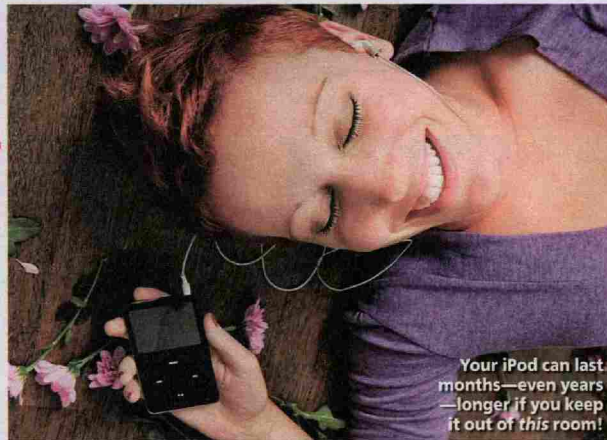




● Your Perfectly Organized Life

# Break-proof your gadgets!

You shell out money for the latest tech gadgets to make your life easier, so the last thing you need is for them to break or get glitches. Luckily, there are easy tricks to keep them in perfect condition—but you've likely never heard of them because they aren't in your instruction manual (or are just impossible to find!). Here, the surprising gadget-saving secrets tech experts revealed to us:



Your iPod can last months—even years—longer if you keep it out of this room!

To lengthen the life of your . . .

## \* Cellphone

### ✓ Drain the battery—really!

You probably recharge your phone before the battery gets too low. But constantly recharging a phone that still has some juice left actually wears down your battery over time, says technology specialist Nick McSpadden of JustAnswer.com. "Your battery will forget how much capacity it has, and you'll start getting fewer and fewer hours of use!" What does he recommend? "At least once a month, let your phone completely die, then fully charge it before you use it again."

### ✓ Clear the memory!

If you're like most folks, your cell is full of old text messages and photos. But all of this data may be slowing down your phone. "If its memory is close to full, it slows down other functions or disables them entirely," says Matt Kelly, CEO of Cell Again, a company that buys and sells cellphones. Scroll through any photos and texts and delete the ones you don't need—or download them to your computer—and your phone will work like new!



## \* Laptop

### ✓ Rely on the battery more!

Think you're doing your laptop a favor by never using battery power? Think again! "Laptop batteries are made to be used; if you leave your laptop plugged in all the time, the battery won't learn to take a charge properly," says McSpadden. "You may find that a battery that's supposed to last six hours now only lasts two." Prevent it by relying on battery power at least once a week.

**Tip!** Keep your laptop's air vents clear with a can of compressed air, available in hardware stores for around \$5; blow out any accumulating dust. Repeat twice a year.



### ✓ Keep it off your lap!

They may be called laptops, but they need a solid surface to sit on. "Laptops have small vents that pull cool air in and blow hot air out," explains McSpadden. "If you place the laptop on a cushiony, uneven place like a bed or your lap, it's easy for these vents to get covered up. If your laptop gets overheated, the components inside can melt and it will crash." Put it on a desk or table, or use a laptop cooling pad, available in office supply stores.

—Alison Bell

## \* GPS



### ✓ Unplug it!

If you're like most folks, you keep your GPS plugged into your car's battery charger 24/7. Trouble is, each time you start and stop the engine, the power fluctuates wildly, putting a huge strain on the device. Instead, unplug or turn off your GPS before shutting off the engine, and turn it back on after you've started the car, McSpadden says. "It may take a little extra effort, but it might just save you the cost of a new GPS!"

### ✓ Connect it to your computer!

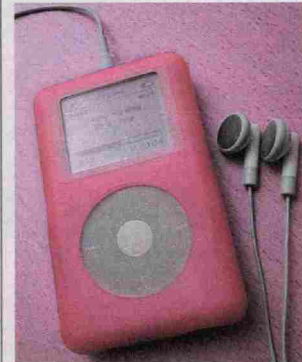
Just like a computer needs regular updating, so does your GPS! "All you have to do is plug your GPS into your computer, go to the manufacturer's website, and see what downloads and updates are available," says Geek Squad's Derek Meister. This can fix any bugs, glitches and irritations—and it's free! You can also download new and updated maps from the GPS manufacturer, so you have the most up-to-date directions.

**Tip!** Instead of plugging your iPod into a regular outlet, plug it into a power strip instead, which offers surge protection.

## \* iPod or MP3 player

### ✓ Keep the tunes out of the bathroom!

You turn on some tunes, close the bathroom door, then hop in the shower. What's wrong here? "The condensation that builds up can cause water damage, even if the iPod never gets wet," says Jean R. Wescott, coauthor of *Digitally Daunted*. And if it does get splashed? You may kill the battery and damage the screen!



### ✓ Cover it up!

When you throw your device in a pocket or purse, it's gets dirty. Even worse: "It not only causes scratches and cracks, but if anything gets into the battery, it can stop working completely," McSpadden says. Invest in a silicone protector—often less than \$10 at stores like Walmart—and clean regularly with a lightly moistened cloth or baby wipe.