

Claims:

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) an elastic 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 (i) to brace at least one finger on each of two opposed sides of the intermediate point, and (ii) so that a first end of the finger brace can be held in the hole; and
  - (d) wherein the length of the elastic member between the hole and the finger brace is such that:
    - (i) 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 the at least two fingers are between the finger brace and the exterior surface of the back portion of the case; and
    - (ii) when the first end of the finger brace is in the hole, the elastic member holds 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 one hand free to operate the mobile device and (B) forms a stand allowing use of the mobile device without holding the mobile device.

2. The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the portion of the elastic member extending through the hole comprises an anchoring device coupled to the elastic member.
3. The apparatus of claim 1 further comprising a clip coupled to the 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.
4. An apparatus to assist a user with holding a mobile device having a front-facing display screen, the apparatus comprising:
  - (a) a finger brace;
  - (b) a case with a rear-facing back portion having (i) an exterior surface, (ii) an interior surface, (iii) a hole through the back portion of the case, and (iv) a recess sized to hold a first end of the finger brace; and
  - (c) an elastic 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 elastic member between the hole and the finger brace is such that:
    - (i) 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 the at least two fingers are between the finger brace and the exterior surface of the back portion of the case; and
    - (ii) when the first end of the finger brace is in the recess, the elastic member holds 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 one hand free to operate the mobile device and (B) forms a stand allowing use of the mobile device without holding the mobile device.

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 a 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.
6. The apparatus of claim 4 further comprising:
  - (a) a tab disposed on an edge of the finger brace;
  - (b) the recess and the tab are of corresponding shapes so that, when the tab is inserted into the recess, the finger brace extends from the exterior surface at an acute angle.
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) an elastic 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 (i) to brace at least one finger on each of two opposed sides of the intermediate point, and (ii) so that a first end of the finger brace can be held in the hole; and
  - (D) wherein the length of the flexible member between the hole and the finger brace is such that:

(1) 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 the at least two fingers are between the finger brace and the exterior surface of the back portion of the case; and

(2) when the first end of the finger brace is in the hole, the elastic member holds 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 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 a thumb of the one hand;

(d) inserting the first end of the finger brace in the hole with the second end of the finger brace is spaced from the case; and

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

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 elastic member.

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 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 that:

(i) when one hand of a user is holding the mobile device, at least one finger of the one hand can press against the finger brace and place the elastic member under tension to brace the mobile device, and

(ii) when the first end of the finger brace is in the recess, the elastic member holds 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 one hand free to operate the mobile device and (B) forms a stand allowing use of the mobile device without holding the mobile device.

10. The apparatus of claim 9 further comprising a clip coupled to the 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.
11. The apparatus of claim 9 wherein the case is an integral part of the mobile device.
12. The apparatus of claim 9 wherein the case is a secondary case that is not an integral part of the mobile device.
13. The apparatus of claim 12 wherein the secondary case covers only a portion of the back of the mobile device.

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) a 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 member, and the 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.
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.
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) the indentation and the tab are of complementary shapes.
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 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:

- (i) when one hand of a user is holding the mobile device, at least one finger of the one hand can press against the finger brace and place the elastic member under tension to brace the mobile device, and
- (ii) 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 the 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 a thumb of the 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.
18. The method of claim 17 wherein inserting the 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.
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 one 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.
20. The method of claim 17:
- (f) wherein the apparatus further comprises a clip coupled to the 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.