

EarthLink Wi-Fi Phone User Guide (Excerpts)

Introduction

This document features excerpts of a printed user guide I wrote for EarthLink's Wi-Fi Phone device. It also describes challenges I faced and explains my solutions to those challenges.

Product Description

EarthLink Wi-Fi Phone was a device that allowed users to make VoIP calls via a Wi-Fi network. The phone came with a combination battery charger/Wi-Fi access point. The user could also use the phone directly on EarthLink's municipal Wi-Fi network (available in selected cities).

Target Audience

The audience was any consumer who wanted to make free domestic VoIP calls wirelessly. When it was conceived, the product was particularly aimed at consumers who did not have good mobile phone reception at home.

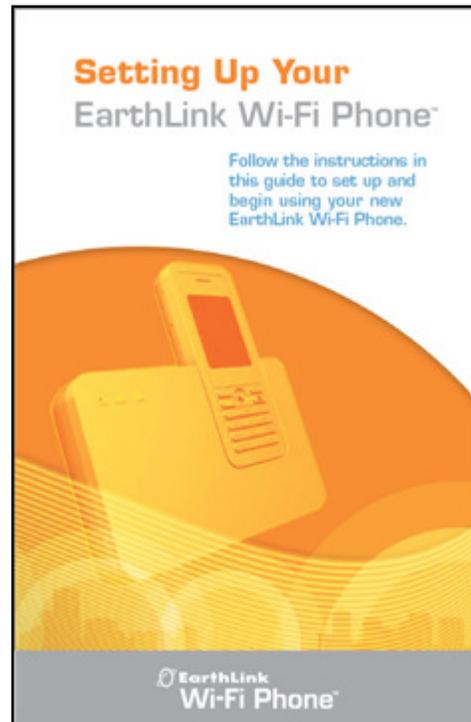
User Guide Objectives

The guide was intended to show users how to quickly set up the hardware, configure the phone for Wi-Fi access, and use its basic features.

My Contribution

I received a rough initial draft of the copy from another writer. I then rewrote and reorganized the copy as the product evolved prior to launch. I completed the copy in Word and delivered it, along with instructions regarding illustrations that would need to be created, to the print production group.

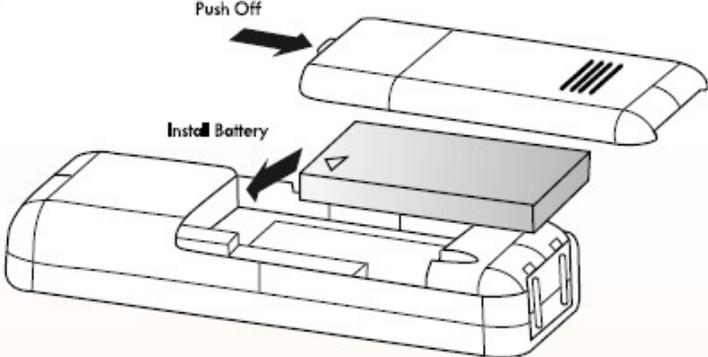
I also worked extensively with the product manager, marketing liaison, and technical lead to narrow the guide's focus and determine which features needed emphasis. Finally, I worked directly with the print production group in the final stages, proofreading the final guide.



Excerpts

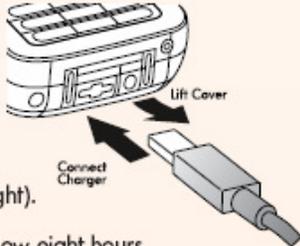
Figure 1 - Battery installation and charging.

Step 2 Install and Charge the Battery



1. Place the phone face down and slide the battery compartment cover off.
2. Install the battery, making sure its text label is facing out and the three metal contacts are pointing toward the top of the phone.
3. Slide the battery compartment cover back on until it clicks into place.
4. Place the phone in the cradle's charger slot, with the phone's screen facing out.

Note: If you are using your Wi-Fi Phone away from home without the cradle, you can use the phone charger power supply to charge the phone. Lift the rubber cover on the charge port on the bottom of the phone and insert the power supply's mini USB plug (as pictured at right).



5. If you're charging the battery for the first time, allow eight hours for the battery to fully charge. After this first-time charge, the battery needs only three hours to charge fully. At full charge, the battery provides 4 hours of talk time and 60 hours of standby time.
6. Remove the phone from the cradle and turn it on by pushing and holding down the End/Power key. When the EarthLink logo appears on the screen (it takes about 2 seconds), release the key. Within 30 seconds, the home screen will appear.

The low number of pages allotted to the guide (12 pages, including front and back cover) made it necessary to fit both the battery installation and battery charging instructions on one page (Figure 1).

- **The Challenge:** I wanted to maintain the readability of this page by avoiding text overload that might intimidate the reader.
- **My Solution:** Even though they took up a lot of space, I felt that the illustrations played two critical roles: They helped the user visualize the procedures described, and they broke up the text on the page. Rather than remove them, I asked the production team to reduce their size somewhat. Then, I pared the text to the essentials, in one case combining closely related tasks (e.g., the “Note” paragraph and step 6).

Figure 2 – Abbreviated usage instructions.

Step 4 Use Your Phone

To make a phone call:

1. Using your phone's keypad, enter the phone number you want to call.
When dialing:
 - ▶ You can omit the area code if the number you are dialing is in the same area code as your WiFi Phone number.
 - ▶ Use 10-digit dialing to call numbers outside your area code in the U.S. or Canada (1-area code-number).

Note: International calls are not supported during the beta testing period.

2. Press the Send button and wait for the call to connect.
3. Press the End button to finish the call.

To turn off the phone, press and hold the End button for about 2 seconds,

To use other phone features:

From the home screen, press the Navigation Key to open the main menu. From this menu, you can access the following features (to choose a feature, use the Navigation Key to highlight it, then press the Navigation Key):

- ▶ **Call History:** A list of incoming, outgoing, and missed calls
- ▶ **Contacts:** Your list of contacts
- ▶ **Applications:** Access to Calculator, Notes, World Time, and other useful programs
- ▶ **Phone Settings:** Access to ring tones and profiles, speed dialing, and other calling settings
- ▶ **Network Settings:** Network configuration and current wireless network status
- ▶ **Calendar:** Keep track of appointments and other important dates

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The hardware setup and network connection procedures were involved enough that they left little room for instructions on how to make calls using the phone. The “Use Your Phone” page (Figure 2) was the only space available for that information.

- **The Challenge:** I had to think of a way to put enough useful information on this single page to get the user started using the phone.
- **My Solution:** I focused on the main purpose of the phone (making calls), the rules for dialing, and how to power off the phone. To cover the information I did not have room for, namely the “other phone features,” I summarized them in the second half of the page, inserting an introductory paragraph about how to access them.