

Title:

How to Choose Printer Paper

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Summary:

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Keywords:

printer paper, Inkjet, laser printers, photographs, inkjet cartridge, HP, Canon, Epson, DPI

Article Body:

Everybody wants to know about the correct inkjet cartridge for his or her printer, but what about printer paper? Inkjet and laser printers can print on a variety of surfaces, including photo paper, labels, business cards, stickers, and t-shirt transfers. One of the biggest advantages of laser printers is their ability to churn out quality prints on almost any paper. However, the same does not apply to inkjet printers. Although most of your inkjet printing probably involves standard white papers, when it comes to this medium, you may have more options than you realise.

Inkjet Printer Paper

Although standard printer paper can do the job as well, your printouts will probably be better if you use paper specifically made for inkjet printers. The quality of your printouts is affected by two major factors: brightness and absorption.

1. Brightness

When a type of paper is advertised as being brighter than average, it indicates that the surface of the paper is smoother than average. The smoothness of the page determines the amount of light reflected from its surface. This factor also determines how bright your images appear on the page. The brighter or smoother

the printer paper is, the better your printout will appear.

2. Absorption

In this case, if the printer paper absorbs less ink, your document will definitely look better. As the paper absorbs ink, tiny dots on the page may spread outside their borders. This may cause the edges of text and images on the page to look fuzzy and soggy. To counteract this problem, quality printer papers are coated with a waxy substance that prevents the absorption of ink by the paper. A well-coated paper allows for more precise and smoother printing. In general, most of the printers on the market print at a higher resolution on coated paper than on standard paper.

Branded Paper - To Buy or Not to Buy

It's no secret that the big names in printers, such as HP, Canon, and Epson, offer a complete line of inks and papers. Each company claims that you will get the best results when you use its products with its printers, and warns you to steer clear of products sold by other companies.

Generally speaking, they're right. In the case of inkjet printers, especially, companies design printers, inks, and papers to work together to yield the best results. If you use third-party paper with your inkjet printer from a big-name manufacturer, the ink may spread too far into the paper before drying, causing inaccurate colours, lower print resolution, and a dull finish. Plus, it is likely that the prints will fade faster.

The choice, after all, lies with you. Printing great photos from an inkjet printer is a tall order, requiring a perfect match between the ink, paper, and printer to work together; and the companies don't make it easy on the consumer's pocket. You can reach the most economical solution through a little experimentation.

Alternatively, laser printers can print plain text documents or draft-quality graphics with equal ease, and you can stock up on your local office supply store's bright white copy or laser paper to your heart's content.

Getting Past the Jargon

To find out if the paper package on the shelf is right for your printer, simply read the fine print that usually lists out the compatible companies and models. Moreover, if you are interested in high-quality photo printing, you can generally see if a particular paper makes the grade.

For example, some papers may have unusual descriptions such as "swellable" or "cotton rag." Swellable paper is designed for high-quality photo printing—the coated surface actually swells as it absorbs ink. Cotton rag is ideal for

inkjets that use pigment-based inks; most low-cost inkjet printers, on the other hand, use dye-based ink, so you should steer clear of cotton rag in this instance.

High-quality paper also has a polymer coating—for both dye-based and pigment-based inks—that keeps the ink from spreading, and it protects the ink from fading over time. However, coated paper can take a number of hours to completely dry your prints. Better quality paper may also be advertised as acid-free and lignin-free; these indicate that your paper is more likely to give you the best image quality and the best overall life span.

Checklist

It is important to remember that most branded photo printer paper from corporate names, including well-known ones, is only suitable for printing at 1440 and 2880 DPI. Here is a simple checklist to help you when deciding the inkjet photo paper best suited to your needs.

1. Always check the DPI (Dots Per Inch) of the photo printer paper.

DPI is an indicator of how much ink the photo paper can absorb per inch on the page. Using low DPI photo paper for high-resolution printing will result in poor quality prints. Usually, if the seller does not advertise the DPI of its inkjet photo paper and card, then it is likely that it is very low and therefore a lower grade paper.

2. Check that the photo paper is instant dry.

Cheaper photo paper may not be designed to dry instantaneously and can result in colour running or smudging while the ink is soaking into the paper. Once again, if the seller does not advertise this feature, then it is likely that it is absent.

3. Decide the weight of inkjet photo paper you need.

Although the weight of photo paper and card vary, the most common weights are between 120gsm to 280gsm.

If you are printing in bulk, then 120gsm is usually sufficient and cost effective. If you are printing photographs at home, then 160gsm to 200gsm should suffice. Buy glossy printer paper if you want shiny pictures, and matt paper if shine is not an issue for you.

As a general rule, bigger the weight is, thicker the photo paper or card will

be .