

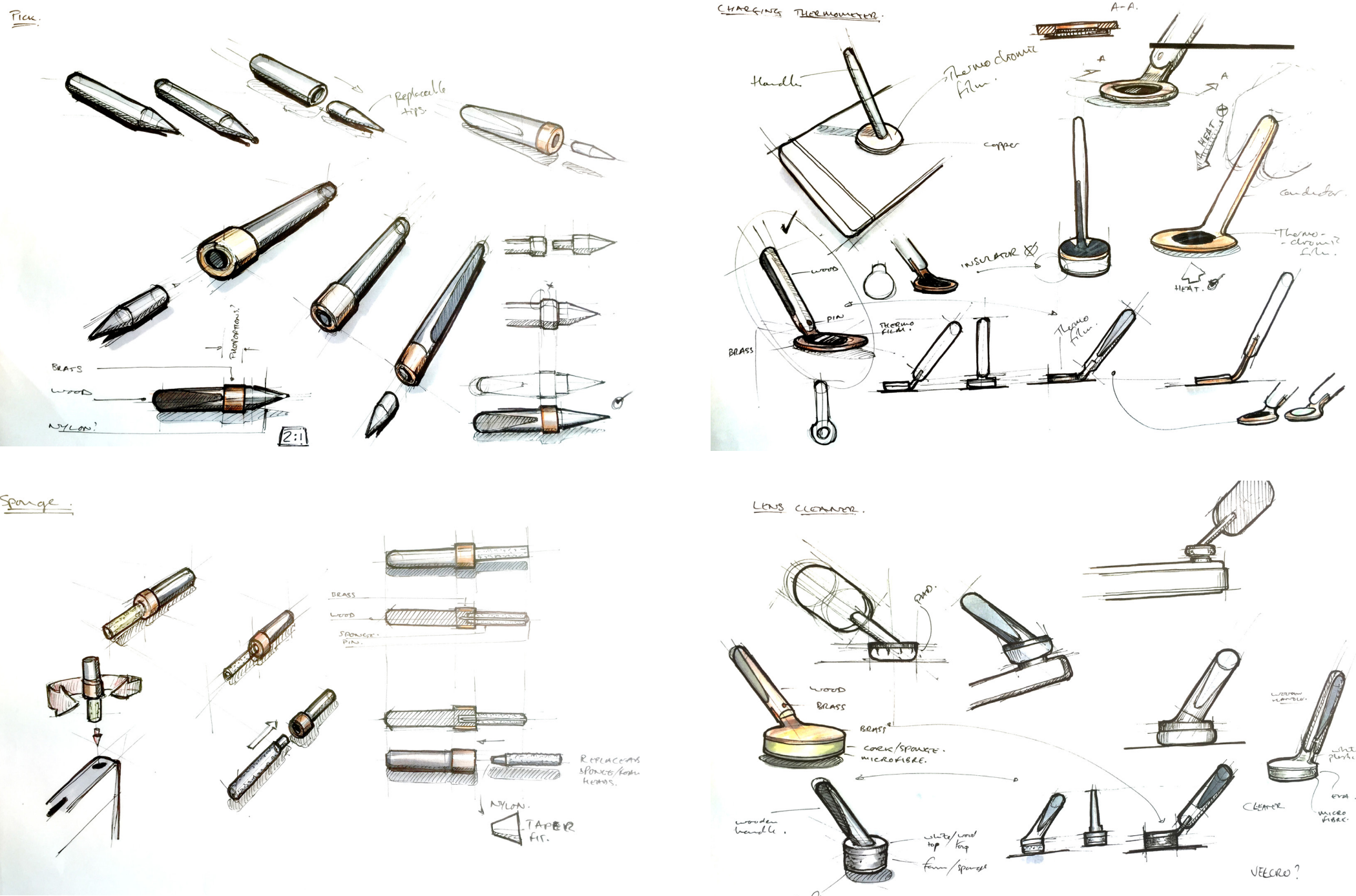
phone care set

context

There are many examples of products past and present that require some form of active care to maintain effective or optimum performance. This has become eroded as society moved towards the promise of convenience during the 20th Century and it could be argued that care practices are disappearing as a consequence. In the context of sustainably responsible design, extending product life can be an important factor in reducing the environmental impact of consumerism.

