

# 10 Things You'll Love About Handheld Devices

by [Catherine Dizon](#)

Next year, California Tobacco Control Local Lead Agencies will be purchasing handheld devices for the Statewide Retail Campaign. But that's not the only thing you'll be doing with these portable power-packed tools.



iPod touch devices work just about everywhere, and you can harness their potential to fulfill some very nifty functions. Just be aware that some require an Internet connection. Here are a few ways you'll love using these handheld devices.

## 1 Offline Data Collection

One of the real advantages of handhelds is that they can be used to collect survey or observation data anywhere, even in "dead" zones where there's no Internet. This makes them indispensable to your field work both within and outside of the retail campaign.

Just ask several projects that have already used them. Ofelia Alvarado, Policy Director of the American Lung Association, brought these unobtrusive devices into San Diego bars to complete public opinion polls with bar patrons. Alex Tyannikov, Project Manager of the STAND Projects with Breathe CA of Sacramento-Emigrant Trails, used handhelds devices at a community college to conduct intercept surveys with college students. Berkeley Youth Alternatives and their Tobacco Prevention interns used them to collect information about non-cigarette tobacco products in their communities.

If you haven't heard enough about using handheld devices for data collection, check out our [Tips & Tools](#) that explain everything you might want to know about these handy gizmos.



## 2 Record Videos and Pictures

Move over Spielberg! You can become a filmmaker and provide powerful evidence to stakeholders. Photos and videos are unique and persuasive presentation tools that help describe the full extent of a problem or the change resulting from a policy. Because a picture paints a thousand words, visual formats are able to transcend language barriers and literacy levels. You might also want to generate images for internal uses, produce your own training videos, or celebrate successes by documenting your work and your team at various stages along the way. Can you picture it?

### 3 Going Green

Save a tree! Instead of printing meeting documents or articles on paper, you can read content directly on your handheld devices. And even if you don't have constant Wi-Fi, there are multiple apps that allow you to read content offline.



### 4 All the Features of a Smart Phone without the Contract

Sure, there are lots of fancy, new smart phones out there, but they're much more expensive and come with hefty contracts. Handheld devices are much cheaper and contract-free, but still have almost all of the same features.

### 5 Basic Built-in Apps

These devices come preloaded with applications that let you watch the time, check the weather, use the calculator, go through emails, or surf the web. There is also a:

*Calendar* – so you can set alerts to remind you about appointments

*Note pad* – for when you get that AHA! moment in the field

*Map* – to scout out a location or find directions to your destination

*Audio recorder* – which is especially useful for recording interviews or if you just need to leave yourself a voice memo

### 6 Downloadable Apps

And if those utilities are not enough, you can download tons of other useful apps! Here are just a few of the free ones we like. Click on the logos for more info:



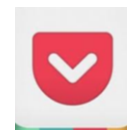
*Counter Up* allows you to label and count up to four different things at once.

*Free Wi-Fi Finder* helps locate nearby Wi-Fi hotspots for you to connect to the Internet.



Have a few minutes to spare? *TED talks* are a quick way to get even more inspired about working as social change agents. There are short 10-15 minute presentations on almost any topic when you need an intellectual pick me up.

*Pocket* or *Instapaper* are among the apps that allow you read online content when you aren't connected to the Internet. If something catches your eye while you're browsing the web but you don't have the time to read it at that moment, simply touch a few buttons and the content will be saved for you to read later – even when you don't have Wi-Fi.





### 7 Relatively Inexpensive, Yet Very Durable

These devices may be small, but they're tough. They can go with you anywhere and can survive being squished into your back pocket or bouncing around in your bag. Compared to a desktop or laptop, these tiny electronics are much cheaper and can outlast despite exposure to punishing conditions.

### 8 Watch TCEC's Video Demonstrations on YouTube

With handheld devices, you can watch TCEC's training [videos](#), add comments, and share our content with your coalition and other partners.

### 9 Check TCEC's Facebook Page

Stay up to date with TCEC events through [Facebook](#). Connect with other tobacco control and health promotion partners, and contribute to the conversations. If you plan on recruiting youth as your data collectors, consider communicating with them via Facebook. You may be surprised by the response rate you can get with social media.

[Of course it goes without saying that these devices should be used for work purposes only!]

### 10 Collaborate with Partners

You could promote the use of handheld devices when you are strengthening your partnerships with alcohol, nutrition and health education counterparts. Having handheld devices is a tangible tool that encourages collaboration and sharing so that your neighbors can also take advantage of the benefits of handheld devices.

There are so many more helpful apps and potential uses for these devices.

What's not to love?



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