force is no longer being sold. Fitbit Force owners can turn in their devices for a refund of the full retail price. Additional information is available on Fitbit's dedicated refund page or by calling 888-656-6381. Our review of the product prior to the recall appears below.

Activity trackers sell the promise that they will help you keep tabs on how much (or little) you move, and motivate you to get up and out of your chair more often in the process. Fitbit has long been a champion player in this arena of modern-day pedometers, and its latest product, the Fitbit Force (\$129.95, direct) is by far the company's best effort. The Fitbit Force tracks the data most people want (steps, distance, calories, stairs, sleep), has the sharpest display you can get, comes with a stellar Web account and app for accessing your data, and sells for a comfortable price. For affordable wrist-worn activity trackers, the Fitbit Force is our Editors' Choice.

The Force lacks some of the extra-special features found in a few other devices, though, such as a built-in heart rate sensor or the ability to automatically distinguish between running, walking, and bicycling. But not everyone needs or wants those bonuses, of course.

To anyone looking to get started with a fitness tracker, and who prefers the wristband form

factor, *and* doesn't want to break the bank, the Force is the device for you. No contest. But anyone who's deeply into self-quantification or wants heart-rate monitoring throughout the day and night (many exercise junkies insist on measuring heart rate), as well as skin temperature and perspiration readings (used to estimate calorie burn), you'll want to spend the extra money for the Basis B1 Band (\$199, direct). The Basis is our Editors' Choice among higher-end wrist-worn activity trackers.

SIMILAR PRODUCTS



Basis Carbon Steel Edition

4.5 Outstanding

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Nike+ FuelBand SE

3.5 Good

\$74.99 at Amazon

[See It](#)

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I'm enamored with both the Basis B1 and the Fitbit Force, but in different ways. The Force is solid, where the B1 feels more daring. Both also have top-notch Web account dashboards where you can access the data these devices collect. The Force makes me say to myself, "Hey, I'm

you can access the data these devices collect. The Force makes me say to myself, "hey, I'm doing all right," whereas the Basis makes me say, "Wow. I didn't know my body was doing that."

Design

The Fitbit Force, which comes in black or slate, is made of flexible "elastomer material" which feels like a lightly rubberized plastic. It's comfortable when worn fairly snugly against the skin, even when typing. The Force comes in two sizes, small (5.5 to 6.9 inches) and large (6.3 to 8.2 inches). An adjustable clasp accounts for the range.

In my experience wearing the Force, I can attest to the fact that it's both secure and comfortable. The material feels softer than the hard bangle of the Nike+ FuelBand SE (\$149), or the metal fastener found on the Polar Loop.

The Force is water resistant, but not water proof, so don't wear it swimming or in the shower. Swimmers might investigate the Misfit Shine or Polar Loop, the only two activity trackers (excluding expensive triathlon watches, that is) that I know of that are fully waterproof. With the Force, or any other Fitbit product for that matter, you can always log a swim manually in your Web or mobile app, but you can't actually record it during the activity.

In the past year, anytime I encountered someone who bought a [Jawbone UP](#) ([\\$28.49 at Walmart](#)) or Nike+ FuelBand, I'd ask what drove the purchasing decision. Almost invariably, they'd answer, "I wanted a wristband." Several friends were adamant that a clip-on device was not for them.

Fitbit's first attempt at a wristband, the [Fitbit Flex](#) ([\\$99.99 at Amazon](#)) was a noble effort. To keep the price at the \$99 mark, the Flex lost a few of the features of the Fitbit One, including the altimeter and OLED display. I guess consumers made it known that they would happily pay an extra \$30 for these perks, and thus the Force was born unto this world.

A few aspects of the Force's design highly improve upon the Flex. The Flex had a tracker that could pop out of the wristband, which was great if you wanted to change the band, maybe to another color. The tracker is a tiny thing, and you necessarily had to pop it out every few days to charge it. That also meant that, when separated from its band, it was easier to lose—accidentally sweep off a desk, or perhaps pop into a pocket and forget about it until an ill-fated tumble in the washing machine. The Force's tracker is fully inside the band with no way to remove it. The charger now locks into a connection point on the underside of the OLED display.

Another small but appreciable change is that there's a button you can press to cycle through the display. The Flex, on the other hand, didn't even have a full display, just a row of lights that you could activate by flicking or tapping it. It's an inelegant and imprecise interaction (replicated in the [Misfit Shine](#) ([\\$89.99 at Amazon](#))), and I'm glad it's gone from the Force.

What's In The Box?

For \$129.95, you get the Fitbit Force tracking band, a wireless sync dongle, one charging cable, and a small set of instructions. The wireless dongle is a significant aspect in the Fitbit line, and one that I think can be easily overlooked until you do comparative testing. With most activity trackers, you have to force a sync via Bluetooth to your phone, or plug the device into your computer via a cable to get data off the device and into your Web account where you can actually see all of it for the full day at once, and over time.

