

How to Save a Wet Cell Phone or Tablet

I've got bad news for you. Dropping your phone in a puddle of water, bath, sink, toilet - even getting caught in a heavy shower - will leave it irreparably damaged. The same goes for tablet computers.

No more apps, games, Facebook, phone calls or browsing. All gone.

That is, if you leave it switched on. Switching it off right away is probably the best solution, but it's not all bad news.

In fact, there are a number of ways in which you can stop your phone or tablet computer from being left as nothing more than an expensive brick following prolonged contact with water.



The Effect of Water Damage

It is important to act fast when your phone or tablet gets wet. Water and electricity simply don't get along, so a wet device could short out and even give you an electric shock. At best, a bit of water will condense on a hot circuit board or processor and cause damage to the screen, while water can find its way into bezels, slots, under the screen and into the battery cavity.

Basically, letting your phone or tablet (or laptop) get wet is a bad idea, and requires you to act as quickly as possible.

First Things First - Turn It Off!

If your phone has been exposed to enough water to make you concerned, the first thing you should do is turn it off! Not all phones will allow you to remove the battery, but if this option is available to you, do this rather than turning the device off.

Whatever you do, don't waste time checking if it still works or not - this will make things worse!

You might be out and about when the phone gets wet, or you might be at home or in the office. Either way, you will need to find a flat, dry surface that you can use for the following steps. Fast action is hugely recommended - failure to complete this and the following steps quickly will result in a permanently damaged phone or tablet!

Disassemble What You Can

Fortunately phones and tablets don't come apart too easily. If they did, they'd probably fragment each time they were dropped!



However along with the battery, there are at most two other items that should be removed. The first is the SIM card, which you should retrieve, dry and keep somewhere safe. Following this, if your device has a removable SD or micro SD card, this should also be removed and dried.

The reason for this step is simple - water gets everywhere! By removing these two cards, you can dry the slots where they are housed with some tissue paper, soaking up as much water as possible.

Drying the Phone or Tablet

Don't stop with the SIM and SD card slots, however - any water you can find on your switched-off device should be blotted up as quickly as possible.

What follows is a list of suggestions for alternative methods of moisture removal from your hardware, but in the meantime, before reaching that stage, ensure all water droplets around the edge of the display, on the display itself, around any screw holes and bezels (in fact, everywhere on the exterior of your phone or tablet) is soaked up with tissue paper or kitchen towel.

Without taking the device apart (something that in itself is dangerous and with the added moisture drops trickling around becomes smartphone-suicide) this is as dry as you will be able to physically get it.

But what about the insides? Fortunately, there are a couple of tricks you can use...

Drying the Inner Workings

Inside a smartphone or tablet computer you will find processors, circuit boards, button rockets - all places where water can find a home and cause damage. With your waterlogged device quickly switched off and the SIM and micro SD card removed, however, you are in a strong position to recover the device.

You just need to dry the bare circuit board, wires and processors inside.

There are several ways in which you can achieve this:



