orientation. The exterior surface 70 of the rear-facing back portion 60 of case 100 can be equipped with a second notch or indentation 1220, which allows finger brace to engage the exterior surface 70 at a different angle than when the first slot is used. The difference in the angle will increase or decrease the angle at which the mobile device is held off of the desk or other flat surface, depending whether portrait or landscape mode is used. A wide range used in landscape mode will create a wide range between the mobile device and the flat surface. On the other hand, a wide range in landscape mode will result in a narrower range between the mobile device and the flat surface. Notches 1210 and 1220 can instead be near different edges of the mobile device, at 90 degrees from each other, thus alternatively allowing for support in both landscape and portrait mode.

[0081] Fig. 19 shows an alternative embodiment where finger brace 20 can be used as a stand. Although Fig. 19 shows the stand orienting the mobile device in portrait mode, the features discussed here could be located differently, so as to allow the stand to orient the mobile device in landscape mode instead. In the example embodiment of Fig. 19, exterior surface 70 of rear-facing back portion 60 of case 100 includes tab 1900. Tab 1900 may be rigid or completely pliable. In certain embodiments, tab 1900 may be pliable, in which case it lies flush with exterior surface 70 until it is peeled back by the user. Slot 1910 is formed in case 100 just below tab 1900. One end of finger brace 20 can be inserted into slot 1910, allowing finger brace 20 to act as a stand for the mobile device. Some embodiments may include projections 1945 on the ends of finger brace 20, which provide additional stability for finger brace 20 when it is acting as a stand. Projections 1945 form a complementary shape to tab 1900, allowing the end of finger brace 20 that is inserted into slot 1910 to mate with the shape of tab 1900 so as to facilitate the end of finger brace 20 being retained in slot 1910. In addition, optional matching projections 1955, on the opposite end of finger brace 20, can add stability by acting as feet. In the case where the stand can hold the mobile device in the opposite direction, such as if the stand is designed to orient the mobile device in landscape mode with the other edge at the top, then projections 1955 can swap locations with projections 1945 to achieve the opposite orientation. If tab 1900 and slot 1910 are positioned off-center or angled, it may be desired to have another tab/slot pair (not shown) at a transposed location to assist in reversing the orientation.

[0082] Fig. 20 shows a cross-sectional view of a different embodiment, also in which finger brace 20 can act as a stand, but in this embodiment, finger brace 20 is inserted into hole 50, rather than needing a dedicated slot. The embodiment of Fig. 20 depicts projection 2010, which can be a section of exterior surface 70 of rear-facing back portion 60 of case 100 that is raised above the rest of exterior surface 70, thereby providing extra depth to hole 50 to receive finger brace 20. In addition, projection 2010 can create room to accommodate anchoring device 210 (discussed above) within case 100. In

Claims:

Claim 1 An apparatus to assist a user with holding a mobile device having (i) a front-facing display screen and (ii) a case with a rear-facing back portion, wherein the back portion of the case has (i) an exterior surface, (ii) an interior surface, and (iii) a hole through the back portion of the case, the apparatus comprising:

(a) a finger brace; and

(b) a flexible member (i) anchored to the interior surface of the back portion of the case, (ii) extending through the hole, and (iii) coupled to the finger brace at an intermediate point;

(c) wherein the finger brace is sized and shaped to brace at least one finger on each of two opposed sides of the intermediate point; and

(d) wherein the length of the flexible member between the hole and the finger brace is such that at least two fingers of one hand of the user can press against the finger brace to brace the mobile device when the one hand is holding the mobile device and at least two fingers of the one hand are between the finger brace and the exterior surface of the back portion of the case;

whereby the apparatus facilitates one-handed use of the mobile device by allowing the user to hold the mobile device while leaving a thumb of the user's one hand free to operate the mobile device.

Claim 2 The apparatus of Claim 1 wherein the portion of the flexible member extending through the hole comprises an anchoring device coupled to flexible member.

