

# Stop making expensive mistakes

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Our \$1,000 phones, \$300 watches and \$100 earbuds add up. Get this: Americans are expected to spend \$485.5 *billion* on consumer tech this year.

Don't be that person who has to upgrade way too often because you don't treat your tech investments right. I'm here to help you get the most out of your gadgets. It'll be easy, promise.

## 1. You keep your phone plugged in all the time

The official word from phone manufacturers is to keep yours charged — but not fully. Ideally, it should range anywhere between 20% and 80%. Most new phones stop charging if you leave them plugged in, but once they drop down to a certain percentage, they'll start the process again. You don't want that. Get in the habit of unplugging your tech after it's fully charged.

## 2. You wait too long to charge your laptop

If you let your battery run out of juice entirely, it kills it over the long term. A good rule of thumb is to keep your laptop battery charged to at least 40% most of the time. When you have a sec, [test your laptop battery](#), especially if you never have.

## 3. You go with the cheapest option

The manufacturers of one-size-fits-all chargers and cables don't want you to know their products often don't have the proper voltage needed to work with your specific device.

Worse, lots of generic phone chargers don't meet established safety and quality testing guidelines. ICYMI: Consumer Reports did a ton of testing, and [this cheap Amazon cord works](#) as well as the expensive USB-C cords. Yup, it's just me again, saving you money!

## 4. You're careless

Today's phones can generally resist dust and a bit of water. But leaving yours in a hot car or directly in the sun can cause the battery to leak or overheat — and corrupt your data.

Extreme cold temperatures are trouble, too. Lithium-ion batteries can stop discharging electricity in freezing temperatures. Say hello to shortened battery life, display problems and even glass cracking. The ideal temperature is 32 to 95 degrees Fahrenheit.

## 5. Admit it, you're a slob

Is your tech sparkling clean or covered in crumbs and smudges? It's not just about cleanliness. Dust and dirt can damage your expensive electronics. My toolkit:

- **Compressed air:** This is especially useful when cleaning tight quarters and inside difficult-to-reach crevices. [If you don't like the waste of regular compressed air, try an electric air duster.](#)
- **Isopropyl alcohol:** A good rule of thumb is that if you use it to clean your kitchen, it's inappropriate for electronics.
- **Cleaning wipes:** Nice if you don't want to mess with alcohol or water. [I buy these all the time.](#)
- **Soft cloths:** Don't use paper towels or tissues that scratch and leave behind particles. If you have a 100% cotton cloth, that works, too. [Here's an affordable pack I've purchased a few times.](#)

**Pro tip:** Take off your phone case and clean out all the junk there, too. Sorry, but it will be disgusting if it's been a while.

# It's important to check your laptop battery's health – here's how

BY KIM KOMANDO, KOMANDO.COM, NOVEMBER 10, 2022

Batteries aren't meant to last forever, including the battery that powers your laptop. It might seem like the power source that gives life to your device should be the tech equivalent of an everlasting gobstopper, but as with any other battery, your laptop battery has a life cycle that ends at some point.

It's important to keep an eye on your laptop battery's health for that very reason: it can, and likely will, die at some point, and you don't want to get stuck replacing it in a pinch. Plus, just because the battery has died doesn't mean you need to buy a new laptop.

Let's take a look at how you can check the life of your laptop battery on both PCs and Mac laptops, brought to you by our sponsor, iDrive.

## How and why laptop batteries die

Most laptops use lithium-ion batteries as the power source, and as a general rule, this type of battery tends to lose charging capabilities. This can cause your laptop battery, which once held a full charge of 100%, to be limited to, say, 30% over time.

This can interfere with productivity — and also your laptop's efficiency. Laptops are meant to be portable, but if you can't move them from one place to the next without the battery dying, it can cause issues with how useful your device is to you.

This happens because your laptop battery is only equipped to handle a limited number of complete battery cycles or, in layman's terms, the charging process in which your battery goes from 0% to 100% before it starts losing efficiency. If you consistently put your laptop battery through complete charge cycles, it will lose efficiency, and so will older batteries as they age.

Your laptop battery can also lose efficiency if you're partially charging it. Let's say you regularly charge your laptop from 30% to 50%, or about 20% each time you charge it. Well, do that five times and you'll have completed one battery cycle because you've charged your laptop 100% in total.

You can't just avoid charging your battery to cut down on the cycles you put it through, so it's essential to check your battery's health instead. Doing so will give you a good idea of how much more abuse your battery can take and help prompt you to make some changes to preserve battery health.

But how do you do that? Let's take a look.

