

Product Review: Power Grabs

Posted by [Josh Seidemann](#) on Tuesday, March 17, 2015 ·



If you have traveled by air in the past 15 years, chances are you have witnessed a phenomenon at the airport: well-dressed and apparently otherwise sensible people sitting cross-legged on the floor while perfectly good seats nearby remain unused. You know the drill – before you board, charge. Tablets, laptops, phones – anything outfitted with port gets plugged.

And, it's not just air travel. Family day trips or off-site work meetings can leave a drained battery by day's end. And, to avoid that inability to make the end-of-day call, obtain GPS directions, or take that last photo, we often search for outlets at restaurants or other venues, setting up the risk

that we will pay the check and forget our phone or other device.

Several products offer the ability to preempt these problems (for legal preemption issues, please [see here](#)). These portable chargers are better alternatives than a spare lithium battery since (1) not every device has an accessible battery, and (2) the charger can be used for a range of devices. These are, essentially, external rechargeable batteries for your smart phone.

The [Accell Tech Power Power Bank](#) contains a 2800mAh lithium ion battery, and is powered by either a USB connection at 5V or an 100-240V AC connection to a common wall outlet with an output of DC 5V. The unit measures 1.12" x 1.12" x 4.25" and checks in at 4 oz. The Accell is a two-piece unit – the top 1.12" inch square, which features the AC plug, detaches to reveal the USB plug. The two parts connect snugly and securely, and I had no concern that they would detach while traveling or circulating through the universe of my lap-top bag. I found the unit comparatively bulky to some others that I have used, but it restored the charge to my phone relatively quickly, and its AC adaptability was a welcome alternative to some units that can be charged only via a USB connection to another device (or second adapter). It has a hefty, substantial feel. The case is a smooth, hard plastic, which made me wonder whether a "gripper" cover may have been useful. But, its bulk makes it easy to hold, and it never slipped from my grasp. It was perfect, in fact, for the FCC meeting at which the [Open Internet](#) order was adopted – my Tweeting, texting and emailing photos from that event would have run down my battery before the Chairman delivered his statement. And, I still would have needed battery time for the Metro ride back to the office.

The [Goal Zero Flip 10](#) charger is a compact unit slightly larger than a lipstick case. And, it comes in many colors, too, for the fashion conscious. It features a 2600mAh battery at 3.6V, and weighs 2.5 oz., just over half of what the Accell Power Tech weighs. Its slender size makes it a good companion for phones or bike lamps. Unlike the Accell charger, however, the Flip 10 charges only via a USB port, which could make recharging the Flip 10 a bit challenging where only an AC outlet can be found. The Flip 10, however, is sold with a short micro USB cable, which adds to its out-of-the-box convenience. Like the Accell, it promises a three-hour charge period. It is compact, has a slightly textured surface for a fast grip, and is virtually unnoticeable when dropped in a pocket.

Of the two, there is no "better or worse" device. The Accell offers a substantial benefit because the unit itself can be recharged in a standard AC outlet, a feature that increases its usability. In contrast, the Flip 10's size offers significant convenience. Each, however, is the better device for particular circumstances. The Accell is the charger for which I will reach when headed to the airport – floor sitting or not, I should be able to find an AC outlet somewhere in the terminal. But, if I am headed out for just an in-town day, the slim Flip 10 is a more comfortable choice, especially knowing I'll be able to re-energize it with a USB port later in the evening.

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