

# Tech review: Charging mat, iPhone cases are smart, useful accessories

September 4 2009, By Jim Rossman

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Charge4All Portable Charging Mat

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## CHARGE4ALL PORTABLE CHARGING MAT

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Most days, I have three or four gadgets I need to charge. Usually, it's two iPhones (mine and my wife's), along with a [Bluetooth headset](#) and possibly a digital camera.

The old way was to either charge them in separate places around the house or set up a rather large power strip.

The Charge4All Portable Charging Mat ([charge4all.net](http://charge4all.net)) is the equivalent of a four-outlet power strip, but it takes up much less space. It also provides a soft place for your [gadgets](#) to sit while charging.

For each gadget, you need a small pigtail adapter. The mat comes with five common adapters: iPod/iPhone, micro USB, mini USB, LG phone and Samsung phone.

There are 20 different adapters you can buy, at \$4.95 each. Chances are there's one for your device, although the Charging Mat seems aimed at [cellphone](#) users.

The business end of the mat is where the adapters plug in. It's about the size of a small flashlight. A button on the end turns the mat on and off.

The rubber mat rolls up for easy travel and has a hook-and-loop dot to keep it rolled tight.

Price: \$39.95

Pros: Small size, easy portability

Cons: Expensive if you need more than the included adapters

Bottom line: If you have a dedicated charging spot, this will fit right in.

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OTTERBOX IMPACT

I tend to drop my iPhone. Luckily, I haven't broken it yet.

Lately, I've been using the Impact case from OtterBox, which will greatly increase the chances of my iPhone surviving a fall.

The OtterBox Impact ([otterbox.com](http://otterbox.com)) is a black silicone case that allows access to all the buttons and switches while keeping the corners protected with extra thickness around the edges.

I like that the silicone is grippy, but not so grippy as to be a hindrance when I'm removing the phone from a pocket.

Installation is a breeze -- you just stretch the case over the phone. It also comes with a clear protector to keep your screen free from scratches.

OtterBox offers protective cases for all types of portable devices, and the company has a reputation for protection and quality.

Price: \$19.95

Pros: Easy to install, good drop protection

Cons: Can't think of any.

Bottom line: If you like a thin silicone case, this one offers the most protection.

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## MONCARBONE FEATHER LIGHT IPHONE CARBON FIBER CASE

On the other end of the protection spectrum is the monCarbone Feather

Light iPhone Carbon Fiber Case ([moncarbhone.com](http://moncarbhone.com)).

That's a very long name for a very small product.

It's a carbon fiber shell that slips over the back of your iPhone 3G or 3GS.

For those of you not familiar with carbon fiber, it's a very light and very durable material. Race cars have body panels made of carbon fiber because it's so light.

The cases come in two flavors -- Midnight Black and Mystery Black. They're basically the same case, but one has a glossy clear coat (Midnight) and the other is matte (Mystery).

The case is the lightest and thinnest I've seen. It's almost as if nothing's on there at all, but it adds a fantastic look.

I can't tell you how many people have asked where I got the cool case for my phone.

On the downside, it doesn't offer much in the way of protection, though it will keep the back of your iPhone from getting scratched up. Also, like almost every other case I've seen, it won't fit in a standard iPhone dock. If your dock has different inserts, you can use one with a bigger opening, or you can use the iPhone cable to charge without a dock.

If you want a case that looks great and will last forever, try the monCarbone.

Price: \$59.95

Pros: Light, strong, durable

Cons: Very little actual protection, expensive

Bottom line: Coolest case I've had on my [iPhone](#), by far

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Citation: Tech review: Charging mat, iPhone cases are smart, useful accessories (2009, September 4) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2009-09-tech-mat-iphone-cases-smart.html>

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