

Title:

How To Clear A Stubborn Inkjet Printer Clog

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Summary:

Has your inkjet printer ever clogged up while you were printing something? If so, you know this can be incredibly frustrating. This article provides helpful information for solving this exact problem. This information can be a life-saver if you've got to get your printing project completed.

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Article Body:

Do you own an inkjet printer? Has the printhead ever clogged up on you, creating streaks or missing colors from your printing?

Clogs can be incredibly frustrating. Normally when you find out you have a clogged printhead, it's because you're right in the middle of printing something important. It's one of those problems that you never ask for. It just seems to throw itself in your lap without warning, and then taunts you in your efforts to fix it.

The printhead is the mechanism of your printer (or inkjet cartridge), where the ink actually comes out.

For the most part, printhead clogs can be normally be flushed out with a couple of "head cleaning" cycles. A head cleaning cycle is a built-in function of your printer. It's a specialized routine meant to address this type of problem.

This "cleaning cycle" works by sending a strong 'print signal' to your printer, while at the same time drawing a small vacuum from underneath. The combination of these two steps works in an attempt to suck out clogged ink from the printhead. From my experience, you'll probably need to run between 3 and 5 cycles to fully clear a clog.

The location of the head cleaning cycle procedure varies for each printer brand, so refer to your printer owner's manual for specific instructions to find yours. Check the index first.

If you don't have your owner's manual anymore, you can check our your printer manufacturers website. Most likely, they will have your printer manual online.

There are times however, when a few standard head cleaning routines don't seem to solve the problem. A stubborn printhead clog like this can be persistant enough to make you want to rip out your hair.

For times like these, you'll need to pull out the big guns!

For stubborn inkjet printhead clogs, there are various cleaners out there specifically for this purpose. These cleaners are formulated to dissolve dried or "gummy" ink which may have accumulated from infrequent printer use, or even just a general build-up over time.

I personally brought an old printer "back from the dead" using a product called 'Clog Buster'. It was a printer I had purchased off of eBay which apparently hadn't been used in awhile. I spent a few hours trying to revive the printer, and 'Clog Buster' was the only thing that worked when nothing else did.

The only downside with using a cleaning product like this however, is that you usually don't have it in your immediate possession when the clog hits. Unless you have some already on hand, you'll have to wait for it to be shipped to you. In the meantime, your printing project will have to remain on pause until it arrives.

(But maybe I can help...)

The good news is that you MAY be able to solve the problem using some basic household products. In fact, Windex glass cleaner can actually work well for dissolving dried ink. What's the secret ingredient?

Ammonia.

Tough printhead clogs can usually be brought into submission by soaking the printhead in a solution of 50/50% ammonia and distilled water.

A important word of warning... Ammonia is potent and powerful stuff. When working with ammonia, always make sure you've got adequate ventilation, and avoid mixing it with other chemicals. Very important.

So, if your printhead is located on the inkjet cartridge itself, you'll want to soak the printhead in the 50/50 solution for an hour or two.

If the printhead unit is located inside your inkjet printer itself, then you'll first need to remove the inkjet cartridges. After those are removed, put some of the solution into the top of the printhead (directly into the nozzle holes) and let it sit a few hours. Go ahead and put a little more into the printhead resting seat. (This is the rubber rectangle part that seals off the printhead unit while the carriage is in it's resting position.)

If this initial soaking doesn't work, then repeat another time using 100% ammonia for up to one hour. Afterward, make sure to rinse completely with distilled water.

If the clog doesn't immediately clear, go ahead and let the printer sit overnight and try it again the next day. Sometimes the clog will breakdown slowly and release later as the ammonia takes it's toll.

Finally, for those of you wondering about the effectiveness of using alcohol to unclog cartridges and printhead -- here's a quick note...

Alcohol won't work as well as ammonia, but may work better than a few cleaning cycles. The downside is that alcohol may actually dry out the plastics and metals in the printhead. This could actually increase the chances of clogging later on down the road. So try to avoid alcohol if possible.