

Gadgets: Western Digital's portable hard drive displays vital info

March 25 2010, By Gregg Ellman



My Passport Studio

Storage is one of the most neglected areas for most digital users, so anything to make that job easier is welcome.

Western Digital's new My Passport Studio ultra-portable 2.5-inch [hard drive](#) has a nice feature that puts them at the head of the class.

The drive is equipped with a Smart display, so users can create a personalized label for content stored on the drive. This includes remaining free space and the number of files stored on the drive. The

display can also show how much storage capacity is available and a security (password protection) status. All is displayed whether the unit is plugged in or not.

The drive comes with FireWire 800 and USB 2.0 connectivity and is formatted for use with Mac computers. This makes them plug-and-play ready and an excellent choice to use with Apple's time machine [backup system](#).

If needed, users can reformat the drive to be used with Windows operating systems XP, Vista or Windows 7.

Included with the drive are USB and FireWire 800 cables and a FireWire 800 to 400 adapter

Details: westerndigital.com, capacities of 320GB - \$149, 500GB - \$179 and 640GB - \$199.

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I never thought a product made by Microsoft - and intentionally warped - would be a great accessory for my Apple laptop.

This is the case with the Arc Keyboard, which looks kind of odd with the warped feature, but works really well. Obviously the unit is warped to make it ergonomically correct.



Arc Keyboard

Since it measures just 12-by-6 inches, it's a great device for the house or the go. In order to compact it down for portability, there are a few features that were eliminated from a more standard keyboard.

The main feature taken out, which is no big deal to me, is the right side numbers, along with arrow keys.

Numbers are still located across the top row of keys and a single arrow key has replaced the four arrow keys. The one key can be used to go up, down, left or right.

Everything else is where it's supposed to be and it worked flawlessly as a wireless device.

Power is supplied by AAA batteries (2), which are included.

The setup is simple; just plug in the wireless dongle (2.4 GHz Wireless) to any USB port and type away. When not in use, a nice storage slot is located on the bottom of the keyboard for safe keeping of the tiny USB piece.

If you don't use your computer's USB ports for other devices, just leave the dongle plugged in.

Fair is fair and as much of a Mac user as I am, this keyboard from Microsoft is much more comfortable to use than the slim, aluminum wireless keyboards Apple has produced the past few years.

Details: microsoft.com/hardware, \$59.95

Aliph, a leader in Bluetooth headsets, has introduced the Jawbone ICON.

The company calls it "The World's First Truly Intelligent Bluetooth Headset" and after using it you will see that this is true.



Some of the advanced features, which make it stand out, include military-grade noise-eliminating technology and MyTALK software.

The elimination of noise is the feature that stands out best to me. Too often I use these devices only to get frustrated by outside noise.

I tried using it while driving with my car window open (not an ideal situation) and while there will still a lot of wind noise, it performed much better than most other models I've tried.

The volume is self adjusting, thus eliminating the need to adjust the volume from call to call.

The new software lets users control the device on the Web in areas of what voice conveys the information such as caller ID names and numbers along with remaining battery life.

This lets users remain truly hands-free at all times. In addition you have multiple choices for what language is used to pass this information on to you.

MyTALK keeps drivers hands-free by allowing the customization of features such as voice dialing and voice-to-SMS messaging.

The ICON unit has simple control for powering it on or off along with being the ability to switch between calls.

iPhone users will like the visual battery meter, which is displayed on the screen of the iPhone itself.

Aliph also worked to make the ICON fashionable and they have achieved that for sure. The line has six different designs and each comes with a choice of finish, color, surface and appearance.

Company specs have talk time up to 4.5 hours, but this varies from phone to phone. It can also stay in standby mode for 10 days and be used at a range up to 33-feet.

Details: jawbone.com, \$89.99

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Citation: Gadgets: Western Digital's portable hard drive displays vital info (2010, March 25)
retrieved 3 May 2024 from

<https://phys.org/news/2010-03-gadgets-western-digital-portable-hard.html>

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