



From left, Strava app tracks your activity, pace, altitude and heart rate; Garmin's popular Forerunner watch; and Philips In-Ear sport headphones.



Strava was in the news earlier this year. The United States military flagged its route-tracking feature as a security risk. While the app allows you to hide your route, some enlisted men and women forgot to do that and potentially exposed the location of military bases. I use Strava's privacy mode to hide my home address, and I also have my account set to private. That way only friends I've allowed can see my routes.

Running wearables

I use my iPhone when running for Strava – and for my 10K playlist on Spotify. There are many wearable options if running with a bulky smartphone isn't for you. The Strava app can import running data from Apple Watch and Android Wear-compatible watches.

The group of awesome runners I spend time with primarily use watches from Garmin, including the Forerunner 935 (\$679.99) and fenix 3 (\$599.99). My

choice is the Garmin Forerunner 230 (\$349.99).

While the more expensive models have great features, I find I only need to track my route and pace, and the 230 does an excellent job of that. Unlike your smartphone, which uses GPS and WiFi to get your location, GPS watches like Forerunner only require a good line of sight to the sky to get an accurate location. In my runs, the Forerunner 230 only took 20 to 30 seconds outside to get a location – and the tracking has been accurate throughout my runs.

Running to the beat

I have to run with music. I've made playlists for each race, with everything including Tom Petty's "Running Down A Dream." Try not running fast when listening to that track.

I've tried a number of headphone options over the last two years. I've borrowed my wife's Jaybird X3 Bluetooth headphones for

a few runs, but I found they fell out more often than I liked. The other issue with any wireless headphones is battery life – and remembering to charge them and your smartphone, too.

My favourite headphones have been my iPhone's stock-wired EarPods. Over the course of the last year, I've managed to lose three pairs of them around the house. They are most likely at the bottom of a box of last season's Barbie clothes. I've given up any hope of finding even one pair.

Over the holidays, I picked up a pair of Philips In-Ear sport headphones (\$19.99, BestBuy) and they have really surprised me. The sound quality is great, even in windy conditions. They have a hook that sits over your ear that I thought would be annoying, but I barely notice now.

Alex Kinsella has been part of Waterloo Region's tech community since 2004 and is always looking for the next great gadget (or tacos, if it's Tuesday). Find him on Twitter at @alexkinsella

Running tech, a social network

I ran my first race of the year in February. Yes, February. The race was aptly named the Re-Fridgee-Eighter, offering eight-kilometre and eight-mile distances around the north end of Waterloo by RIM Park. It was -5 C and there was a lovely bit of freezing rain, but that didn't stop more than 250 runners from joining in.

I wisely chose the eight-kilometre event. After crossing the finish line in 43 minutes and 23 seconds, I broke the ice off of my pants and jacket, and spent a minute thinking about how it was only two years ago that I took up running. When I started, I never thought about running in more than one race, let alone an event in the dead of winter.

Now, as I prepare for the Waterloo Classic 10K in June, I am struck by how much running tech has changed in the past two years.



Alex Kinsella

Running with your smartphone

In 2016, I started training with a Couch to 5K program using the RunDouble app (www.rundouble.com). Available for both iPhone and Android, the app coaches you through walking and running a little each day – eventually hitting that 5K milestone. While RunDouble is a great app, I eventually outgrew its limited functionality and moved up to Strava.

Strava (www.strava.com) is more than just a fitness app – it's a social network for runners, cyclists, swimmers and triathletes of all skill levels. Strava's social network lets

you share your routes and runs.

If you use Strava during a race, you can even see a flyover view of the route and compare your pace to other Strava runners. My running club is also on Strava, which helps us celebrate each other's training runs and races.

The app tracks your activity – pace, altitude and even heart rate, if you have a heart-rate tracker connected to your smartphone or on your watch. Strava also tracks your running routes and provides a detailed view of how you are progressing.

There are two main routes that I run in a week for training. Both routes are 5K – one with a start and finish at my house and the other a great route around downtown Kitchener that I can run on my lunch break. I've been running both routes consistently over the last two years and it is great to be able to see my time decrease.

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