## How to check the battery life on your laptop

The steps you take to check your battery health will depend on your laptop type. Checking on the health of your battery on a MacBook is much simpler than checking the health of your battery on a PC laptop, which involves a much more laborious process. Let's start with the difficult one first.

How to check the battery health of your PC laptop

### Option 1: Use the Windows PowerShell terminal (Windows 8 or later).

You just have to use one simple command from the Windows Powershell terminal to check your battery health.

- Click the **Start menu** on your laptop.
- Search for **PowerShell** and then click on the PowerShell option that appears.
- Once it appears, type the following command: **powercfg /batteryreport**.
- Press **Enter**, which will generate a report that includes information on your battery health.
- Search for the folder in your user accounts directory with the name: **C:\Users[YourUsername]** to access the report.
- Note: Rather than searching for Powershell, you can opt to type "**cmd**" while pressing the **Start** button.
- Press **Ctrl + Shift + Enter** to run it in administrator mode.
- While in admin mode, type **powercfg /batteryreport**.
- Hit **Enter**.

- Go to **Users\Your Username** folder and look for the **battery-report.html** file to access the report.

Following either set of instructions above generates a report containing a ton of information on your laptop, including information about your battery health. This report will be an HTML file, so all you have to do is double-click it to view the contents.

You can find the information about your battery health by scrolling down on the report to the Battery Information section. This section will include subsections with details on Design Capacity, Full Charge Capacity, and Cycle Count. It also includes a subsection called Battery Life Estimates, which will give you a clearer picture of how long your laptop battery will last on a full charge, along with information on how long it would last on a full charge when it was new. This information should help you better understand your battery's life cycle.

## Option 2: Use Battery Report, which allows you to see your battery health (best for older laptops)

- Press **Windows Key + X** to open Win + X menu.
- Choose **Command Prompt (Admin)**. (**Note**: This opens Command Prompt as an administrator, which allows you to run a battery report for your laptop).
- When Command Prompt opens, type in the same command you use for Windows PowerShell: **powercfg /batteryreport** and run the report.

This will do the same thing as the Windows PowerShell method: it will generate a report that includes information on your battery health, which can be found by searching in your accounts directory for a folder called C:\Users[YourUsername].

As with the PowerShell method, this report will show you information about your battery, along with the name, serial number, and chemistry type of the battery.

## How to check the battery health of your Mac laptop

It's surprisingly simple to check the health of your MacBook battery, especially when compared to checking the battery health on a PC laptop. To check the health of your battery on a MacBook:

- Hold the **Option** key and click on the **Apple menu**.
- Click on **System Information**.
- Scroll down to **Hardware > Power > Cycle Count**.

The screenshot shows the macOS System Information window for a MacBook Pro. The left sidebar lists various hardware components, with 'Power' selected under the 'Hardware' section. The main pane displays the following information:

**Battery Information:**

- Model Information:**
  - Serial Number: D865152Q37DFWLK6H
  - Manufacturer: SMP
  - Device Name: bq20z451
  - Pack Lot Code: 0
  - PCB Lot Code: 0
  - Firmware Version: 702
  - Hardware Revision: 1
  - Cell Revision: 3241
- Charge Information:**
  - Charge Remaining (mAh): 4333
  - Fully Charged: No
  - Charging: No
  - Full Charge Capacity (mAh): 7434
- Health Information:**
  - Cycle Count: 253**
  - Condition: Normal
  - Battery Installed: Yes
  - Amperage (mA): -1901
  - Voltage (mV): 11103
- System Power Settings:**
  - AC Power:**
    - System Sleep Timer (Minutes): 60
    - Disk Sleep Timer (Minutes): 10
    - Display Sleep Timer (Minutes): 60
    - Wake on AC Change: No
    - Wake on Clamshell Open: Yes
    - Wake on LAN: Yes
    - AutoPowerOff Delay: 28800
    - AutoPowerOff Enabled: 1
    - DarkWakeBackgroundTasks: 1
    - Display Sleep Uses Dim: Yes

The "Cycle Count" section will give you a firm number of times your laptop battery has completed the battery cycle, and you can use this number to better understand where your MacBook battery is in its life cycle.

You'll also find information on the full charge capacity, the charge remaining, and a ton of other information about your battery, including the serial number. This information is important because the battery cycles will vary with each model of the Macbook.

As you can see in the screenshot above, the MacBook this was written on has a cycle count of 253, which may seem high, but it's a MacBook Pro and MacBook Pros that were released in 2009 and later have 1,000 cycles on their batteries. So, this MacBook is about a third of the way into the full battery life cycle.

But, if you complete a battery health check and find that your battery is at the end of its life cycle, don't panic. There are plenty of replacement batteries available to keep your laptop up and running.