

## Duracell Powermat Car Charger

Forum member [kdkuhns3](#) wondered if it was possible to install a Powermat wireless charger in your car. I thought that was an interesting idea and decided to have a look. As luck would have it, I am a BlackBerry user (Canadian, eh?). Powermat was bought by Duracell and Duracell appears to have discontinued anything but iPhone 4/s and Galaxy SIII charging backs and a generic charge plate that you need to plug into your device (hardly wireless). However, while looking around I discovered that The Source (former Radio Shack stores in Canada) was selling off old Powermat systems for the BlackBerry Torch (mine), including the charger and a charging back for the phone. Here is what the backs look like.



There is a little

dongle to attach the back to the charge port on the BlackBerry and the whole thing only adds a millimeter of depth to the phone.



This is the charger base and wall block. All of this is in a nice gray, a perfect match to my interior. The whole package of charger and back was on sale for only \$30. I got carried away and bought one for the car, one for the office and one for the bedside table (and got 3 phone backs and dongles in the package). Such a deal!

Now to try to install the thing in the car somewhere...

The first thing to note is that the unit uses 18vDC, not 12v. While I did not look, it is unlikely that the voltage regulator is in the device, so we need to feed it with 18v. As it happens, most laptop car chargers

output 18v. I had a couple of these around, including this one from INNERGIE that someone gave me for car and plane



operation. It is by far the smallest one I have seen so I decided to use that. The picture does not give you a good idea of scale but it is only about 3" long by 1" square. I adapted the airplane plug and soldered on some wire leads and fuse to connect to a 12v source in the car.

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The second thing to note is that your phone needs to sit ON the charger. This unit actually uses the Blackberry magnet (used to identify insertion into the holster) to align the BB on the charger. This magnet is not nearly strong enough to hold the phone in place while driving, however. My first thought was to glue one of those sticky mats to the charger base. I had a couple lying around, one very thick and one very thin. Neither worked – it looks like while wireless, the phone needs to be virtually in contact with the charger. A piece of paper between them was OK, but anything thicker interfered. Plan B was to take a flexible



rubber holder and cut it apart to fit both the charger and the phone. My cutting was rather crude (I was in a hurry – it is getting cold here!) but I made a slot for the charger and a hole to allow the power cord to exit. I used 3M tape to hold the charger to the back of the holder and added extra 3M tape to the back of the holder to attach to the car.

One thing to try might be to spray the base with Plasti-Dip. A coat or 2 might be thing enough and sticky enough to hold a phone in place. If it didn't work, it is not hard to remove.

I wanted to be able to access and see the phone while in the holder since the Caller ID is not displayed on the car AV head, so I placed the holder at the back of the lower console tray. I popped off the panel where the 12v outlet is and used the wiring there to power the charger, feeding the power cable out through the switch blank to the left of the power outlet. I then just stuck the assembly to the back of the tray. Installation complete, although, I think I would like to move the whole thing up onto a bracket to



the right of the gearshift eventually (when it warms up again).

The unit lets out a very high tech (some would say annoying) chirp when it starts up and another one when the phone is inserted and charging or removed.

There is also a light on the top of the charger (as it is positioned in the holder) that lights when charging but it is now hidden by the body of the phone. I am thinking about how to extend that. It is easy to open the charger base to cut the

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speaker wire if you hate the sound and probably also to adapt some other LED to the charging light. That is another day's project for the moment.

While the unit is a little far away, it is pretty easy to holster and un-holster the phone and you can



actually read the Caller ID and email headers if you are so inclined. A quick glance at the screen is all you need for the Caller ID, which was my main goal for this install. The positioning in the lower tray has the added benefit that no passengers can see the phone screen and thus cannot see

who is calling, emailing or texting (just in case that might be a concern ☺).



I had to buy a \$3 App for the BB that keeps the backlight on when charging.

I would recommend this ONLY if you are really a geek or really want to save a wire. I got lucky on the components (and it still cost me \$100 in chargers since I bought 3). Most people will require:

- At least one charge kit (case and charger are about \$60 on-line, I think – cases only for iPhone4/s and Samsung Galaxy SIII)
- Some sort of holder (\$10 at Canadian Tire in Canada)
- A laptop car charger (I have never seen one for less than \$50 – INNERGIE is \$60 [here](#))

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