

HOW TO BUY A PHOTO PRINTER

Digital photography has advanced a great deal recently and has become the preferred method for most photography lovers. The number of people who print their own photographs with photo printers is increasing day by day.

If you want to start taking and printing your own digital photographs at home or office yet do not know how to choose a photo printer, you'll definitely want to read on. This guide provides all the information you need in regards to what to expect from a photo printer and how to choose the photo printer that best fits your needs and interests.

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Types of Photo Printers

Types of photo printers vary and options on offer are mainly inkjet photo printers, portable photo printers, all-in-one photo printers, dedicated photo printers and professional photo printers.

Almost all the NEW photo printers in the market today provide great quality photo printing. Whether they are quite affordable or more expensive, most of them provide similar photo quality. Where they differ is usually with regards to their speed and features.

If you will be printing snapshots to share with friends and family, almost any **inkjet photo printer** will be fine for you. However, if you want to frame and display your photos or perhaps hang them on the wall in your home, you'll need further consideration in choosing the right photo printer. Canon PIXMA iP5000, HP Photosmart 8450 and Epson Stylus Photo R800 are some examples of current popular inkjet photo printers.

Dedicated photo printers are built around thermal-dye technology. The maximum print size on these printers is often 4 x 6 inches. Within the same category, there are dedicated photo printers with larger output, up to 4 x 8 inches or 5 x 7 inches, and lightweight inkjets with a maximum 4 x 6 output size. The dedicated photo printers offer very good to excellent output; although they may offer a limited choice in paper size. If the only choice the printer offers is 4 x 6 inches and you want credit card -size prints, for example, you'll either have to print two or three photos on the same sheet or waste

some photo paper which may be very costly for you in the long term. Epson PictureMate and Canon Pixma iP6000D are some examples of current popular dedicated photo printers.

Some of the **all-in-one printers** also offer extra features for photo printing. With some of them you can print photos directly from your camera without connecting to a PC. Others offer a button for a proof sheet showing every photo on the card. You can select the shots you want to print with a pen by filling in the ovals that appear under each proof-sheet image and it will automatically print only the photos you select. HP OfficeJet 4215, HP PSC 1315 and Canon PIXMA MP780 are some examples of current popular all-in-one photo printers.

Professional photo printers are mostly used by professional photographers and graphic artists and provide larger outputs as a general rule. They are likely to need a minimum of 11 x 17 inches (tabloid size) or 13 x 19 inches (super-tabloid size). Professionals may also need poster size. Professional photo printers usually include network connections, so you can share the printer in an office or a graphic-arts department. HP Photosmart 8750 Professional and Epson Stylus Photo R1800 are some examples of current popular professional photo printers.

A **portable photo printer** is a good choice for you if you are planning to print on the go. Most portable printers offer a good print quality and are usually light weighted (between 2 to 5 pounds) and conveniently sized. HP PhotoSmart 375 and Canon PIXMA iP90 are some examples of current popular portable photo printers.

Photo Printer Purchase Prices

Current inkjet photo printer models cost anywhere from \$50 to \$400. As a general rule, faster inkjet photo printers are the more expensive option. A typical dedicated photo printer costs between \$150 and \$400. Professional photo printers start at about \$500. The all-in-ones usually cost between \$100 and \$800 and portable photo printer prices vary from \$200 to \$350.

Please see our "**Top Selling Photo Printers**" section below for detailed pricing information ↓

Please keep in mind that most photo printers do not come with a printer cable that connects the printer to the computer so remember to include printer cable cost in your budget; their prices range from \$5 to \$25.

Specs to Consider

Here are the important points to consider when buying a photo printer:

Resolution

Resolution is the maximum number of dots (dots per inch or dpi) that the printer can print in a square inch. In theory, higher resolution will give better results and will print more details which is especially important for printing graphics. The higher the resolution, the sharper and clearer your



results will be. However as a marketing ploy, manufacturers inflate the resolution numbers. These numbers are not the only factors to be considered when looking at print quality. The ink cartridges or toner cartridges, the number of colors used, the paper and the method of printing (at which quality you are printing) are also great factors in print quality.

Dpi resolution in the printing arena is the equivalent to pixels in a digital photograph. A digital photograph is made up of thousands of pixels. Resolution is one of the most important aspects of photo printing. You will want a photo printer with a resolution of at least 1200 dpi.