Claim 3 The apparatus of Claim 1 further comprising a clip coupled to finger brace and configured to retain a portion of the flexible member, whereby the length of the flexible member is adjustable by increasing and decreasing the portion of the flexible member retained by the clip.

Claim 4 An apparatus to assist a user with holding a mobile device having a front-facing display screen, the apparatus comprising:

(a) a case with a rear-facing back portion having (i) an exterior surface, (ii) an interior surface, and (iii) a hole through the back portion of the case;

(b) a finger brace; and

(c) a flexible member (i) anchored to the interior surface of the back portion of the case, (ii) extending through the hole, and (iii) coupled to the finger brace at an intermediate point;

(d) wherein the finger brace is sized and shaped to brace at least one finger on each of two opposed sides of the intermediate point; and

(e) wherein the length of the flexible member between the hole and the finger brace is such that at least two fingers of one hand of the user can press against the finger brace to brace the mobile device when the one hand is holding the mobile device and at least two fingers of the one hand are between the finger brace and the exterior surface of the back portion of the case;

whereby the apparatus facilitates one-handed use of the mobile device by allowing the user to hold the mobile device while leaving a thumb of the user's one hand free to operate the mobile device.

Claim 5 The apparatus of Claim 4 wherein the exterior surface of the rear-facing back portion of the case includes a structure that extends orthogonally from the exterior surface to a distance that is substantially equal to or greater than the dimension extending orthogonally from the exterior surface of the case occupied by the finger brace when it is adjacent to the exterior surface of the rear-facing back portion of the case.

Claim 6 The apparatus of Claim 4 further comprising:

(a) an indentation in the exterior surface of the rear-facing back portion of the case; and

(b) a tab disposed on an edge of the finger brace;

(c) wherein the indentation and the tab are of corresponding shapes so that, when the tab is inserted into the indentation, the finger brace extends from the exterior surface at an acute angle.

whereby the finger brace functions as a stand for the mobile device.

Claim 7 A method of using an apparatus to assist a user with holding a mobile device having a front-facing display screen and a case with a rear-facing back portion, wherein the back portion of the case has (1) an exterior surface, (2) an interior surface, and (3) a hole through the back portion of the case, the apparatus comprising:

(A) a finger brace; and

(B) a flexible member (1) anchored to the interior surface of the back portion of the case, (2) extending through the hole, and (3) coupled to the finger brace at an intermediate point;

(C) wherein the finger brace is sized and shaped to brace at least one finger on each of two opposed sides of the intermediate point; and

(D) wherein the length of the flexible member between the hole and the finger brace is such that at least two fingers of one hand of the user can press

against the finger brace to brace the mobile device when the one hand is holding the mobile device and at least two fingers of the one hand are between the finger brace and the exterior surface of the back portion of the case;

the method comprising:

(a) inserting at least one finger between the finger brace and the exterior surface of the rear-facing back portion of the case;

(b) bracing the at least one finger against the finger brace; and

(c) operating the mobile device with the thumb of the hand of the at least two fingers.

Claim 8 The method of Claim 7 further comprising:

(A) inserting at least one additional finger between the finger brace and the exterior surface of the rear-facing back portion of the case; and

(B) bracing the at least one additional finger against the finger brace;

(C) wherein the at least one finger and the at least one additional finger are on opposite sides of the flexible member.

Claim 9 An apparatus to assist a user with holding a mobile device having a front-facing display screen and a rear-facing back, the apparatus also forming a stand for the mobile device, the apparatus comprising:

(a) a case couplable to the mobile device and covering at least part of the back of the mobile device;

(b) a substantially inflexible finger brace; and

(c) an elastic member anchored to the case and coupled to the finger brace;

(d) wherein the case has a recess sized to hold a first end of the finger brace; and

(e) wherein the finger brace and the elastic member are configured, including the length of the elastic member between the case and the finger brace, so as:

(A) when the one hand is holding the mobile device, to position the finger brace relative to the case such that at least one finger of one hand of the user can press against the finger brace and place the elastic member under tension to brace the mobile device, and

(B) when the first end of the finger brace is in the recess, to hold the finger brace in tension against the case with a second end of the finger brace spaced from the case;

whereby the apparatus both (A) facilitates one-handed use of the mobile device by allowing the user to hold the mobile device while leaving a thumb of the user's one hand free to operate the

mobile device and (B) forms a stand allowing use of the mobile device without holding the mobile device.