The aim of this project is to try to understand caring practices, where they exist, as a means of extending the useful life of products and then develop artifacts to demonstrate how designers can encourage better maintenance and care practice. The act of caring for products may also prove to help develop the emotional bond between the user and the product, again contributing to an extension of the life of the product and reducing consumption.

“Everyday objects.....depend upon our care and attention in order to survive”
(Chapman, 2005, p.72)



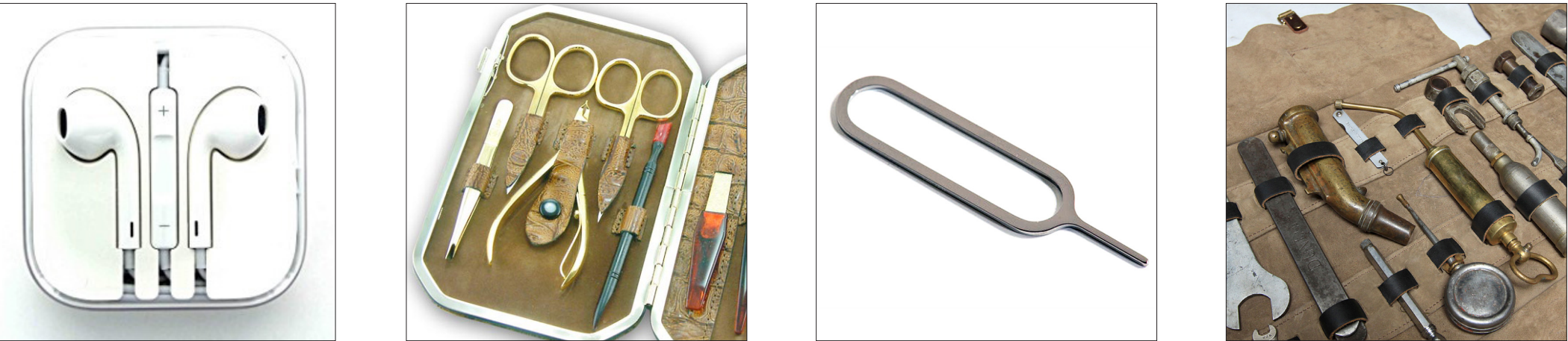
critical design

From initial research it is clear that many products exist that allow users to engage in active care and maintenance as a means of extending the product lifespan. Most examples are of established products with recognised rituals and procedures and are often practiced by niche groups of enthusiasts. The electronic product sector is focused on convenience and the opportunities to extend the useful life of these devices is not widely recognised.

There are examples of Critical Design, notably the work of Dunne and Raby, Auger and Loizeau where the designers develop artifacts, using recognised industrial design methods, that present abstract concepts to provoke reaction and understanding from the viewer. The opportunity with this project was to apply critical design as a means of expressing the means by which users may consider actively maintaining their belongings.

old and new

There are many examples of kits that have been made to help users take care of themselves or something that they own. These range from personal grooming sets such as vanity sets or manicure kits through to tool kits for fixing and maintaining vehicles. The visual language that is generally applied to such ‘care’ products can be categorised as either quite traditional, making use of traditional materials and forms; or purposeful, making use of strong and robust materials and forms that infer precision. The equipment supplied with smart phones takes on a very modern, geometric form that looks and feels futuristic. Finding a balance between these competing approaches to reinforce the idea that old-fashioned caring practices should be considered for high-tech modern equipment. By choosing to develop a set of traditional tools to care for your modern smartphone this project aims to provoke a realisation that there is considerable value tied up in our personal digital devices and that we can choose to take care of these things.



