What's New!

George Harding

Powercell 5000

When your mobile device runs out of power, you're stuck unless you have something to recharge it. The Powercell 5000 is just what you need. It is easy to carry and can charge your phone, tablet or MP3 player in short order. The Powercell has an internal rechargeable lithium-ion battery and has two USB charging ports. One is designed for tablets and provides 2.1 amps. It can also be used for smartphones. The other is lower power, but provides 1 amp. You can charge two devices at the same time, if you need to. The Powercell can provide up to 15 hours of talk time per charge.

The box contains the Powercell, a long cable for charging use with any USB port.

This is an ideal travel solution for those who may not have convenient ways to recharge when on the road.

Something you might not think of is the overcharging and temperature control built into this device. You won't have to worry about leaving it on charge too long.

The Powercell 5000 is a handy charging tool to have with you whenever you're away from an electric source

About: Powercell 5000

Manufacture: Ventev

www. ventev.com

Price: about $55

Pivotal Living

There are quite a number of devices (wrist or arm bands) that are worn to measure various physical attributes of your body. These are known as Wear Tech, or Wearable Technology, devices. Each measures something of interest to you and/or your doctor, such as pulse, oximetry, steps, calories, sleep time and more. The price is in the range of $100 to $200, a one-time cost.

Pivotal Living is a wrist band that measures sleep, activity, steps, calories, weight and hydration. You synchronize the band with a smart phone app, either iOS or Android, and display the results graphically.

What's most notable about this product is its price - $12 per year. Yes, $12. It's remarkable that so much can be recorded by such a small and such a reasonably priced device.

When you order one of these, the first step is to charge it. The kit comes with a very short cable that connects to a USB port. The band connection is specialized and connects to the inside of the band. It takes about an hour for a full charge, but it lasts for a week or more.

You wear the band 24/7. You click on its button to display the various current readings. You can synchronize to the smart phone app any time, but you will probably want to do it once a day.

You can set an alarm in the app to wake you at a specific time each day, if you want. The alarm is a low key buzz that others won't hear, but you will feel it on your wrist.

The band displays the time of day, which is updated to be correct each time you sync with your app.

Syncing is accomplished by Bluetooth, the ubiquitous transmission short-distance method used to transfer data from one device to another. You press the band's button and at the same time tap the Sync button in the app. The data is transferred and displayed in graphical form.

Sleep mode is entered by double-clicking the band's button. In this mode, the band measures the quality and duration of sleep. The display in the app is a squiggly line, showing how often and when you moved around during sleep. Another double-click exits sleep mode..

Hydration is logged manually in the app.

This is a really interesting device available for a very reasonable price. I recommend it for those who want to monitor their physical health.

About: Wrist Band

Manufacturer: Pivotal Living
www.pivotalliving.com

Price: $12 per year plus $3 shipping

WaveCast External Speaker

This product is beautifully constructed and has a very attractive appearance. Its white rectangular shape is appealing.

The front has a grid with apertures for sound from the three speakers to get through.

The top of the unit has three buttons and an On/Off switch. Button one is for deceasing the volume, button three for increasing volume Button two appears to be to move to the next song.

The back of the unit has a connector for a micro-USB plug and a socket for an Auxiliary plug (for receiving phone calls, presumably). There is an LED indicator to show that charging is taking place.

The product box contains the speaker, a cable for charging and a Quick Start Guide. The unit has a rechargeable lithium-ion internal battery that's good for 5-7 hours.

The Quick Start Guide follows what seems to be the common practice of including no text, but rather only pictures of instructions. The warranty page, however, contains its info in a number of languages.

Input for the product is either Bluetooth or through the Auxiliary connection. The latter involves tethering the speaker to your phone or MP3 player with a cable which has 3.5 mm plugs on both ends. The more elegant connection is by Bluetooth.

Establishing the Bluetooth connection involves "pairing" your phone or MP3 player to the speaker. This process is easily done by simply turning your phoneMP3 player on and selecting the Bluetooth section in Settings. When the speaker is turned on, it searches for a device and connects with it.

Bluetooth is an efficient transmission method. Its limitation is distance.

In my testing, I found frequency response to be excellent, both at high and low frequencies. The only complaint I have is that high volume is not very high. Apparently, the product is intended for intimate situations, rather than open-air conditions.

This is a solid, attractive external speaker.

About: WaveCast External Speaker

Manufacturer: iLuv
www.iLuv.com

Price: about $40

Perfect Photo Suite 9
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Perfect Photo Suite 9 is a collection of seven integrated modules - *Browse, Layers, Enhance, Portrait, Effects, B&W* and *Resize*. The eighth module of the previous version, *Mask*, has been integrated into *Layers* and *Effects*. This collection provides the tools for making minor tweaks to your photos or effecting a total transformation into "something else," and everything in between.

The OneOneSoftware website and blog provide a wide selection of instructional and inspirational videos to help you get started with the suite, as well as dig deep into its wealth of features. There is also an extensive manual in PDF form available for download. In addition to detailing all the features of the modules, you'll also find information on using the Perfect Batch processing engine which is used to convert file format, resize, as well as apply presets to multiple files.

There have been quite a few enhancements and additions to the Suite, many in response to customer requests. Most noticeably, improved performance, an improved algorithm for masking, a faster and expanded browse module, noise reduction, a print engine and smart photos.

1. Browse is a viewing and organizing module where you manage your photos with tags, ratings and labels, which then provide the ability to filter and search. The module previews and sorts images very quickly due to the lack of database storage or management. Metadata is written to a standard Adobe sidecar file and most will transfer to compatible applications.

2. When you open an image, you are given the option to open it as a Smart Photo psd (*Photoshop*) file. This will enable you to re-edit an image, even masks and adjustment layers, after you save and close the program. Be aware though that the cropping, trim and transform tools are not available in this mode. There is an option to convert the image to the traditional format for destructive editing purposes, which also flattens the image. You can then use the gear icon to convert it back to a Smart Photo.

3. The Crop tool has been beefed up to include the ability to rotate the image inside the cropbox, level by entering a numerical degree or by drawing a line, resize and of course, crop.

4. There is a new Quick Mask tool for making selections that allows you to either paint across an area for removal or draw a box around an area to keep. It includes buttons to Grow, Invert and Reset. The refine brush, perfect brush and chisel tools have improved to provide more accuracy, more subtle transitions and better blending.

5. The *Effects* module now includes a new Lensflare filter, which allows you to add lensflare or sunspots to an image. You can manipulate the position, size and intensity of the lighting effects.

6. Color and luminance noise reduction for removing the appearance of graininess have been added to *Enhance, B&W* and *Effects*.

7. Printing capability has finally been added to the Suite and is available from all of the modules. You can access a full-featured print dialogue through the file menu or just press **Ctrl-P**.

We had a rare event in Southern Arizona on New Year's Eve and Day, snow accumulation and ice!!! So the residents of my city (myself included), were all out with cameras, either around 2AM when the flakes started, or the