

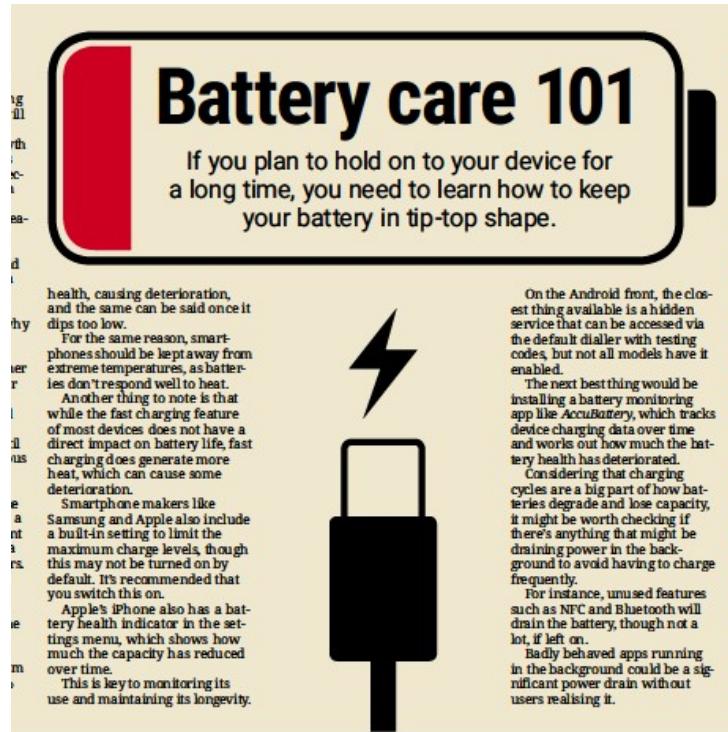
- Cellular telephone

Battery care 101

If you plan to hold on to your device for a long time, you need to learn how to keep your battery in tip-top shape.

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HAVE you ever had an older family member say that leaving a phone charging overnight will cause its battery to blow up?



While that may just be a myth at this point – modern devices come with overcharging protection that stops the device from drawing power when fully charged – that's not the only reason to avoid leaving gadgets charging overnight.

As a general rule, you should make sure the battery level on your smartphone is between 35% and 80%. For those unfamiliar with why that is, the important thing to remember is that lithium-ion batteries used in most consumer devices have a limited number of charge cycles.

As the battery is drained and recharged over time, its health will continually deteriorate until the degradation becomes obvious from the reduced capacity and speed at which it loses charge.

This may not matter to those who upgrade their devices on a yearly basis, but it is significant for those who intend to keep a device for more than two years.

So, how does this relate to keeping a battery's charge between certain levels?

Well, charge cycles aren't the only thing that affects the lifespan of a battery.

Both the heat and strain from charging a device beyond 80% can have an impact on its health, causing deterioration, and the same can be said once it dips too low.

For the same reason, smartphones should be kept away from extreme temperatures, as batteries don't respond well to heat.

Another thing to note is that while the fast charging feature of most devices does not have a direct impact on battery life, fast charging does generate more heat, which can cause some deterioration.

Smartphone makers like Samsung and Apple also include a built-in setting to limit the maximum charge levels, though this may not be turned on by default. It's recommended that you switch this on.

Apple's iPhone also has a battery health indicator in the settings menu, which shows how much the capacity has reduced over time.

This is key to monitoring its use and maintaining its longevity.

On the Android front, the closest thing available is a hidden service that can be accessed via the default dialler with testing codes, but not all models have it enabled.

The next best thing would be installing a battery monitoring app like Accubattery, which tracks device charging data over time and works out how much the battery health has deteriorated.

Considering that charging cycles are a big part of how batteries degrade and lose capacity, it might be worth checking if there's anything that might be draining power in the background to avoid having to charge frequently.

For instance, unused features such as NFC and Bluetooth will drain the battery, though not a lot, if left on.

Badly behaved apps running in the background could be a significant power drain without users realising it.

So it is worth checking the battery section in the device's settings menu, which can indicate if a specific app is crashing a lot or using up a disproportionate amount of power.

Cutting the cord

Your phone is not the only device that runs on a battery, especially with the trend towards going wireless.

With wireless headphones and earbuds, much of the same advice given for smartphones will apply, but since earbuds tend to be charged in a carrying case, it will be quite a bit harder to maintain a specific charge level.

Battery life should not be an issue for devices like mice and keyboards because they are not power-hungry, but this is assuming they are no-frills models.

Gaming-focused models usually come with extras like lighting and higher polling rates (usually at 1,000Hz) for enhanced precision and accuracy.

For these, it would be best to disable lighting to preserve battery life, and perhaps consider lowering the polling rate when unnecessary.

Those that want to escape the hassle of plugging in the mouse or keyboard for charging should consider grabbing a model that's compatible with a wireless charging mousepad.