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active caring practice

Examples of existing products that afford an extension to their useful life through regular maintainance or ‘caring’ can be divided into three clear categories.

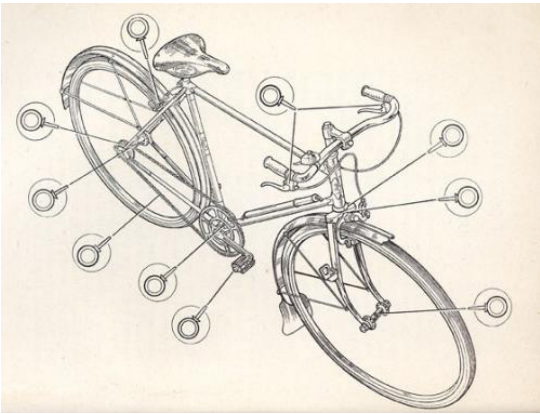
material



a well cared for saddle - www.equineink.com

The lifespan of natural materials can be extended by following care routines involving cleaning and ‘feeding’. This can be seen in the care given to leather riding tack, shoes and boots.

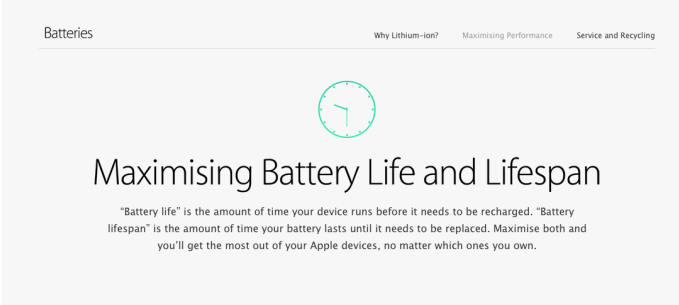
mechanical



bicycle lubrication guide - www.sargentandco.com

Regular lubrication and adjustment can significantly reduce mechanical wear, extending the life of mechanical components and maintaining peak performance.

