

Guide to Watch Movement Types

The watch is probably the coolest accessory there is. What's even more fascinating is that even though its mechanics have undergone evolution through the years, most of the vintage designs are still used in the modern era. All thanks to the so-called 'movement'. If it's something that piques your interest, then read on, as we'll reveal everything you need to know about it.

The heart of a timepiece

Also known as caliber, the movement is considered as the heart of a timepiece or the engine powering its hands and other complications. Usually, casual watch-wearers don't really care about the type of movement their timepiece has. However, it's a big deal for timepiece enthusiasts and collectors, as they have a deep appreciation for the artistry and inner mechanics making their watches run. Akin to the performance distinctions in automobile engines, timepiece movements come with various attributes that fascinate diverse types of watch shoppers. Timepiece movements come in three major types, each with its fair share of strengths and weaknesses.

Explore the various types of watch movements

Modern timepiece movements are classified into three types: mechanical, automatic, and quartz. Each of these plays a significant role in the history of watches, and familiarizing yourself with them is the key to being a more informed watch collector.

Mechanical movement

Known as the grandfather of calibers, mechanical movements came into existence 100 years before automatic movements. However, they are similar in such a way that the watch hands are powered by a mainspring. The only difference is that mechanical timepieces must be periodically wound to maintain power. This is not as convenient as an automatic movement, but most mechanical timepiece owners learn to wind their timepiece before wearing it.

Automatic movement

An all-time favorite among timepiece enthusiasts, automatic movements open up a world of possibilities. They embody the the craft and heritage of the finest watchmaking tradition. Basically, an automatic movement pertains to a self-winding mechanical timepiece. The action of the wearer's wrist produces the energy that powers the watch. There is also a mainspring wound by a rotor that spins when the timepiece is worn. Therefore, a battery is no longer required.

Quartz movement

It was in the late 1960s when Japanese watchmakers launched the first-ever quartz movements. They were a game-changer in the market, as they came with a battery to power the timepiece instead of mechanical rotors, gears, and springs. It works by sending an electrical signal to the quartz crystal in the movement. This, in turn, creates a vibration that runs the watch hands and other complications without the necessity for winding.

Automatic movement vs mechanical movement

When torn between an automatic and a mechanical movement, it's imperative to take into consideration the winding. An automatic watch winds on its own when worn. Meanwhile, a mechanical watch requires winding in order to operate.

In this case, your decision will depend on whether or not you are knowledgeable in winding your timepiece to keep it powered.

Mechanical movement vs quartz movement

The following are some of the differences you have to consider when choosing between a mechanical and quartz movement:

Mechanical movement

- Sweeping second hand
- Cachet among timepiece aficionados
- More expensive cost of entry
- Artisanal craftsmanship
- Battery replacement is not required

Quartz movement

- Ticking second hand
- Battery replacement is required
- Low maintenance
- More affordable cost of entry
- Timekeeping is more accurate

Mechanical watches are perfect for those who love a work of art on their wrist. They are also intricate mechanisms that require more care and upkeep than quartz timepieces.

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