



SUPERLATIVE CHRONOMETER CERTIFICATION

REDEFINING PERFORMANCE

The Oyster has always been known for its superlative performance.

The notion of 'Superlative Chronometer', first formulated in the late 1950s, was reinforced in 2015 with stricter criteria. Today, the Superlative Chronometer certification is applied to all of the brand's watches and covers chronometric precision, waterproofness, self-winding and power reserve.



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The criteria that have made every Rolex watch a 'Superlative Chronometer' since the late 1950s were reinforced in 2015; the brand's objective was to establish a new standard of excellence for mechanical watches.

Rolex has developed unparalleled testing methodologies and high-technology equipment to certify its watches and award them the status of Superlative Chronometer. Since 2015, this exclusive designation attests that every watch leaving the brand's workshops has successfully undergone a series of tests conducted by Rolex in its own laboratories, according to its own criteria, following the official certification of the movements by the Swiss Official Chronometer Testing Institute (COSC).

These in-house certification tests apply to the fully assembled watch, after casing the movement, guaranteeing superlative performance on the wrist in terms of precision, power reserve, waterproofness and self-winding. They systematically complement the qualification testing performed during development and production.

The precision of a Rolex Superlative Chronometer after casing is of the order of $-2/+2$ seconds per day – the rate deviation tolerated by the brand for a finished watch is significantly smaller than that accepted by COSC for official certification of the movement alone. Moreover, the watch's precision is tested by Rolex using an exclusive methodology that simulates the conditions in which a watch is actually worn and is much more representative of real-life experience.

The Superlative Chronometer status is symbolized by the green seal that comes with every Rolex watch and is coupled with an international five-year guarantee.

SUPERLATIVE CHRONOMETER CERTIFICATION CRITERIA

Under the Superlative Chronometer certification, key areas of performance for each Rolex watch – precision, power reserve, waterproofness and self-winding – are checked.

- **PRECISION**

Each Rolex movement is sent to the Swiss Official Chronometer Testing Institute (COSC) for 15 days and 15 nights of testing, involving seven eliminating criteria in five static positions and at three temperatures. All Rolex movements are officially certified as a 'Chronometer', meaning that they have passed the COSC tests and been awarded an official certificate attesting to their precision.



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After casing the movement in the Rolex workshops – an operation that can affect precision by several seconds per day – the brand tests the precision of each finished watch. Over a period of approximately 24 hours, using an exclusive methodology developed by the brand, the watch is placed in a series of seven static positions, followed by a dynamic sequence of movement – two complementary steps that simulate real-life wear. The tolerance criteria are much stricter than those of the official certification in terms of precision: the deviation for a Rolex Superlative Chronometer must not exceed $-2/+2$ seconds per day, after casing, versus the $-4/+6$ seconds per day required by COSC for the movement alone.

- **WATERPROOFNESS**

The waterproofness of each Rolex watch is tested in a hyperbaric tank. Watches guaranteed waterproof to a depth of 100 metres (330 feet) are tested at a water pressure equivalent to their rated depth plus 10 per cent, while divers' watches – waterproof to 300, 1,220 and 3,900 metres (1,000, 4,000 and 12,800 feet) – are tested with a safety margin of 25 per cent, according to the standard in effect for this type of watch. These tests are performed according to an exclusive methodology, developed by Rolex, which yields precise and reliable results.

- **SELF-WINDING**

An exclusive testing methodology is used to verify the winding power of the self-winding module; all the movement components must work together optimally and not be obstructed by or rub any other pieces once the movement has been cased.

- **POWER RESERVE**

Every watch is fully wound at the beginning of the tests to ensure that it runs for the entire length of its stated power reserve.

A ROLEX SIGNATURE

The designation 'Superlative Chronometer Officially Certified' inscribed on the dial of each watch in the Oyster Perpetual collection – except for entirely gem-set dials, which do not bear the wording for aesthetic reasons – is a true signature of Rolex watches.

The inscription on the dial of Rolex watches has evolved over time. From 'Chronometer', it was changed to 'Officially Certified Chronometer' in the late 1930s, before attaining its definitive form 'Superlative Chronometer Officially Certified' some 20 years later. It symbolizes Rolex's tireless



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pursuit of chronometric excellence, given the pioneering role played by the brand in improving wristwatch precision from early in the 20th century.

