

Vintage Watch Valuations - 7 Rules

Rule #1: 3 things influence the value of a vintage watch: condition, condition and condition. It's very difficult to assess condition from a photo, hence any online value estimate is a crapshoot.

Rule #2: If you have a solid gold case, add \$500 US to the price assessment. If it's encrusted in diamonds and is platinum, it doesn't much matter about the watch part anyway – the scrap value will be higher unless it's a Rolex, Patek or Vacheron.

Rule #3: The watch is worth what a buyer will pay for it. There are price lists published, but they assume the watch has been serviced and is in running condition. Any buyer will have to deduct at least \$100 from the price list value if the watch has not been recently serviced. A watch seller will not give you more than 50% of the posted price in any case.

Rule #4: Your antique watch is worth far less than you think. They are not rare, even if they are old. For instance, Elgin made over 50 MILLION movements. They were built to last and be repaired so a lot of them are still around in various conditions. The average retail price for an 80 year old pocket watch is around \$150. Of course, how do you put a price on something your grandfather gave you when you were 7?

Rule #5: When it comes to wristwatches, men's are worth more than ladies' models. Women are not as interested in old mechanical things, and the ladies' watches are often really tiny - that's out of fashion today. Besides, the men's watches of the '30s and '40s are quite small and can serve as unisex pieces. So, ladies, go ahead and wear Dad's old Bulova, if you want.

Rule #6: Watches stink as an investment. I bought an 1883 keywind Hampden in 1978 for about \$100. Its value today? Maybe \$175. I'm not going to retire on those types of returns. It's a great watch, though.

Rule #7: When in doubt, refer to Rule #1.