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Motorola HF800 Bluetooth Speaker

by Dan Leonard published on 10 February 2005

Handfree doesn't have to mean wearing one of those silly headsets. We look at Motorola's answer to the problem - a Bluetooth wireless speaker. The bundle includes the speaker, lanyard, car charger and neoprene open fronted case, with clip. The unit features a grippy rubberised underside and shiny top. In keeping with Motorola's range of headsets there is no display other than a flashing blue button. A standard dial adjusts volume. Muting can be done with one button and all other operations via the other (see images). This can be confusing at times and a little like learning Morse code. There is a Motorola logo front and centre with a handy indicator and for those wanting a private conversation the addition to plug in the included earpiece. We recommend avoiding the non-hands free elements, especially while driving as it's now UK law, so you might as well know how to use it without risking a fine. The HF800 has a 10-metre connectivity range via Bluetooth 1.1, more than enough for car and office use. The one-watt speaker uses echo and noise reduction technology, but is at best a louder rendition of the built in speakerphones on our test phones. Motorola users will benefit most, as this uses standard Motorola charger connection. There is a cigarette lighter charger included, but no mains plug in, leaving non-Motorola users at a disadvantage or the need to own a car. During testing, a Motorola v500 faired as well as, but not noticeably better than, a Nokia 7610. Sound quality is no better than one would expect from the handset itself, but there are obvious advantages over a built in loudspeaker. With a range of attachments, including a lanyard and rubberised cover with clip this is clearly aimed at drivers. We found the offside flip down sun visor in our Z4 the best place [you wishÖ - Ed]. As there is no fixed mounting, the speaker can slide and lurch around the dash when loose. However, even in a quiet office, callers reported a dull noise in the background on calls to both phones. While the sound of the engine covered the background



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noise generated by the speaker, the absence of a mains charger made the office life span short lived. The HF800 also connects with PDAs and Pcs, although we can't see much call for it, if you'll pardon the pun.

VERDICT

Expect 3 hours' talk time and 100 hours' standby from a full charge. Motorola users will benefit from charging this one in the wall socket, but regardless of your Bluetooth phone, expect the same overall sound quality. The reliance on only two buttons takes a bit of getting use too, but the device looks good, not unlike a Motorola flip phone. It won't override the car stereo, but it doesn't need to be hard wired either. Anyone on the move owes a duty of care to use a hands-free unit and at least with this option, you won't look like a choreographer from Steps.

At a glance

What is it?

Bluetooth Portable Wireless Speaker

Good

Cheap, quick in car/ roaming solution. Supports 3-way calling

Bad

Expect background noise. No mains charger. Too many commands via one button

Verdict

An alternative to headsets, with 10-metre range that will store up to 8-paired devices, but limited by overall sound quality

Price £60

Our score

7/10

Your score

?/10