

Computer Basics Part 2 – Printers

In these instructions we will cover the following:

- What is a printer?
- Do I need a printer?
- What printer options are available?
- What can I print with a printer?

Here is a list of the words you will learn in these instructions:
ink jet, Laser, toner, hard-copy, monochrome

These instructions were written so you can make a better informed decision on purchasing a printer or simply to understand what your kids may already know.

What is a printer?

Simply put, a printer is an output device. Just like the monitor (display), the printer is used to output data from the computer. You can use the printer to print letters, pictures, and much more. In just a few paragraphs we will discuss what can be printed with a printer.

Do I need a printer?

Yes. If you ever want to have a hard-copy (paper copy) of something you see such as a photo, etc. or you want to print a banner or a letter to mail then you need a printer.

What printer options are available?

Well, there are many different types of printers, but for these instructions we will only discuss two types. These are the most common: Ink jet (Inkjet) and Laser

We won't explain the inner workings of these, but we will mention just a bit of info you need to know.

An **Ink jet** printer prints with ink. Similar to ink in a pen, but instead of rolling the ink on the paper it shoots it out with a jet nozzle, hence the name "Ink jet."

A **Laser** printer prints very differently. This technology takes very small pieces of iron (metal shavings) called "**toner**" and melts them onto the paper. The picture won't smear like ink since it was actually melted onto the paper.

Laser printers are more expensive than Ink jet printers, but the price continues to come down. Laser printers have a better picture quality than an Ink jet printer.

Laser printers come in **monochrome** (only print black) or color (prints all colors).

As of this writing, Ink jet printers start at around \$100.00 and Laser printers (color) start at about \$200.00 and Laser printers (monochrome) start at around \$80.00.

There are many different brands and types of printers. Here are a few photos of different printers:



Illustration 1: All-in-One Ink jet Printer



Illustration 2: All-in-One Photo Ink jet Printer



Illustration 3: Color Laser Printer

Remember that I mentioned there are many different types of printers. Illustration 1 shows a photo of an Ink jet printer that is an “All-in-One” printer. This means that it can be used as a copy machine, fax machine, and a printer. Illustration 2 shows a photo of a printer that is a “Photo” Ink jet “All-in-One” printer. This means that it can be used as a copy machine and fax machine just like the other All-in-One printer, but it also was designed to specifically print photos. This means that it has one additional feature, it has a built-in screen and can print photos without a computer directly from a memory card used in a camera.

Illustration 3 shows a Color Laser Printer. This printer cannot be used as a fax machine or copy machine since it is not an “All-in-One” printer, but since it is a laser printer then it will have a much better print quality than an ink jet printer.

When purchasing a printer make sure you look at a couple of other things. First, the printer might be cheap, but how much are the replacement cartridges (ink for the ink jet or toner for the laser printer). Some brands such as Lexmark have been known in the past to have a very cheap printer, but the replacement cartridges cost as much as a new printer!

Another thing to look for is how many cartridges does it have. Obviously, if you are looking for a monochrome laser printer then it will have only one black toner cartridge. If you are looking for a color printer then make sure it has separate cartridges for each color and not one cartridge for three colors. Why? Because let us say you print photos with a lot of yellow in it. If you use up all of the yellow then you need to replace the yellow. If you have separate color cartridges (yellow, magenta (red), cyan (blue), black) then you can replace only the yellow. If you have only the two cartridge system (color, black) then replacing the color cartridge for the yellow means you have lost the magenta and cyan colors that were remaining in the cartridge. This is more expensive in the long run.

High-end printers have more than 4 colors. These printers can usually print metallic colors they have copper, gold, and silver metallic cartridges. You probably won't be getting a printer with these anytime soon as these are very, very expensive.

What can I print with a printer?

You can print anything you can think of. There is special paper to not only print photos, resumes, and letters, but also to print bumper stickers, magnets, t-shirt transfers, banners, business cards and much more!

I hope this information has been helpful to you.

You may print this information if needed.

Check www.scottfam.us for additional information!