Claim 10 The apparatus of Claim 9 further comprising a clip coupled to finger brace and configured to retain a portion of the elastic member, whereby the length of the elastic member is adjustable by increasing and decreasing the portion of the elastic member retained by the clip.

Claim 11 The apparatus of Claim 9 wherein the case is an integral part of the mobile device.

Claim 12 The apparatus of Claim 9 wherein the case is a secondary case that is not an integral part of the mobile device.

Claim 13 The apparatus of Claim 12 wherein the secondary case covers only a portion of the back of the mobile device.

Claim 14 The apparatus of Claim 9 wherein the case is contoured so that a first portion of the case extends away from the mobile device to a distance at least as great as the sum of (i) the distance that a second portion of the case extends away from the mobile device and (ii) a thickness of the finger brace, and wherein the case, the elastic, and finger brace are structured to allow the finger brace to be retracted adjacent to the second portion of the case, whereby, when the finger brace is thus retracted, the first portion of the case can support the mobile device on a flat surface with the display screen facing upward.

Claim 15 The apparatus of Claim 14 wherein the first portion surrounds the second portion, so that the finger brace can be retracted into a cavity, and wherein, when the finger brace is retracted adjacent to the second portion of the case, surfaces of the first portion and of the finger brace farthest from the mobile device together form a substantially flat surface.

Claim 16 The apparatus of Claim 9 wherein:

(f) the recess comprises an indentation in the case;

(g) the finger brace has a tab at the first end of the finger brace; and

(h) wherein the indentation and the tab are of complementary shapes.

Claim 17 A method of manipulating a mobile device having a front-facing display screen and a rear-facing back with aid of an apparatus comprising:

1. a case couplable to the mobile device and covering at least part of the back of the mobile device;
2. a substantially inflexible finger brace; and
3. an elastic member anchored to the case and coupled to the finger brace;
4. wherein the case has a recess sized to hold a first end of the finger brace; and
5. wherein the finger brace and the elastic member are configured, including the length of the elastic member between the case and the finger brace, so as:

a. when the one hand is holding the mobile device, to position the finger brace relative to the case such that at least one finger of one hand of the user can press against the finger brace and place the elastic member under tension to brace the mobile device, and

b. when the first end of the finger brace is in the recess, to hold the finger brace in tension against the case with a second end of the finger brace spaced from the case;

the method comprising:

(a) inserting at least one finger between the finger brace and the case;

(b) bracing the at least one finger against the finger brace;

(c) operating the mobile device with the thumb of the user's one hand;

(d) inserting the first end of the finger brace into the recess; and

(e) placing the mobile device on a flat surface, using the apparatus as a stand.

Claim 18 The method of Claim 17 wherein inserting at least one finger between the finger brace and the case comprises inserting a first finger on one side of the elastic member and a second finger on an opposite side of the elastic member.

Claim 19 The method of Claim 17 wherein all fingers inserted between the finger brace and the case are placed only on one side of the elastic member, and further comprising, on the opposite side of the elastic member, holding at least another finger of the hand against a surface of the finger brace farthest from the mobile device so as to press one end of the finger brace against the case.

Claim 20 The method of Claim 17:

(f) wherein the apparatus further comprises a clip coupled to finger brace and configured to retain a portion of the elastic member, and

(g) further comprising adjusting the length of the elastic member by changing the portion of the elastic member retained by the clip.