electronic



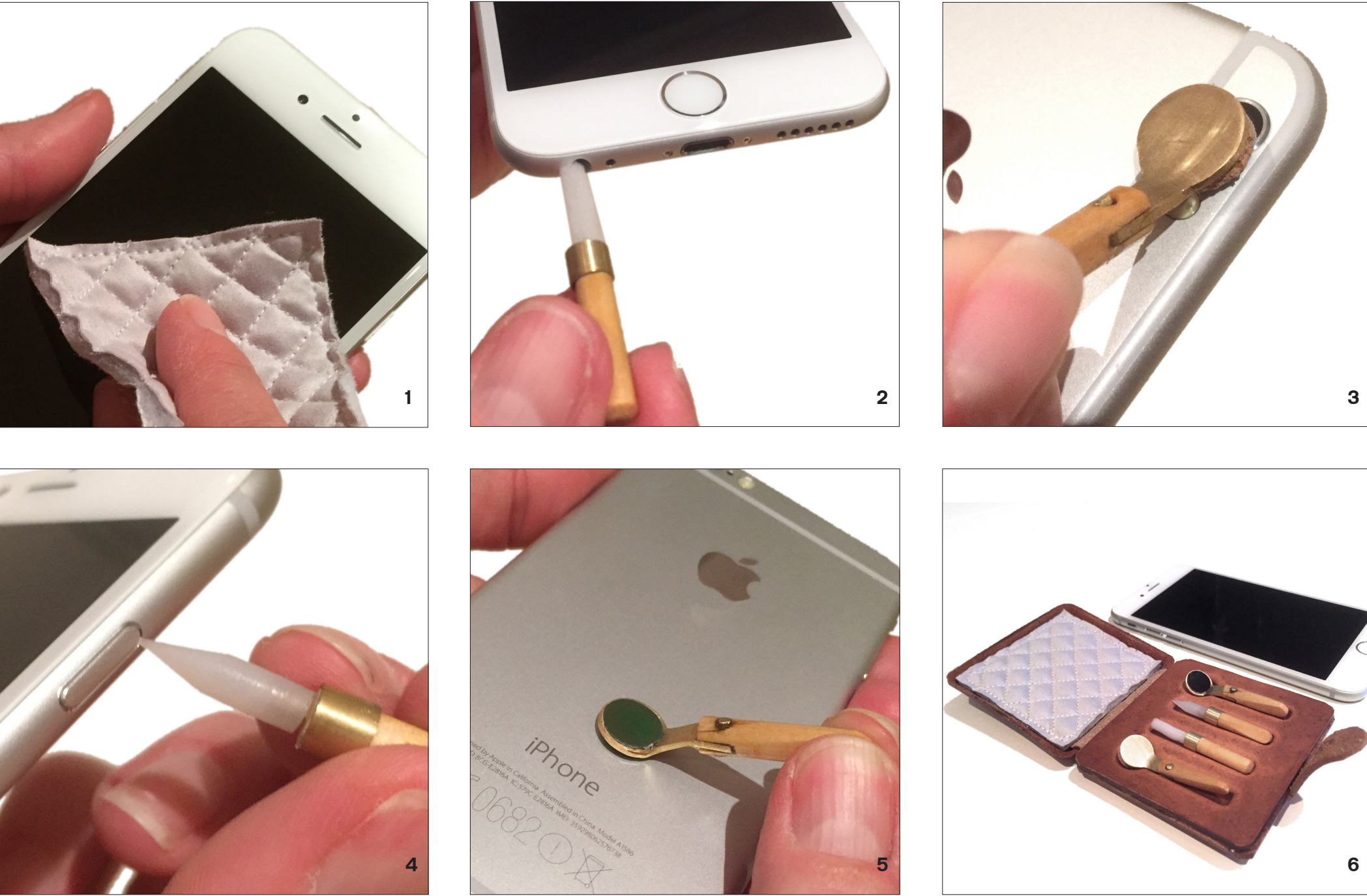
battery care advice - www.apple.com

Despite significant technological development, modern batteries found in electronic devices still benefit from careful charging procedures, enhancing performance and lifespan.



smartphone care set

This ‘Phone Care Set’ is designed to reflect the visual language of the accessories associated with contemporary electronic products, whilst being produced from traditional materials associated with vanity sets and traditional care kits. Designed using traditional materials and a deliberately simple utilitarian style, these tools evoke old fashioned practices of maintenance. These critical objects aim to provoke the viewer into considering the value of the digital devices that they carry about them everyday and to engage in actively taking care of their digital possessions. The smart phone offers an interesting opportunity for critical design as there seems to be a significant disparity between the monetary value of the product, the length of ownership and the care taken to look after this expensive personal item. Advances in material technology are helping to improve the durability of the external finish of these expensive and powerful devices. Special glass, surface coatings and material processing may mean that we will not need to pay any attention to the cosmetic condition of the most valuable object that we regularly carry with us. This development, alongside the lack of understanding of the real financial value of smartphones has given rise to a general lack of active care for these devices. Through critical design, this project aims to highlight this lack of care and to provoke a reaction that will encourage the audience to consider taking better care of their possessions.



- 1 Quilted, optical grade micro-fibre cloth for removing marks from the screen.
- 2 Port Cleaner, foam stick to ensure electronic contacts are clean.
- 3 Lens Tool, with cork pad and optical grade microfiber to clean camera lens.
- 4 Pick, soft nylon pick to remove trapped debris from around buttons and switches.
- 5 Thermometer, ensure that charging takes place under optimum temperature conditions.
- 6 Leather Case, traditional smartphone tools supplied in a traditional leather case.