

Belkin Mini Surge Protector with USB Charger

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Overview

Have you ever stopped to think about how many portable electronic devices you use? The topic probably doesn't come up until you head out on a business trip or vacation. That's when you spend equal amounts of time packing clothes and your gadgets. Let's see: Centro, Canon SureShot digital camera, iPod, regular cellphone, Bluetooth headset, and maybe if you are really needing more than email and basic Web access, a portable computer.



Now do the math. That's six types of charging devices. Or put another way, that's six devices needing charging.

Okay, so let's fast forward to your final destination. You enter your hotel room and the outlet hunt is on. Seems like a lot of hotel rooms were built in the day where you'd have maybe one or two devices max. And grounded outlets (3-prong) were reserved for the bathroom. Yikes!

Let's look at a different scenario. What if you are renting a beach house? You could run into a similar problem regarding grounded outlets, with the kitchen becoming a possible alternative to the bathroom.

It's clear that travelers face an outlet challenge that has nothing to do with buying clothes at discount prices.

Switching gears slightly. Have you looked at a weather map lately? Seems like there's a squiggly thunderstorm symbol over 80% of the United States. And since thunder and lightning tend to go hand in hand, you can pretty much guarantee that electrical instability will be the rule, not the exception.

So traveling person, have you prepared yourself for the possibility of power surges (where the voltage rises above the standard level of 120 volts)? Didn't cross your mind, right? It wouldn't take much for your fine gadgets to be torched and rendered useless. Double Yikes!!

Wouldn't it be awesome if someone invented a compact, portable power strip that you can take with you to maximize the charging potential of the available grounded outlet AND keep your devices protected from voltage surges?



Lucky for you, the folks at Belkin recognized that need and have created an amazingly functional Surge Protector with USB Charger that is so awesome and so affordable, that it makes sense to have a few around the house and one (or more) for wherever your travels take you.

Design:

I'm guessing that the word mini that appears in the official name of this product, Mini Surge Protector with USB Charger, refers to the size of it because after reading the specification, there's nothing "mini" about its surge protection capability.

Nevertheless, I had a hard time getting the concept of "mini surge" out of my mind, so for the sake of this review, let's just call it the **MSP**.

In a fairly compact size (five inches long, by approximately 1.5 inches tall by 2.5 inches thick), you get three AC outlets on the front and two powered USB outlets on the side or top depending on how you plug it in. And speaking of the plug, MSP features a grounded plug that can rotate 360-degrees with four locking positions. That means you can adjust it to fit just about any space. Way cool!

It's lightweight too. If I did my math right, the MSP comes in at 6.6 ounces. The Centro weighs in at 4.4 (though my Centro is closer to 5 ounces since it sports a [Seidio Super Slim Hybrid case](#)). The MSP won't weigh you down or take up too much precious room in your briefcase or carry-on.

All five outlets have complete surge protection. Here are some vitals:

- UL 1449 — Which means the MSP meets the rigid requirements specified by the Underwriters Laboratories.
- Response time is less than a nanosecond. That means that your devices are protected immediately, with out delay, when a surge happens.
- Clamping Voltage — The maximum voltage that the suppressor will let through to protected equipment. The lower the voltage, the better the protection. The MSP rates 800v.
- Joule Rating — This is the maximum energy the suppressor can handle without being damaged. The higher the number, the better the protection. This one is 918. To put that in perspective, the APC Professional SurgeArrest that handles 8 outlets (similarly priced at \$24.99) has a 320 Joules rating.
- Belkin's Connected Equipment Guarantee — Most manufacturers guarantee that the surge suppressor will protect your equipment up to the dollar amount specified, which could be anywhere from \$500 to \$25 000. Clearly, the higher the dollar amount specified, the better. The MSP has a hefty \$75,000 Connected Equipment Guarantee! It also comes with a Lifetime Product Warranty.



It's clear that from a design standpoint, the folks at Belkin really thought it through, because the MSP has everything I needed and even exceeded expectations.

Usability:



Out of the box, you get the MSP and a mini-USB power cable (compatible with Motorola phones) and a user's guide. I just fiddled with the 360-degree rotating plug to get it to the right position for the outlet I was using and that was it. Then I went to town. I plugged my iPod and my Centro (with the [Smartphone Experts retractable USB sync & charge cable](#)), my cell phone and my Jawbone Bluetooth headset using the AC charger. Fiddling some more, I reconfigured it for my PowerBook, the Centro and my cell phone. No problems. I really liked having the flexibility to adapt to whatever devices needed charging.



Conclusion:

The [Belkin Mini Surge Protector with USB Charger](#) well exceeded my expectations. I was amazed at how functional it was and sort of shocked that Belkin has focused primarily on travelers (Their box states: ADD EXTRA OUTLETS WHILE ON THE ROAD). At the modest price of \$24.95, I say get one for home, one for the office, one for your briefcase, some for your friends, some for stocking stuffers... You get the point.

In fact, here's a suggestion. Maybe for the holidays Belkin can come up with a nice pouch for the traveler that would accommodate the MSP plus cables and adapters (Hey, Belkin! Drop a line to Eagle Creek. I'm sure they'd be willing to help you out.)

This is an awesome product and well worth the investment!

Criteria	Rating	0	1	2	3	4	5
Design	5	[Progress bar]					
Usability	5	[Progress bar]					
Features	5	[Progress bar]					
Cost/Benefit	5	[Progress bar]					
Overall (not an average)		[Progress bar]					



Pros
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compact, lightweight and amazingly functional • Multi-option charging convenience at a great price • It rotates! Can be adjusted to fit where space is limited. • Connected equipment warranty huge plus!

Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Belkin is marketing it too narrowly... focusing on those who travel • Could use a better name