Icon and Image Sizes

Every app needs a beautiful, memorable home screen icon that uniquely identifies the app to the user. Because apps on the home screen are identified solely by their icon, your icon should be recognizable and similar to your iOS app icon while still conveying the purpose of your app.

Icon Sizes

Home screen icons are circular and Table 20-1 lists the appropriate diameter and usage for each icon. Create your icons as full-bleed square images using the given dimensions. The system applies the circular mask automatically.

Table 20-1 Icon sizes

Asset	Apple Watch (38mm)	Apple Watch (42mm)
Notification center icon	29 pixels	36 pixels
Long look notification icon	80 pixels	88 pixels
Home screen icon Short Look icon	172 pixels	196 pixels

Create all of your image resources as `@2x` images. There is no need to include non `@2x` resources in your Watch app bundle.

For all images and icons, the PNG format is recommended. Avoid using interlaced PNGs.

The standard bit depth for icons and images is 24 bits—that is, 8 bits each for red, green, and blue. You can include an 8-bit alpha channel but doing so is not required. You can also use PNGs with indexed colors to save space in your image files.

Home Screen Icon

The Home screen on Apple Watch is unique, yet familiar. Home Screen icons echo those of iOS, but without accompanying text. At such a small size, these icons must clearly identify the apps they represent. When the functionality of an Apple Watch app is very similar to its sibling iOS app, the icon remains virtually the same. But when the Watch app acts as a complement or controller to an iOS app, the icon design differs accordingly.

For the best results, enlist the help of a professional graphic designer. An experienced graphic designer can help you develop an overall visual style for your app and apply that style to all the icons and images in it.

Use universal imagery that people will easily recognize. In general, avoid focusing on a secondary or obscure aspect of an element. For example, the Mail icon uses an envelope, not a rural mailbox, a mail carrier's bag, or a post office symbol.

Embrace simplicity. In particular, avoid cramming lots of different images into your icon. Find a single element that captures the essence of your app and express that element in a simple, unique shape. Add details cautiously. If an icon's content or shape is overly complex, the details can become confusing and may appear muddy at smaller sizes.

Create an abstract interpretation of your app's main idea. Typically, it's better to interpret reality in an artistic way, because doing so lets you emphasize the aspects of the subject that you want users to notice.
Make your icon similar to the icon for your iOS app. Maintaining a similar appearance helps the user associate your Watch app with your iOS app.
Create different sizes of the home screen icon for both Apple Watch display sizes. You want to make sure that your icon looks great on both Apple Watch device sizes. For device-specific measurements, see Table 20-1.
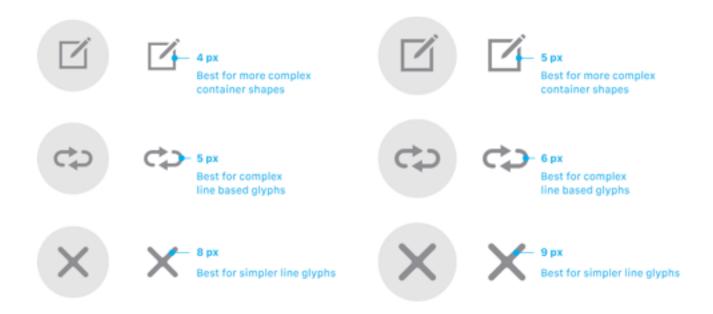
Menu Images

Icons in the Force Touch menu are template images, whereby the alpha channel of the image defines the resulting shape. Color information in the image is ignored.

With menu images, the canvas size of the image is larger than the content. The extra space around your content ensures that there is a sufficient border between the edge of the menu icon and your content.

Table 21-1 Table

Device	Canvas size	Content size
Apple Watch (38mm)	70 pixels	46 pixels
Apple Watch (42mm)	80 pixels	54 pixels

When designing the glyphs to display in your menu images, use line weights that are appropriate for the device size and the complexity of the glyph. Keep line weights at a minimum of four pixels to prevent them from being illegible.

4 px
Best for more complex
container shapes

5 px
Best for more complex
container shapes

5 px
Best for complex
line based glyphs

6 px
Best for complex
line based glyphs

8 px
Best for simpler line glyphs

9 px
Best for simpler line glyphs

Apple Watch (38mm)

Apple Watch (42mm)

For menu images, the PNG format is recommended. You should avoid using interlaced PNGs.