



Hard case with embedded keyboard for a small portable computer

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Hard case with embedded keyboard for a small portable computer

Disclosed is a method of integrating a keyboard into a carrying case for a small portable computer such as an electronic notepad, tablet, handheld or the like.

Often, a carrying case for such a portable computer is used exclusively for protecting the computer from damage while it is being transported. This is most often done with the use of a soft slip-case. If a user wants to use an external keyboard, this must be carried in addition to the computer. External keyboards, when closed, attempt to conform to the basic dimensions of the portable computer by using very small buttons, or by using complex and fragile folding mechanisms. To carry both the portable computer and keyboard, the devices are usually placed into another carrying case, which often fails to provide adequate protection to the keyboard.

By integrating a keyboard into the inside of the carrying case, a larger keyboard can be supported without a fragile folding mechanism, and the keyboard and the computer can both be protected when transported. Compressible but resilient standoffs or bumpers hold the computer in place when the case is closed. The buttons for the keyboard are recessed beneath the tops of the standoffs, to provide room for the computer when the case is closed. Ideally the case would be rigid but semi-rigid cases can be used. The carrying case provides an interface for the portable computer to connect to the keyboard. This could be an expansion connector which is folded into the case when it is closed, a connector fixed in place, or an embedded wireless transceiver.

