

Going Hands-Free Is Not as Easy as You Might Think

By Jennifer Wake



Edward Zeidan holding hands-free products Photo Andy Scheck

Planning on purchasing a hands-free headset before the wireless telephone law begins on July 1? If so, you had better plan ahead.

With multiple hands-free products available on the market, there are an equal number of user manuals and programming differences that make the process of going from purchaser to user a sometimes arduous task.

According to Edward Zeidan, owner of Nerd4Rent in Lafayette, the first step is to get the right headset.

“If you’re going to use Bluetooth (a wireless application allowing users to connect and exchange information between devices such as mobile phones), you need to coordinate the Bluetooth headset with your phone,” he said. “Find out if your phone will support Bluetooth. The best way to find out is through your vendor, be it Verizon, Sprint, or whatever.”

Once you have the right equipment, the fun really begins. The first part seems simple enough: Have your equipment recognize each other. This process usually involves pressing “menu” or “settings” and looking for the word Bluetooth. You’ll set one of the devices to “pairing mode” and the other to “search for new device” to have them begin to communicate.

Seems simple enough, right?

But the next step – actually using the headset – often involves small buttons and different rules for each button that can send a user over the edge and the device into the far reaches of desk drawers and glove compartments.

Thankfully, help is on the way.

Nerd4Rent will be available at three different locations on May 22 and June 3, 12, 17 and 26 to set up Bluetooth headsets at no charge. Participants seeking help must bring fully charged headsets and cell phones as well as the instruction manuals with them.

“Most people have trouble with installation,” Zeidan said. “That’s why we’re offering free installation workshops.”

The workshops on May 22 (from 5 to 7 p.m.) and June 3 (from noon to 2 p.m.) will be held at the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce at 100 Lafayette Circle. The June 12 workshop (from noon to 2 p.m.) will be at Contra Costa Stationers at 3463-D Mt. Diablo Blvd. in Lafayette, and the two final workshops on June 17 and 26 (from 5 to 7 p.m.) will be held at the Nerd4Rent office at 3503 Mt. Diablo Blvd., Suite 4, in Lafayette.

“So many people say, ‘I don’t have time to deal with this.’ Even technical folks have put it off,” Zeidan said. “I’m still getting used to my Bluetooth buttons and have had it a few days.”

The difficulty involves the variety of options with the different brands. On the Best Buy Web site alone, there are more than 15 brands available to choose from.

“It’s a by-product of the free market,” Zeidan said. “You have the benefit of much lower prices, but not everything works the way you’d like it to work. If it was all reliable, then I wouldn’t have a business.”

But you don’t need Bluetooth technology to go hands-free, explained Zeidan. “You could plug in a wired headset to your phone, if you don’t mind the wire. The technology is better and you get better voice clarity,” he said. “As long as your phone has a headset jack, you can just plug in the headset and you’re good to go.”

Some headsets are also made to plug into the car, but this reduces the benefit of continuing a phone conversation when you leave your vehicle.

The main goal for the workshops, said Zeidan, is to help make the roads safer. “There are a lot of accidents involving cell phones, and if we can help in that area, that’s what it’s all about,” he said. “We want to enhance our community and promote safety. Hopefully the events will help people get set up with a headset and promote safe driving.”

Nerd4Rent has been serving Lamorinda residents from its Lafayette location for the past 13 years. Founded in 1984, the company’s eight self-professed techno geeks (who don’t speak geek), offer technical support both in person and remotely.

For more information about the workshops and to make a reservation, call Nerd4Rent at (925) 283-5666, or check their website at www.Nerd4Rent.com