The Fitbit dongle is a miniscule USB stick that, once connected to a laptop, blends right in. You'll forget it's there. But anytime your Force is within range of that dongle, the data uploads and syncs. The result is frequently updated stats that you never have to think about. Other devices make you wait. Fitbit constantly updates your account. When you're out and about, you can sync to the mobile app using Bluetooth, which also happens automatically when you launch the app (see Fitbit's [list of supported devices](#), as Android compatibility is limited to a few Samsung phones). Again, the beauty is in not having to think about the sync. You can force a sync by pressing a button in the app, but it's rarely necessary to do so.

Fitbit Force: Web Account and Mobile App

Web Account and Mobile App

Fitbit offers a free Web account that's as simple as any I've seen for making sense of your data. It also offers a lot of settings for customizing and fine-tuning your Force.

The Web account also lets you collect and track other aspects of your health that the Force can't measure on its own, such as weight, calories consumed, heart rate, glucose levels, and more. Some of the data for these fields can come from other sources, though. For example, if you weigh yourself every morning by standing on the [Fitbit Aria Wi-Fi Smart Scale](#) (\$179.99 at [Amazon](#)), the scale can automatically add your weight to the account. You can also sync your Fitbit account to other health and fitness-tracking apps, such as [Lose It!](#), [MyFitnessPal](#), and more than a dozen others.

In addition to the Web account, Fitbit has a mobile app for iPhone and Android, where you can access a lot of data related to your activity and device, too. From the mobile app, you can set the silent vibration alarm (a wonderful way to wake up in the morning without disturbing your sleeping partner), log foods eaten, and change a few important device settings, such as whether you wear the Force on your dominant or non-dominant wrist. You can also customize, from the app, exactly what will display on the Fitbit Force. For example, if you just want to see the time and distance traveled, but suppress step count, stair count, and calories burned, you can.

In the Fitbit mobile app and Web account, you can view different details of your fitness habits over time, although you can't overlay more than one metric on a graph, which you can do on Basis' website.

Also in the account side, you'll find social features for seeing how you stack up against your friends or other Fitbit community members, as well as badges and other happy-go-lucky fun stuff. But more importantly are really deep features, like telling Fitbit the length of your stride so it can more accurately count your steps. That's very cool.

Sleep

The Fitbit Force automatically tracks your sleep if you simply leave the band on when you go to bed. However, you do have to log in and record in your account roughly what time you got into bed and when you arose. After that, the Force will show you the slight movements you made overnight, indicating when you were awake or just restless. And if it seems to detect too much of your nighttime motions, you can adjust the sensitivity level.

One of my favorite features of the Fitbit Force and updated app is the ability to change your goal—and not just the number of the goal, but the goal itself. For example, by default, users have a goal of 10,000 steps per day; I changed my goal to 5 *miles* per day.

An Ideal Balance of Price and Features

Fitbit's products are consistently top notch and very accurate, and the Force is no exception. It tracks what most people will want to know about their activity and habits, and lets you fill in the missing pieces (such as calorie intake) via the Fitbit Web account.

For features, accuracy, comfort, and price, the Fitbit Force is our Editors' Choice among bracelet-style activity trackers.

The Basis B1 Band is also an Editors' Choice at the higher price range, though, because it contains a couple of unique and compelling features that any fitness enthusiast will swoon over. The two are equally impressive, but are priced in two different ballpark.

The two are equally impressive, but are priced in two different ballpark.

If you're not sold on a wristband, I'd recommend the [Fitbit One](#) (\$99) ([\\$179.99 at Amazon](#)) or the [Withings Pulse](#) (\$99) ([at Amazon](#)), our top picks among clip-on fitness trackers.

Fitbit Force

4.5 EDITORS' CHOICE



PROS

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- Thoughtful design.
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CONS

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About Jill Duffy

Contributor



I've been contributing to PCMag since 2011 in a variety of ways. My column, [Get Organized](#), has been running on PCMag since 2012. It gives advice on how to manage all the devices, apps, digital photos, email, and other technology that can make you feel like you're going to have a panic attack.

My latest book is [The Everything Guide to Remote Work](#), which goes into great detail about a subject that I've been covering as a writer and participating in personally since well before the COVID-19 pandemic.

I write about work culture, personal productivity, and software, including project management software, collaboration apps, productivity apps, and language-learning software.

Previously, I worked for the Association for Computing Machinery, *The San Francisco Examiner* newspaper, *Game Developer* magazine, and (I kid you not) *The Journal of Chemical Physics*. I was once profiled in an article in *Vogue* India alongside Marie Kondo.

I'm currently pursuing a few unannounced long-form projects.

Follow me on [Mastodon](#).

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