

Four Season's Newsletter
TECH CORNER
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How to Clean Your Cell Phone

COVID-19 - Coronavirus - may be able to survive on your cellphone for up to nine days. This is the device you handle constantly and often press to the side of your face, which means that any bacteria, virus, or other germs that makes its way onto your phone or case could easily transfer to your skin. So how can we keep our most used device clean from this virus is something we need to know. Here are some dos and don'ts.

First, be very careful what you use. Cell phones have oleophobic (anti-oil) and hydrophobic (anti-water) coatings that keep oil and water from damaging your display on their unprotected screens which normally deteriorate over time. The wrong chemical applied to these screens will only accelerate this deterioration. And they might also damage internal parts.

First, let's discuss what NOT to do to clean your cell phone.

Window Cleaner: Using harsh cleaners can strip the coating and could leave your phone more vulnerable to scratches. Any cleanser with an abrasive agent – like Windex - will likely scratch the surface. Avoid these entirely.

Kitchen Cleaners: A screen's scratch-resistant properties won't get ground down by cleaning agents or bleach.

Paper Towels: Keep them away from your phone. The paper can shred, making the debris on your phone much worse. Paper towels can even end up leaving scratches on your screen.

Rubbing Alcohol: Rubbing alcohol can wear your phone's coating away quicker over time, causing your phone to be more prone to scratches. Make sure to check for alcohol in product ingredients on any "safe to use" phone screen cleaners. Avoid alcohol when cleaning its devices.

Makeup Remover: Some makeup removers may have chemicals that can be harsh to an electronic screen.

Compressed Air: Your phone is delicate, so blowing an intense amount of air into its portals can cause some damage, specifically to your mic.

Dish Soap and Hand Soap: While your dish and hand soaps may be gentle, the only way to use them is to combine them with water. Most phone companies suggest keeping water away from your phone, so again, stick to a damp cloth.

Vinegar: This is a major no-no. Vinegar will strip the screen's coating. You could use very diluted vinegar to cleanse other parts of your phone. Try a 50/50 mix with distilled water for cleaning the sides and back.

Now that you're thoroughly frazzled, let's discuss what you should use to clean your cell phone.

Disinfect your phone using disinfectant wipes that contain 70% isopropyl alcohol to clean your phone screen, not pure alcohol. Try using Clorox Wipes and others with similar concentrations. You might also try spraying a nonabrasive or alcohol-based (70% isopropyl) disinfectant directly on a soft lint-free cloth and wipe down your device while it is powered down and unplugged.

Another option for day-to-day cleaning is investing in a UV light. They claim to kill 99.99% of germs and banishes bacteria. I can't say that I tried one, but it might be worth your looking into.

Fingerprint smudges are hard to prevent because your skin constantly produces oils. The safest and most effective way to clean your screen is with a microfiber cloth. If the screen is in desperate need of cleaning, use distilled water to dampen the microfiber cloth and then wipe down your screen. This method can be used on the back and sides of your phone, too. Important - avoid squirting the water directly on the screen.

Lint and sand can get stuck in the small ports of your phone and in the crevices where the screen meets the body. If you like going to the beach the best solution for removing sand and lint is Scotch tape. You can lay it along the creases and speaker. Roll it up and gently place it in the ports. The tape's stickiness will pull out any lint or sand that may be stuck in your phone. For the smaller speaker holes that tape can't reach, vacuum the debris out with a small crevice tool.

If you have a water-resistant phone, rated for IP67 and above, you can rinse it with water. Although these phones, like the iPhone 7 and newer and the Galaxy S phones, can withstand submersion for up to 30 minutes in up to three feet of water, it's a much better idea to use a damp or wet cloth to clean your phone. Then dry your phone with a dry, soft cloth to remove the water. Make sure to pat dry all speakers and ports. Dunking the phone in water or running it under a faucet will get water into the ports, which means you won't be able to charge it until they're dry, and that can take time. Remember that having a water-resistant phone is more about peace of mind than it is about purposely taking your phone for a swim.

Good luck!

Please come to our Computer & Technology Club meetings on the 2nd Wednesday of every month at 7:00 PM in the multi-purpose room in the Club House.

If you have any questions or if there are any topics you would like me to cover in the future, PLEASE send me a note by email to: brianmarder@comcast.net