Title:
Getting the Most Out of Your Photo Printer – For Less!

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Summary:
As many photo-printer owners would know, paper and ink costs can quickly exceed
the cost of the printer. These six tips will help you get the most out of your
photo-printer without leaving a hole in your pocket.

Keywords:
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camera

Article Body:
As many photo-printer owners would know, paper and ink costs can quickly exceed
the cost of the printer. These six tips will help you get the most out of your
photo-printer without leaving a hole in your pocket.

Raise the Resolution: Any digital camera that is less than three years old can
capture at least 1 megapixel of data with each shot. This is sufficient to print
a good-quality 4 X 6-inch photo; a 2-megapixel image holds enough information to
output a higher-quality print of the same dimensions. To generate an 8 X 10-inch
print worth framing, you'll need a resolution of at least 3 megapixels. You're
in a good position if you have a new camera as most new models offer from 4 to
8.1 megapixels.

Adjust your camera to its highest resolution when taking shots that you might
want to print. Some newer cameras, depending on the manufacturer's menu setup,
make it very simple to change resolution.
Save your Originals: Don not save the images you plan to print as JPEGs or in
any other compressed file format. Each time you compress an image, you lose some
data. Before working with an image, make sure it is unaltered and in the TIFF
format.

Enhance the Image: Experiment with your image-editing program's functions such
as cropping, contrast, brightness, and other controls until you're entirely
satisfied with the image's composition. Remember to always save the altered file
with a new name.

Plan Your Print Drafts: If you plan to make test prints that you will discard

later, reduce the image size and load the printer with plain inexpensive paper. Your printer software may allow you to print multiple images on one sheet.

Use matte-finish photo cards instead of glossy photo paper when printing 4 X 6-inch images. These cards have a nice look and feel, and they cost almost half as much as full-size photo paper. Place the images that you print on 8 X 10-inch glossy photo paper behind glass for added protection from ultraviolet light, and hang them away from direct sunlight.

Save on your ink: Special photo inks can provide your printer with a more refined colour palette. Unfortunately, these come with specific models, and if such ink didn't come with your model, you may have to buy it separately and install it in place of the standard ink cartridges.

In some cases, photos printed using general-purpose cartridges look almost as good as ones printed using photo ink. Another effective trick is to print your black-and-white photos in colour mode (with standard colour cartridges). This makes the printer use all of its inks to create the tones in your picture, and the resultant prints can be as subtle and precise as pictures printed with photo inks.

Get your Cartridges in Line: Use your printer's controls to realign your cartridges--especially if you see vertical or horizontal bands, unwanted lines, gaps, or bleeding colours in your prints. Right-click the printer's entry in Control Panel's "Printers and Faxes" or "Printers" applet, click Properties, and search for a cartridge maintenance option. If aligning your cartridges does not solve the problem, clean the cartridges with a cotton swab dipped in isopropyl alcohol. Use water merely as a solvent, and clean just the cartridge itself, never the print head or the nozzle plate. Always align new cartridges.
Practice Good Housekeeping: By keeping your printer's mechanisms clean, you will ensure that the device runs at its best. An occasional blast from a can of compressed air (easily available at electronics stores) will keep dust and bits of paper from clogging the paper path and other moving parts.
Make sure that the small ink nozzles on your print heads are clear of dried ink. Leaving any inkjet idle for even a week or two leads the ink in the tiny tubes that feed the nozzles to dry. Many inkjet printers have a cleaning program in their settings that can handle partially clogged nozzles.

Unfortunately these programs use a lot of ink, so use them judiciously. If the tubes are badly blocked, then you will need the services of a professional or an inkjet cleaning kit.