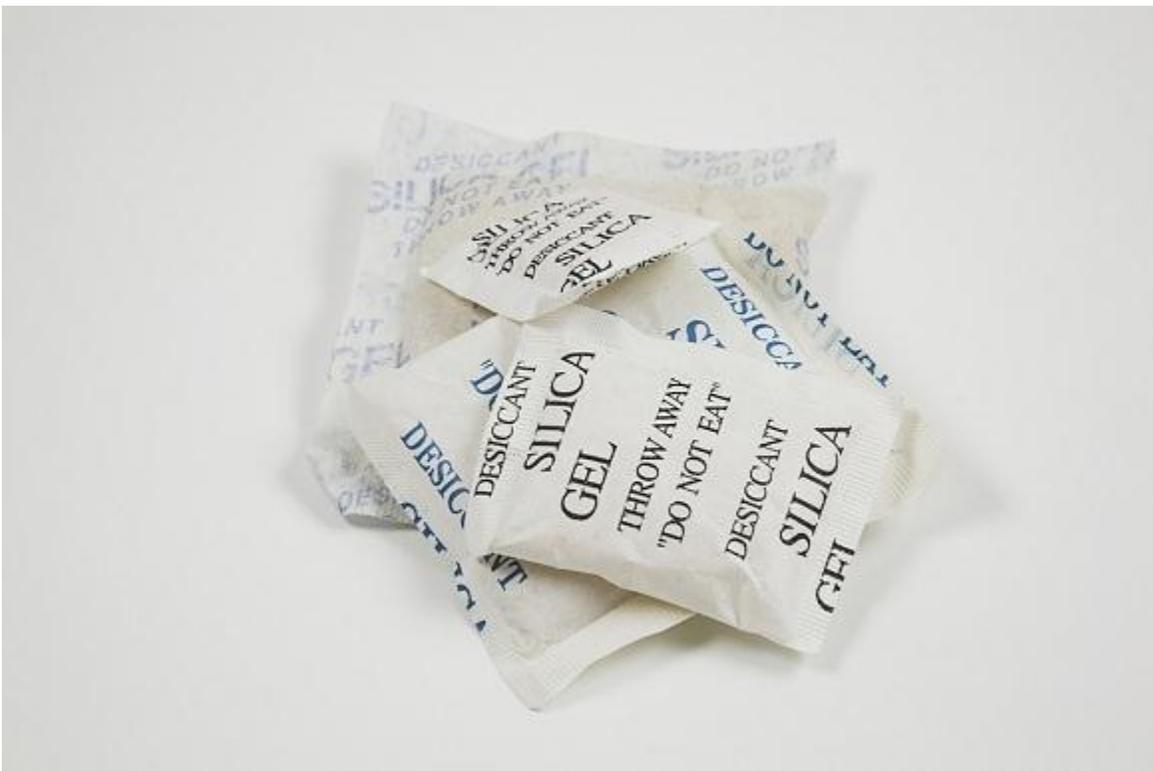
Hairdryer: with your hairdryer on a low setting and your phone held far enough away that you won't burn your hand, use the hot air that it projects to dry your phone, spending some time focusing on the battery and SIM/micro SD card slots (in order to push warm, drying air into the device). Be careful when warming the screen, however, as you don't want to cause damage to the touch-screen interface. Continue this for up to 30 minutes, maintaining an even covering of warm air.

Oven: placing your phone or tablet on a small empty box on an oven tray and setting the oven to its lowest setting is one other way that you might dry the internal components of your device. Your oven's lowest temperature (110 to 120 degrees Fahrenheit) shouldn't cause any damage to your device, but you'll need to leave it in overnight (or until "done")

Boiler/Airing Cupboard: another heat-based solution, this will take a few hours to dry your phone - probably about a full day. Make sure your boiler is switched on before using this solution, however.



A Bowl of Rice: while you might have to head to the local convenience store, a bowl of dry, uncooked rice is perhaps the most successful solution to any water damage to your phone or tablet. You'll need to pack it into a container big enough to hold your hardware and a good layer of rice - about 1 inch on all sides - but the foodstuff will soak up almost all of the moisture overnight, leaving you with a fully working device.



Lots of Silica Gel: if you're a serial tech addict, the chances are you've collected a large supply of silica gel sachets for some indeterminate event in the future. Well, I've got news for you - the future is now! Pack your phone or tablet into a box with plenty of silica gel sachets to cover the device on all sides and leave it overnight, and hope that your hoarding wasn't in vain.

Pure Alcohol: one last suggestion that has been proven to work is the use of pure alcohol. If the damage caused to your device by water is the result of basic physics then the submerging of the switched-off device into rubbing alcohol is a result of basic chemistry. The concept is simple: the alcohol will displace the water, and when your device is removed from the liquid the alcohol will evaporate. This is an extreme solution, but useful if the other fixes don't work.

Conclusion



With so many ways of resolving the problem of a waterlogged phone or tablet, you would be forgiven for thinking that it is okay to get your hardware wet.

It isn't.

These potential fixes are precisely that: "potential" fixes, as opposed to "actual" fixes. They've all be used by people in the past, but none is guaranteed to work, not even submerging in rice! As such, there are a few things you should consider:

- Don't use your phone or tablet over a toilet, sink or bath.
- Don't leave your device in the bathroom (steam from a hot shower can condense and cause water damage).
- Treat your hardware with respect, regardless of how much it cost you. A replacement will be costly and time consuming to acquire.

Keeping your phone or tablet in a safe place where it is unlikely to be exposed to any water damage is of course the best option!