In 1910, a Rolex wristwatch obtained the first certificate in the world granted to such a watch by the Official Watch Rating Centre in Bienne, Switzerland. In 1914, another Rolex model received from the prestigious Kew Observatory in Great Britain, at the time the world's highest authority for measuring watch accuracy, the first 'Class A' certificate ever accorded to a wristwatch – a distinction until then reserved for marine chronometers.

The various designations marked on the dials of Rolex watches over the course of time attest to the brand's ability to continuously innovate as well as to the high degree of precision of its timepieces.

OFFICIALLY CERTIFIED CHRONOMETER AND SUPERLATIVE PRECISION

In watchmaking, the word 'chronometer' is given to a watch whose movement has been officially certified as a high-precision timekeeper by an independent entity according to international criteria. In Switzerland, it is the Swiss Official Chronometer Testing Institute (COSC) that measures and checks the precision of the watch movements in different positions and at different temperatures. A movement that passes the eliminating tests receives the 'chronometer' certification attesting to its capacity to measure time without deviating from atomic time by more than a few seconds per day.

It was not always so. Before 1951, the regulations concerning the 'chronometer' designation were quite different, with the official definition of a chronometer being: "a precision watch [...] having the capacity to obtain an official rating certificate". A watch could thus be certified as a 'Chronometer' by its own manufacturer. To guarantee the quality of its chronometers, Rolex chose to have their movements officially certified, and the inscription 'Officially Certified Chronometer' began to appear on the dials of the brand's watches in the late 1930s.

From 1951, in Switzerland, only watches with a movement whose precision had been officially certified – according to pre-established tolerances and by an independent entity – could use the 'Chronometer' designation. A triumph for Rolex, since the brand's watches accounted for almost 90 per cent of the chronometers that had been officially certified since 1927. Starting in 1951, each Rolex watch was accompanied by a red seal stamped with the inscription 'Officially Certified Chronometer'. To continue to differentiate its chronometers from others, Rolex set its sights on another goal: obtaining certificates *avec mention* (certificates of superior performance). According to the old rules, movements whose precision proved superior in the tests received a certificate with the



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citation “Especially Good Results”. From the early 1950s, Rolex founder Hans Wilsdorf became increasingly keen to have certificates *avec mention*, concluding by January 1959, “We have reached a point where we must obtain all our certificates *avec mention!*” adding, “It is thus that the prestige of Rolex will increase”.

An important technical innovation paved the way for this achievement. In 1957, Rolex launched a new generation of movements: the 1500 calibres, equipped with a balance wheel with gold Microstella screws (Microstella nuts since 1983), which provided excellent chronometric performance. In fact, the rate results achieved showed greater precision than those required for a certificate *avec mention*. To mark these exceptional qualities, Rolex created the term of ‘Superlative Chronometer’.

This designation would thereafter be combined with the ‘Officially Certified Chronometer’ marking which already featured on the dial of Rolex watches, to constitute the well-known phrase ‘Superlative Chronometer Officially Certified’. This new inscription first appeared in the late 1950s on Datejust and Day-Date models.

Since then, the meaning of the term, which perpetuates the notion that Rolex chronometers surpass the current standards, has continued to evolve in order to reflect the brand’s technical developments and the excellent performance of its watches.

IN-HOUSE CERTIFICATION

Rolex’s goal has always been to produce watches of the highest quality, notably in terms of precision and reliability. Technological advances have opened up new opportunities and allowed the introduction of new criteria that exceed existing norms and standards and which justify the qualification ‘Superlative’ applied to Rolex chronometers.

Already in 1927, the founder of Rolex, Hans Wilsdorf, had said about the precision of his watches: “We work to a gauge that cannot be measured by any instruments excepting our own”.

Rolex has always tested the performance of its watches according to its own standards, supplementing the testing with the official validation of its movements. After 1973, the creation of the Swiss Official Chronometer Testing Institute (COSC) consolidated the various official watch rating centres and led to the adoption of unified denominations and criteria. Rolex continued to legitimize the ‘Superlative’ qualification of its chronometers with more extensive in-house testing of every single watch. Thus, in addition to testing the waterproof and dustproof qualities, which contribute to a



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watch's precision, the brand has, for decades, been testing the precision of its chronometers after casing the movements.

Rolex can therefore offer its customers watches with a superlative level of performance that pushes back the limits of mechanical timepieces and makes the brand a benchmark of watchmaking excellence.