

9 Ways to Get the Most from your Portable Computer Battery

Battery maintenance on a portable computer can be a bit tricky. On one hand, you have better performance if your computer is plugged into a wall outlet. At the same time, you need battery power so you can use your computer for its original intention, to be free of the power cord. With recent battery technology, you're able to have a bit of both. Your battery can live for a long time if you take care of it properly.

The life of the battery is generally measured in cycles. These vary from one manufacturer to another. The life cycle can be reduced if improper care or exposure to excessive heat occurs. In the case of a refurbished computer, the battery has probably been used for a certain period of time. It will not be 100%, but it will be functional to a good degree.

It's important to follow these rules to help maintain your battery.

1) Charge the battery! Consider keeping it plugged in for 12 hours before you unplug and use your unit.

2) Optimize for battery use. Today's portable computers have powerful processors, high end video displays, Bluetooth and Wi-Fi interfaces that require a good amount of energy to run at peak performance. To help prolong battery life, switch on the optimized battery or power feature. Your portable computer has multiple power settings that can help extend the use per cycle of your battery.

3) Lower the brightness of your screen. If you're indoors, there is no need to have a brightness level that will challenge the sun at the beach.

4) Unplug any accessories you are not using. These drain your battery even if they are not in use.

5) Turn off Wi-Fi or Bluetooth if it's not needed. Wireless systems draw significant power even in standby mode.

6) Keep your laptop off your lap. The air intake vents are normally placed on the underside of the unit. Like a race car, if your computer is unable to get proper cooling by ventilation, it can cause performance problems and overheat. If your portable computer overheats it can actually cause damage to delicate internal components. The fan may also run excessively, draining the battery.

7) Keep your laptop cool in warm weather. Hot summer days can kill your battery. When possible, keep your laptop in a cool place. Store it indoors, avoid direct sunlight, and keep it out of hot cars during the warmest days.

8) Don't let the battery fully discharge. When a laptop battery discharges fully and a forced shutdown occurs, the battery uses a full charge cycle. The more charge cycles are consumed, the quicker the battery is permanently depleted. Even when running a discharge cycle, don't let the battery drop to zero percent. Instead, stop when your operating system warns you the battery is getting low.

9) Use shutdown rather than hibernation or sleep mode for long periods. When you place your computer in hibernation mode, your battery is still active. Your computer is sleeping, but the information and data are still being maintained by the battery. Avoid hibernating your portable computer on battery power for long periods of time.

With a little care, you can extend the life of your battery and make sure that you get the most from your portable computer for years to come.

