

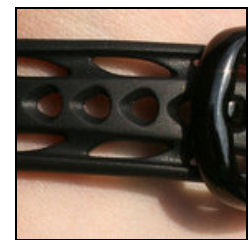
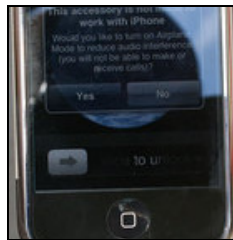
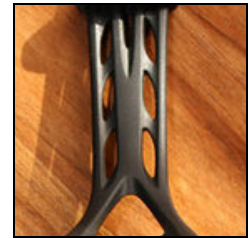
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Hands On the Timex Ironman iControl (Verdict: Great, But...)

August 2, 2007 – Charlie White

Timex teamed up with Apple for this Ironman iControl watch, which is pretty much a standard workout watch with one major difference: It has iPod controls on it. Communicating with your iPod via a little dongle that plugs into an iPod's universal docking port, you're able to control play/pause, volume up and down, and the go to the next/previous track on any iPod with a dock connector. We got our hands on one of these babies and took it out on the road for a week's worth of workouts.

Timex iControl



The iControl watch is offered up in a variety of colors, including gray, black, white, pink, blue, orange and green. Timex sent us a black one, probably thinking that the other colors might be a little too girly for our tastes. The watch looks like most training watches except it's quite a bit smaller, and we mean that in the best way. It's unobtrusive around the wrist, and doesn't stick up too far. Its band is strong yet pliable, and it's nice and open with plenty of perforations, keeping down the perspiration.

We tried plugging in the dongle to both an iPod nano (it doesn't work with the iPod shuffle because that player doesn't have a dock connector) and an iPhone, and it synced up flawlessly with each one as soon as we plugged it in. The iPhone complained that this device wasn't designed for it and offered to go into airplane mode, but after we selected No, it communicated with the watch without incident.

After it's synced up with the iControl watch, the iPod accepts the watch's commands almost instantly. The next/previous track buttons are on either side of the watch, the volume up and down buttons are on the right side, and the play/pause button is front and center, and all are easy to reach and operate. One major disappointment was the lack of fast forward or rewind controls. We find that to be a useful capability when listening to podcasts, because we often zone out and want to back up and hear certain sections again, but you can't do that with iControl—if you want to back up a bit, you'll have to dig out the iPod and do that the old-fashioned way.

Because of that lack of fast-forward and rewind, it hardly makes any sense to use this watch with the iPhone, especially when using the iPhone's included headphones with play/pause and next-track functions available right there on the earphone cable. Once we have our volume set with the iPhone, we rarely need to adjust it again or go to the previous track. But when walking with the iPod nano in a pocket, it was especially convenient to be able to pause and advance the tracks without having to break stride or grope for the iPod.

Besides those iPod features, the watch also contains the full complement of training features of other Timex Ironman watches, including a 50-lap memory recall chronograph, the ability to store training logs with your current workout, a multimode countdown timer, two interval timers for speed and endurance training, and three customizable alarms. It's also water resistant to 100 meters.

The Timex Ironman iControl watch works as advertised, and it looks great, too. However, if you're getting this watch just to control your iPod, or especially your iPhone, \$125 is a steep price to pay for the limited convenience it offers.