



*Vintage
Eye
Watches*

OUR GUIDE TO CARING FOR VINTAGE WATCHES

Vintage watches, cherished for their timeless craftsmanship, require careful handling to preserve their condition and functionality, especially since many are no longer waterproof.

Water and watches are best kept separated

To maintain their delicate mechanisms, avoid exposure to water, humidity, or extreme temperatures, as these can cause rust, corrosion, or damage to the movement. Store your watch in a dry, stable environment, ideally in a watch box or pouch, away from direct sunlight or damp areas.

Through the decades, vintage watch parts can deform slightly, and steel-on-steel contact areas can erode through pitting. Even with fresh seals and a pass on the pressure test machine, that makes them less reliable in this respect. There is just a slightly bigger chance of freak coincidences of circumstances that allow in a little moisture. The damage this can do to the movement is not worth taking the risk, even with a vintage dive watch, so it is smart to take it off when you go swimming. But even wearing it under your sleeve in heavy rain for prolonged periods can be too humid. And, while you're at it, don't put it in the bathroom while you're taking a shower. Steam is still water.

If you do end up with a fogged-up crystal, time is of the essence. Put the watch on with the crown pulled out — the only time you should ever do this — and rush to your watchmaker. I have seen water-damaged watches that were immediately serviced come out perfectly fine. Ones that were kept in a drawer until "I am in the neighborhood and able to drop it off" were in trouble. Rust can form in the movement, and the dial can get severely damaged. If the watch means anything to you, getting it sorted quickly is the way to go. Placing the watch in sealed box with rice would help to draw out moisture.

Handling & General Wear

Handle vintage watches with clean hands to prevent oils or dirt from transferring to the case or crystal and use a soft microfiber cloth to gently clean the exterior. Avoid harsh chemicals or abrasive materials that could scratch or tarnish the watch.

Since vintage watches are often delicate, refrain from wearing them during high-impact activities like sports or heavy manual work to prevent shocks to the movement.

General Operation

There are a few rules to follow when operating vintage watches. These are pretty much the same as they are for modern watches, but perhaps they matter a bit more. For starters, I would strongly advise against operating the crown while the watch is on your wrist. This puts a lateral force on the crown that can potentially damage the keyless works. Obviously, always ensure the crown is pushed all the way in and, if applicable, screwed down when wearing.





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Servicing

Regular servicing by a qualified watchmaker every 10 years is recommended to ensure the internal components remain in good condition, as old lubricants can degrade, affecting performance. With mindful care, your vintage watch can remain a functional heirloom for years to come.

Thinking of vintage watches a little differently

If you take the above into account, I believe vintage watches can be worry-free and rewarding to own and wear. In general, I think their fragility is often a bit overstated. Think of it this way: if a watch has survived for four, five, or six decades, what do you plan on doing to it that it hasn't already been through? Water is the only thing that I am more mindful of when wearing a vintage watch versus a new one.

WINDING A MANUAL WATCH

Ensure the crown is in the winding position: If your watch has a screw-down crown (common in dive watches), unscrew it by turning counterclockwise until it pops out. For non-screw-down crowns, it's already in the correct position when not pulled out.

Wind the watch:

- Hold the watch securely, preferably on your wrist or in your hand.
- Turn the crown clockwise (forward) in smooth, gentle rotations. Most watches require 20–40 turns to fully wind, depending on the movement. You'll feel slight resistance as the mainspring tightens.
- Stop winding when you feel a firm resistance—this indicates the watch is fully wound. Do not force it further to avoid damaging the mainspring.

Set the time (if needed): Pull the crown out to the time-setting position (usually one or two clicks) and turn to set the correct time. Push the crown back in (and screw it down if applicable) to seal the watch.

Wind regularly: Manual watches typically need winding every 24–48 hours, depending on their power reserve. Wind at the same time daily (e.g., morning) to keep it running smoothly. (This is assuming you will continue to wear the same watch on a daily basis, otherwise leave them).