

Thinking About a Watch Collection? Here Are the Answers to Your 6 Questions.

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James Yang

Anyone who wants to start a watch collection has questions. So The New York Times asked watch experts around the world — at auction houses, in retail, collectors, bloggers, at internet sites and a trade foundation — for advice. Their replies, which were condensed and edited, ranged from how to make the first purchase to how to store watches properly, and much in between.

Why start a collection?

In such a critical period from the economic and politic points of view, investing our money in something certain is really complicated and watches are surely one of the best things to invest in. if we look at the prices of certain wristwatches we can see the their value today is so much higher than in the past.

GIORGIA MONDANI, 33, founder of Mondani Web, author of seven Mondani books on watches and editor of the Mondani magazine, based in Genoa, Italy

It's like all collection, you have to fall in love with the object, being fascinating. You love the stamps, you have chances to start a collection of

stamps. It's the same with watches.

GRÉGORI GARDINETTI, 34, *culture and patrimony manager, Fondation de la Haute Horlogerie, in Meyrin, Switzerland*

A watch truly represents your personality and character without any form of communication. My relationship with my mechanical watches grounds me and pulls me out of this fast-paced and hectic world. Those few minutes of winding my watch in the morning are quite emotional and enjoyable and makes me feel like I'm rewinding my own energy and giving myself a morning boost much in the same way as a double shot of espresso.

SHAWN MEHTA, 22, *member of the [Belgian Watch Club](#), in Antwerp, Belgium*

There isn't one concise reason why any one man or woman *should* begin a watch collection. This isn't like starting a 401(k) or taking your daily vitamins. Only begin one if you want to begin one — you really enjoy watches, want to learn more about watches or just enjoy the hunt. They can be really rewarding, honestly, from an emotional and social point of view, and occasionally, though not often, financially.

[BENJAMIN CLYMER](#), *founder and chief executive, the watch website Hodinkee, in New York*

When you have a real passion for watchmaking, for the beauty and complexity of mechanical objects, you will get to a point where you will have this strong feeling to own the timepieces you always desired. One purchase leads automatically to the next one. Then I think you have to make the difference between accumulating objects and collecting. Collecting implies that there is common point between all your timepieces. It's like a quest to perfection. All your timepieces must be connected by age, material, complication, brand or any other specificity.

ALEXANDER FRIEDMAN, 40, *co-founder of the online magazine Watchonista and co-founder of the Watches Network, a communications agency dedicated to watch brands, in Lausanne, Switzerland*

The classiest element marking a milestone in each man's life is a watch. A simple graduation gift can escalate to becoming an acute passion. As a young boy, I was fascinated by the watches worn by my father and the unique mechanisms always had a positive impact on me. This infatuation has only amplified with time. This is the same impression watches leave most men with. Besides fixation and admiration, watches are a significant part of a great investment plan.

OMAR AL HAJ, 35, founder of the online site *Homebazar*, in Dubai

[**MORE:** [Members of the RedBar watch clubs in New York and London offer their best tips for new collectors](#)]

How do I begin?

Depending on your age, your taste, your personal history, your profession and your budget, you will probably begin to feel drawn to one brand or type of watch. Start with what you enjoy. My advice: Don't pay attention to trends. Follow your heart.

VANESSA CHICHA, 43, owner of the consulting company *Iconeek*, in Geneva

I would suggest you find your comfort zone at first (in terms of complication), whether it be a tourbillon, chronograph or a simple three-hand watch. Thereafter, I would research endlessly until I found something that ticks all the boxes. The categories that are most important to me are movement/finishing, wearability, aesthetics and the vision of the brand.

MR. MEHTA of the *Belgian Watch Club*

I love nothing more than the research and hunting period — where I try to find every piece of information on any given reference or example known to man. I do it through my own records that I've accumulated after 10 years of world travel for watches with Hodinkee, my network of friends, auction houses, and old books and magazines. There are any number of websites out there writing about watches, even more Instagram pages, and

the first thing to know is not all “experts” are created equal.

MR. CLYMER *of Hodinkee*

Vintage watches can be a little perplexing at first. People throw around reference numbers that sound like they’re reciting a Fibonacci sequence and they debate minuscule details which sometimes aren’t even visible to the naked eye. Vintage watches are a challenging category in collectibles, and that’s precisely what attracts so many collectors. Start by gathering as much information about the watch you’re personally interested in. Learn about the manufacturer’s history, find out how many watches they produced, in which metals, with which dials. In other words, do your homework.

ARTHUR TOUCHOT, 29, *head of digital and watch specialist, Phillips auction house, based in Geneva*

How do I build a collection?

It is good to follow your passion but we also have to consider the ongoing market. For example, why should we buy a pocket watch today, if these items totally lost value over the time?

MS. MONDANI *of Mondani Web*

Look for themes that interest you, whether it be a particular brand, complication or feature. Learn as much as you can about that initially, then look at brands that might have that as a focus. Personally, I have a soft spot for titanium watches, I like that they’re quite light (compared with steel) which makes them very comfortable on the wrist.

