

IN-CAR GADGETS



Driving technology

Futurology may not be much help but these four must-have car gadgets will make the present a lot easier



DASHCAMS

You've almost certainly seen these on the windscreens of taxis and delivery vans – or strapped to the helmets of couriers, cyclists and bikers. They're small digital cameras recording everything that's going on – largely for reasons of self-protection in case of injury and accident claims.

Some insurance companies already offer discounts for motorists who use dashcams – particularly in light of the explosion of fraudulent accident claims, which are thought to be behind up to half of all dodgy insurance claims.

There are plenty on offer, but the Garmin Dash Cam 20 is a good bet. It's easy to use, records in HD, offers playback and is GPS-enabled so you can pinpoint where any incidents take place.

Garmin Dash Cam 20 £169



BLUETOOTH HANDS-FREE KITS

If you're driving, you're not using your mobile – at least you certainly shouldn't be unless you have a hands-free kit. Statistics on the amount of accidents caused by inappropriate use of mobile phones are alarming and, while there's some debate over the safety of hands-free kits, they're legal to use when behind the wheel.

Needless to say, the best kits will allow you to initiate, receive and conduct phone conversations with minimum distraction, using Bluetooth to connect a headset, earpiece or speakerphone to your smartphone.

The latter are probably the easiest to use and are clipped onto your car's visor. The Plantronics K100 is cheap, easy to use, voice-controlled and can play conversations over your car's FM channel – handy if the radio's playing.

Plantronics K100 In-Car Speakerphone £30

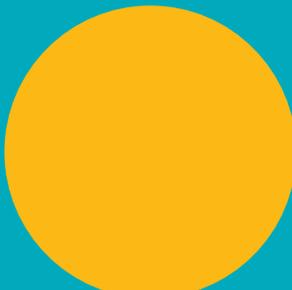


POWER INVERTER

If your devices aren't made specifically for in-car charging, you have a problem. While your car's engine produces electricity, you're going to need some proper kit to fire up the laptop. Power inverters allow you to use your car's battery to recharge your devices by converting the energy from your car's standard 12-volt socket to a standard three-pin socket. Plug in your device and play – just don't run down your car's battery, and ensure you match the inverter's wattage to the device's.

Look for 500W inverters to power devices such as laptops, tablets and smartphones. Ring Automotive has a digital 500W inverter that has three-pin and USB sockets, with a digital display that allows you to see how much energy you're using.

Ring 12v 500W Digital Inverter £100



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