

Men's Journal

NOTEBOOK

Digital Life Coach

THE LATEST DATA-GATHERING DEVICES INDULGE THE SELF-OBSSESSED, SIMPLY AND ELEGANTLY MEASURING EVERYTHING YOU DO. HERE'S HOW TO START LIVING A MORE EXAMINED LIFE.

In this age of information overload, it can be tough to keep track of the parts of your life that really matter — among them, your health and fitness. But a new generation of data readers has arrived to provide detailed, actionable feedback on just how well-oiled your machine is: Sleep monitors read brain waves, bathroom scales calculate body-fat ratios, and armbands count every calorie burned. Even better, with the touch of one button, all these instruments can crunch the numbers and send a thorough analysis to an easily accessed website. The age of self-delusion is over.

SLEEP

The latest monitors, like **Up** from **Jawbone** (2) and **Fitbit Ultra** (4), give morning readouts of how your night unfolded using motion sensors to detect movement. Others have alarms that wake you up during an optimal part of your sleep cycle. The **Zeo Sleep Manager Mobile** (\$99) takes it up a notch, using actual brain waves to monitor your sleep through the night.

WHAT IT DOES: A lightweight wireless headband reads your brain waves and transfers data to your smartphone as you sleep. The Zeo app calculates how much time you've spent in restorative deep sleep, REM, light sleep, and awake. Then a sleep coach gives you advice.

WHY YOU NEED IT: This synthesized feedback gives you goals where there once were none.

Trying to get a good "ZQ score" encourages you to avoid afternoon espressos and late-night TV — all the better to get a quality night's sleep.

WEIGHT LOSS

A raft of new watches, belt clips, and armbands, like the **Body-Media Fit Link** (6), takes the



Complex computing and simple interfaces in next-gen devices allow users to better measure quality of sleep, body fat, stroke, speed, and whereabouts.

guesswork out of calorie counting by measuring movement and estimating the number of calories you've burned. The only wireless body-composition scale on the market, the **Withings Body Scale** (\$160) makes regular weight tracking a more accurate and effortless activity. (3)

WHAT IT DOES: The Withings scale calculates your total weight, body mass index, and percentage of muscle and fat — the latter two by sending a small current through your body.

WHY YOU NEED IT: Gathering this data over time helps you chart real progress, track trends, and ignore any depressing temporary setbacks.

TECH

SWIMMING

You can swim endless laps, but you'll never get faster if your stroke doesn't improve. That's why today's swim watches, like the **Finis Swimsense** (\$200), leverage 3-D motion-sensor technology to perfect your form.

WHAT IT DOES: Accelerometers monitor every swim stroke you take, counting your overall laps, number of strokes per lap, how far each stroke gets you, and total distance. By uploading the data to the Swimsense app, you can view stats once available only to elite swimmers.

WHY YOU NEED IT: The robust info goes beyond distance and time. By focusing on stroke, you get a coach, not just a statistician.

RUNNING

Devices that measure speed, distance, and heart rate for runners were among the first of their kind. The updated **Nike+** system (first released in 2006) puts a pedometer in your shoe, sending distance and speed wirelessly to your iPod or phone. **Wahoo Fitness** (launched in 2008) uses your smartphone's GPS to measure the same. But the best run-specific device available today is the **Timex Ironman Run Trainer** (\$225).

WHAT IT DOES: A simple Timex sports watch with GPS, the Run Trainer (1) maps your route, pace, mileage, and exertion level (with an optional heart monitor for an extra \$50). There's one button to start and stop. Adjustments to settings can all be done on a computer.

WHY YOU NEED IT: The streamlined interface makes recording a run easier than ever.

CYCLING

Speed, distance, and heart rate give an incomplete picture of a bike workout. You need to measure wattage output to show how much power, or torque, you're producing. Such meters are usually major installations — at pro racing prices. But the new **iBike-Power Meter** (\$749) provides all the readouts you need, costs less, and is easy to outfit. (5)

WHAT IT DOES: A handlebar-mounted case turns your iPhone or iPad into a digital dashboard, gathering information from a magnetic sensor that clips to your spokes. (Most meters use sensors embedded in your crankset or wheel.) It measures speed, cadence, and wattage, then uploads the info to your coaching website of choice, like Training Peaks.

WHY YOU NEED IT: Linking simple sensors to a phone brings bikers tech that was once available only to the pros.

—DANIEL DUANE