

## Got a phone charger? No, just a wireless pad on a desk

March 6 2015, by Laure Fillon

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Samsung included wireless charging capability in its new flagship smartphone, the Galaxy S6, unveiled on March 1 in Barcelona

"Got a phone charger you can lend me? No, I need the new type.... Oh, forget it."

To ease the stress of a dying mobile phone battery and the hassle of bundling wires into your bag, designers are hoping to make 2015 the

year of the wireless charger.

Companies at the Mobile World Congress, a top telecom fair which wrapped up Thursday in Barcelona, Spain, promised that soon you will just place your phone on a table or lamp stand for it to absorb electricity through a wireless surface.

South Korean giant Samsung included wireless charging capability in its new flagship smartphone, the Galaxy S6, unveiled on March 1 in Barcelona.

Swedish furniture-maker Ikea announced a line of bedside tables, lamps and desks equipped with wireless charging spots to be launched in Europe and North America in the coming weeks.

"This is probably the year of the wireless charger," said Kevin Curran, a senior member of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers, ahead of the mobile fair.

"A lot of the top-end phones now by default are coming with a wireless charger. You just have to put the phone onto a mat or onto a stand."

If a phone has a wireless charging receptor, just placing it over the charging pad on one of these items will transfer power to it.

The piece of furniture itself is not wireless, drawing its power from the mains, but no wire is needed to plug into the phone.

## **Standard adapters**



Swedish furniture-maker Ikea has announced a line of bedside tables, lamps and desks equipped with wireless charging spots

Different rival technologies for wireless charging have emerged over recent years.

For their devices, Samsung and Ikea opted for the Qi standard—a system developed by the Wireless Power Consortium, an alliance of 200 different companies founded in 2008.

The Qi consortium claims its standard is the most widely used in the world with charging points in 3,000 hotels, restaurants, airports and public spaces. It says its system can be used in 80 models of [mobile phone](#) and various types of car.

The product announcements at the Barcelona show "will allow a big step forward," eventually freeing users of cumbersome charging wires, said

Inge Tauber of the German company L&P Automotive, part of the Qi project.

"People have no need to fear that their chargers will become obsolete, because these bases will be compatible with the new generations of smartphone."

Even smartphones that were not made with a [wireless charging](#) receptor can be fitted with adaptors in the form of an outer case or other minor accessory costing from about 10 euros (\$11).

## Wireless charging race

Qi is competing with two other standards, PMA and A4WP, which between them group some 200 other telecom, computing and electronics firms.



A visitor tests a phone during the 2015 Mobile World Congress in Barcelona on March 4, 2015

The PMA and A4WP camps will merge in mid-2015 "to accelerate the growth of this nascent market," they said in a statement.

Tauber denied this competition would hold back the industry from developing a common standard for compatible charging pads. She reckoned it would drive it towards a "homogenous standard".

Makers of smartphones have so far failed to find a common standard for any kind of charger, despite attempts such as the European Union's bid to impose universal chargers by 2016.

Analysts said it was tricky to estimate the potential value of the market for wireless chargers.

The Wireless Power Consortium estimates that 50 million chargers were sold in 2014.

According to technology consultancy Gartner, in that year consumers bought 1.8 billion handsets—which typically come with a charger included.

"In the next few years they will all have wireless chargers in-built," Curran said.

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