[SEAN LI](#), 48, *editorial and business development director, Blackbird Watch Manual website*

There’s really no road map to this. What’s important is that you pursue what interests you. Not trends and what 20 other people around you are buying. Do your research, talk to others who share your interest, take your

time and enjoy the process.

SUMIT NAG, 33, *online editor for Revolution Media, in Singapore*

To build your collection with confidence focus on authenticity, quality, rarity, provenance and pieces with accompanying documentation. Stay informed by consulting professionals and always try to improve your network. My advice: Taking your time means saving time.

MS. CHICHA of *Iconeek*

Depending on your budget, of course. I think your quest will have different stages over time. With patience you will find the exact watch you wish to add to your collection.

MR. FRIEDMAN of *Watchonista*

How do I store my watches?

A safe at home for your daily pieces and one at the bank for the rest of your collection. You can also loan pieces to museums; it will be a good way to transmit your passion to other people. For me, it's important to share — to share your passion, share your knowledge, share your love for watchmaking. From my point of view, if you leave all your pieces in the back of your safe, it's a pity.

MR. GARDINETTI of *the Fondation de la Haute Horlogerie*

You can choose one or several solutions, such as having a personal safe, home security measures, a bank vault or fire ports. Whatever your choice, make sure your watches are protected from water, humidity, dust and direct exposure to light. My advice: The best protection is discretion.

MS. CHICHA of *Iconeek*

Other important aspects?

Too often we hear stories of a watch being stolen from having been left out

in the open. Even worse is when the watch is not insured. Adding watches to a homeowner's policy is simple and in most cases not too costly; most insurers require just a certified appraisal from the dealer who sold the watch to you.

LIAM WEE TAY, 58, *chairman of the online sale site WatchBox, in Hong Kong*

You should insure your collection. Ask for documents with insurance values or contact an independent watch expert to create a portfolio of your collection with detailed pictures, descriptions and estimates. Then proceed with your insurance company.

MS. CHICHA *of Iconeek*

Ultimately, what I enjoy most about watch collecting is the emotional and intellectual rush I get from learning things that are not widely known and then the great reveal to my other collector friends. One of the great joys of collecting is really the people you will meet, and though there is always some mild competition among friends, the support from this group of people is really something very special and one that is not found in many other areas. Watch collecting is also a fun way to hone your critical mind and provides a nice vehicle to support international travel – above all else, it is a lot of fun. The minute it stops being fun, you should stop.

MR. CLYMER *of Hodinkee*

I used to keep and keep and keep. But maybe at this time of my life I would fancy some changes. Let's upgrade!

MR. FRIEDMAN *of Watchionista*

Most collectors will buy a watch because A) they don't have it B) they have one but in poorer condition or C) it's part of a family or set that they are trying to complete. And then there are those who buy watches just because they can. They collect to keep. They aren't so concerned with upgrading because they often start with the very best. Ultimately though, everyone is

collecting to upgrade, because tastes change over time and new pieces become available. Every watch has its price, and sometimes that means starting over. One of the consignors from the Heuer Parade auction held last year sold most of his collection because he felt he had “done it.” He had spent almost a decade finding Heuer chronographs from a specific era, and once he had them, he needed a new challenge. He is still collecting watches today, but from other manufacturers.

MR. TOUCHOT *of Phillips*

Chances are the first 10 to 20 watches you end up buying will also be the first instances of watches that you flip. Collecting is a journey of learning after all. The more knowledge you amass, the more you discover about the world of watches and what you like about your watches. In turn, your collection evolves.

MR. NAG *of Revolution Media*

Personally, I feel what one does with each watch depends on its history and mechanism. A vintage watch with different complications hard to find is definitely meant to be kept. On the other hand, the latest watches in the market are eligible to be changed if you feel there are better ones in the market. The simple strategy of selling a watch to fund a better one is acceptable.

MR. AL HAJ *of Homebazar*

What’s the next big thing?

We are starting to see a resurgence in popularity of “contemporary vintage” pieces. By this, I mean watches from the 1980s-1990s. Pieces from this era that stand out to us are IWC Pilots watches, Jaeger-LeCoultre Calendars, previous generation Lange models. Furthermore, ultraexclusive brands like [F.P. Journe](#) will be very desirable moving forward. They have seriously low production numbers and have already begun captivating collectors around the world.

MR. TAY *of WatchBox*

Steel sport watches from Rolex continue to be a smart option for parking your money, with the added benefit of being able to wear them out on the weekends (take the newest Daytona, for example, the MSRP of this watch is \$12,400!).

BLAKE BUETTNER, 34, *director of watches, the e-commerce company StockX, in Detroit*

It's impossible to say which model will be the next big thing, and it's very difficult to look past early Rolex Daytonas these days. However, it's a hard and fast rule that vintage watches that are original and well preserved today will have enduring value. We will almost certainly see the value of the most sought-after watches continue to appreciate as new collectors enter this field of collectibles.

MR. TOUCHOT *of Phillips*

I am not sure if there is anything left to be collected; it seems to me that every possible item is already being collected by someone.

SABINE KEGEL, 56, *international senior specialist and head of Christie's Geneva Watch Department*