

BUYING GUIDE • Printers



There's never been a wider variety of high-quality printers to choose from at such affordable prices. There are small-footprint color inkjets that produce photo-quality printing; powerful personal and small-office monochrome and color lasers; and network-ready monochrome and color lasers that connect easily via built-in Ethernet or wireless 802.11 b/g interfaces. Many printers are packaged with low-yield "starter" consumables.

SELECT YOUR PRINTER BASED ON THESE CRITERIA:



COLOR LASER TECHNOLOGY Printers using color laser technology deliver high-resolution business color and monochrome output quickly. They are ideal for busy offices with higher print volumes where the majority of the printing will be black and white, with an occasional need for high-quality—but not photo-quality—business color for presentations, proposals and correspondence.



MONOCHROME LASER TECHNOLOGY Printers using monochrome laser technology produce high-quality, high-resolution black and white text and graphics very quickly and are a good fit for offices with mid- to high-volume printing needs. They are typically faster than inkjet models, less expensive than color laser printers and generally have a lower cost per page, especially those models that offer optional high-yield toner cartridges.



COLOR INKJET TECHNOLOGY Printers using color inkjet technology offer the best quality color reproduction—"photo-quality" in many cases. Typically the least expensive printers to purchase, but with a generally higher cost per page, these machines are best suited for smaller offices with lower printing volumes that need true photo-quality color output from time to time.

OTHER FEATURES TO CONSIDER:

MEMORY Most printers ship with sufficient memory installed to handle most offices' typical document printing tasks, and many allow you to increase the installed memory—a good idea if you routinely print more complex documents, heavy on graphics.

PAPER CAPACITY The higher the paper capacity, the less often you have to reload paper; this is especially important if you plan to connect your printer to a network serving multiple users. Most printers ship with adjustable paper trays that can accommodate letter, legal and other paper sizes, while others also provide multi-purpose trays or slots to handle envelopes, card stock and letterhead.

AUTOMATIC DUPLEX PRINTING This can save on paper and mailing costs—and provide more professional-looking documents—by printing on both sides of a page automatically.

PRINT SPEED Print speeds are expressed as pages per minute (ppm)—about how long it takes to print a "typical" page, like a standard business letter. Generally, the higher the ppm, the faster your documents will print.

MONTHLY PRINT VOLUME If you print a few hundred pages per month and sometimes need photo-quality output, a color inkjet may fit. But if you are printing thousands of pages per month, then a laser model is probably the better choice over time.

PRINT QUALITY For most printing applications, 600 × 600 dpi is fine for everyday printing; for crisper text and graphics, look for 1200 × 1200 dpi or 2400 × 600 dpi—or even higher for photo-quality results with color inkjets.

COMPATIBILITY & EMULATIONS Will the machine be used in a mixed PC and Mac® workplace? Also, some printers offer multiple emulations—such as PostScript® and PCL®6—which may be required for certain applications.

CONNECTIVITY If you plan to connect to either a wired or wireless network now or in the future, buy a network-ready or wireless-ready printer now; adding these options later will likely cost more than buying a model with these capabilities already built in. However, if you have no plans to network your printer, a stand-alone desktop model will do fine.