

Gift Guide: Accessories to jazz up mobile phones

November 27 2009, By DEBORAH YAO , AP Business Writer



In this Tuesday, Nov. 10, 2009 photo, shown is the TomTom app for iPhone displayed with car kit, in Philadelphia. The iPhone is sold separately. (AP Photo/Matt Rourke)

People you know have spent small fortunes on shiny new smart phones such as the iPhone 3GS, a BlackBerry or the Droid. But the devices still don't have all the features they want.

The battery runs out too quickly when they surf the Web, watch a movie or play a video game. They wish the phone offered turn-by-turn directions like a true [GPS unit](#) and without monthly payments. A tripod

would come in handy when they want to take a group photo on the phone for Facebook.

All these holes can be filled by accessories that make for good gifts. We've got some suggestions.

TomTom for iPhone Car Kit, \$119.95

This new kit from TomTom Inc. makes the iPhone easier to use for in-car navigation. The kit includes a mount — allowing you to attach the phone to a window or the dashboard — and a car charger.

In addition to this kit, your recipient would need a GPS application on the iPhone — TomTom sells one for \$100, with no monthly fees.

Pros: The TomTom mount is sturdy and grips the windshield tightly. It tilts forward and back, and rotates for viewing street maps in landscape mode, if you want a wider angle. The mount has a built-in GPS receiver to boost signals, a speaker for louder driving instructions and a microphone so you can take calls handsfree. The mount also charges the iPhone and has a line out for music playback.

Cons: There are cheaper GPS apps and third-party car kits on the market.

Where to buy: Apple.com, TomTom.com and Apple retail stores.

Mophie Juice Pack Air for the iPhone, \$79.95

It's an iPhone case that just about doubles the life of the phone's battery as well. The phone charges through a connection port embedded in the

case.

Pros: I like the battery indicator lights on the back of the case that tell you when you're about to run out of power. It has a standby mode, so you can use the Juice Pack battery only when needed. You can charge your iPhone and the battery case at the same time. It handles 500 full recharges.

Cons: The top of the case doesn't curve over the iPhone screen, making me worry that there's less protection if I drop my phone face down.

Where to buy: Online and various retail stores.

Gorillamobile by Joby, \$39.95 for iPhones, \$29.95 for all other devices

Pros: Propping up your phone to take group photos or self portraits isn't the easiest of tasks. Gorillamobile by Joby aims to solve that with a 6.5-inch malleable tripod whose legs wrap around the trickiest of terrains.

The tripod attaches to the back of an iPhone case, which is included. For other phones, clips attach to the back of the device with suction cups or adhesive. The tripod hooks into the clip. Gorillamobile also can be used to prop up your phone so you can watch videos on it.

Cons: I'm not crazy about packing a tripod in my purse, even if it's only 6.5 inches long.

Where to buy: REI and various online stores.

MoGo Talk, \$129.95

Pros: In the category of "Why didn't they think of this before?" MoGo Talk solves the annoying problem of having to scrounge around in my purse for my Bluetooth earpiece device when someone calls. MoGo Talk's phone case (currently shipping for the iPhone but BlackBerry Curve and Javelin to come in the first quarter) has a Bluetooth device that fits snugly in the back — so it's always attached to the phone. You can choose among different sizes of rubber ear tips for the most comfortable fit.

Cons: Like the Juice Pack Air, the phone case doesn't curve around the iPhone's screen so there's less protection for the front.

Where to buy: At Apple.com, Apple retail stores and MogoStore.com through year's end. Then it is due to hit retail stores.

AirCurve for the iPhone, \$19.99

Pros: Griffin Technology's speaker for the iPhone is acoustically designed to amplify sound even without power. The AirCurve's gorgeous, clear polycarbonate case also serves as a stand for the iPhone with a slot at the bottom for the charging and synching cable.

Cons: You have to take your iPhone out of its case to fit into the speaker, which can be a hassle and leaves the phone unprotected.

Where to buy: At various online and retail stores.

iSkin for the BlackBerry Curve, Storm and Bold, \$29.99 and \$32.99

Pros: iSkin's "Vibes" phone cases for the BlackBerry are made with Microban antimicrobial protection that the company says inhibits

bacterial growth. The cases are lightweight and flexible and come in different colors. The "Vibes FX" cases sport an argyle pattern. There are iSkin cases for the [iPhone](#) as well, priced from \$30 to \$45.

Cons: I'm not sure I want to shell out \$30 to \$45 for a phone case, germ-killing or not.

Where to buy: At [iSkin.com](#).

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