

Fossil connects Palm to wrist bone

By [Matthew Broersma](#)

Staff Writer, CNET News.com

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Fossil, the Texas-based maker of trendy watches and other accessories, has started selling the Wrist PDA, a Palm-compatible device that displays contacts, a to-do list, appointments and other information from a handheld computer.

The [Wrist PDA](#) marks a watershed of sorts in the PDA market, since Fossil is a resolutely non-technical brand that caters to young, fashion-conscious consumers. However, the device can only be used by the 17 million or so handheld users around the world, limiting its appeal. By contrast, the mobile phone industry sells about 410 million units a year.

The version on sale now is compatible with Palm OS devices like the m500, the Handspring Visor or the Sony Clie. Fossil will sell a Pocket PC-compatible model later this year. The Palm version sells for \$145 at various retail outlets, Fossil's own retail shops or via Fossil's Web site.

Wrist PDA is not a handheld computer in itself: The owner uses the infrared transmitters built into most PDAs to input read-only information like to-do lists, memos and contacts. The watch can also receive up to 20 business cards beamed from other Wrist PDAs or handhelds.

The watch has 190KB of memory--the equivalent of 1,100 contacts, 800 appointments, 5,000 to-do notes or 350 memos. It uses an application on the Palm device, which can be installed directly from the Wrist PDA, to customize which information to relay to the watch's memory. It is also capable of displaying the time and date.

The Wrist PDA uses an 8-bit Epson processor and is water resistant up to 30 meters.

Industry observers are unsure whether gadgets like the Wrist PDA can carve out much of a market for themselves, given their limited functionality and dependence on already owning a handheld computer.

"My first impression really is that it will attract gadget people," Roberta Cozza, an analyst with Gartner Dataquest, said when the watch was [announced](#) last November.

"It seems a little bit redundant," Cozza added. "The market doesn't need to think about another gadget to carry around."

Wrist-based "connected" organizers are nothing new. For several years Timex and others have offered watches that can download data from PC-based organizers through a cable or even, in one case, via a pattern of flashing lights on the PC monitor.

Several manufacturers have set their sights on introducing wearable PDAs or mobile phones, including Samsung, which has won U.S. regulatory approval for a Dick Tracy-style [wrist phone/PDA](#) combination.

IBM showed the latest version of its prototype Linux watch at CeBit in March. The WatchPad is the result of IBM's collaboration with watchmaker Citizen, and features a pager-like application for sending and receiving short messages. It also has Bluetooth and infrared connectivity for connection to a notebook PC, and a fingerprint sensor for user--or wearer--authentication.

ZDNet U.K.'s Matthew Broersma reported from [London](#).