To test the real print quality of the printer, it is best to print out a sample rather than just looking at its resolution.

Ink Cartridges

The photo printers that use multiple ink cartridges (4 to 8 ink cartridges) provide better quality, sharper and clearer pictures. Most of these printers use 4 colors (cyan, yellow, magenta, and black). Many photo printers additionally use light cyan and light magenta. And a few printers also use red and green or red and blue in addition to the other 6 colors. The photo printers that use multiple ink cartridges are inexpensive to maintain as you can replace only the color that is empty. There is an added option to use a gray ink cartridge in some of the photo printers. If you opt to get this cartridge, you will have better quality rich blacks, whites and grays. Some photo printers provide long lasting fade-resistant photo prints that keep their colors for many years.

Speed

Photo printers have similar speeds to standard inkjet printers. However, compared to inkjet printers, they can be slower when printing text as photo printers are specially designed for photo printing. If you plan on making a large number of photo prints, speed will also be an important factor for you. In that case, get a fast printer, though keep in mind that their prices are higher.

Printing without a PC

If you want to print your pictures directly from your digital camera without using a computer, then you can select a photo printer that has this feature. Such photo printers have memory card slots and most are compatible with the PictBridge technology. So you can use a PictBridge compatible camera and print directly from these printers.

Paper /Media Handling

Also consider the paper handling features of the photo printer when buying it. What is the paper capacity? Depending on how often you will print, you can determine how many sheets your printer should hold to suit your needs. Usually personal printers hold 100 to 300 sheets which is quite sufficient.

What type of media does the photo printer accept? Can it print on thicker papers for example? Some can also print on envelopes. If you are looking to use different media such as postcards, envelopes, glossy photo papers, transparencies, or iron-on transfer sheets, make sure to get one that accepts these kinds. Most personal photo printers handle letter and legal size paper. Some photo printers also provide double-sided printing. With some photo printers you have the option of printing directly on CD's.



Some photo printers have two built-in paper trays of different sizes which allow you to print photos without switching paper. On some printers, you can even fill one tray with photo paper and the other with plain stock.



Compatibility

Make sure the technology your photo printer uses is compatible with your computer's technology. Most printers use USB interface while some still use the older parallel port technology.

Memory

Memory is where printers queue documents to be printed. Memory will especially be important for you if you intend to print graphics and photos often. The memory affects your printer's speed. The more memory you have the faster you will print. On some printers it is also possible to upgrade the memory if at some point you realize that you need more.

Warranty

When buying your photo printer, ensure it comes with a warranty and that you carefully review the coverage. Get written explanations of your printer's warranty explaining its coverage. Get a warranty that covers all the parts (and labor) of your printer's components. Get information on website services of your printer's manufacturer. Find out where and in which circumstances you will be allowed the services and how much they will cost you. If you know that you will use the photo printer excessively, we recommend buying an additional warranty from the store where you purchase the printer. Test your printer immediately after buying it.

Important Tip:

ALWAYS check the ink cartridge prices before you purchase a printer. Why? Because sometimes cheaper printers end up costing you more due to the high costs of their ink cartridges. You should calculate the "**cost of ownership**" per month. The math is simple: "number of prints per month" times "cost of the printer cartridge" divided by "the yield of the printer cartridge". Yield is the number of pages that can be printed with one particular printer cartridge.

For example, assume that the average home user prints 150 black pages per month using a black printer cartridge that yields 200 pages and costs \$28. The monthly "**cost of ownership**" is

$$\frac{(150 \text{ pages}) \times (\$28)}{200 \text{ pages}} = \$21$$

Also look at the printer ink alternatives; besides the original manufacturer's printer cartridges (OEMs), you may have the selection of remanufactured printer cartridges, compatible ink/toner cartridges, and refill kits.

Before purchasing your printer, visit www.printcountry.com to check out the prices of the available ink cartridges your target printer uses. Visit our [Photo Paper Section](#) as well.

Our gift to you: Enter the coupon code "**photoprguide2005**" at the www.printcountry.com checkout when purchasing the ink cartridges to save 5% for orders over \$50, plus get **FREE** shipping.

Top Selling Photo Printers

The prices below reflect the Amazon.com prices. Please click on each printer model to buy them from Amazon.com.

Printer Model	Price
Canon PIXMA iP3000 Photo Printer	\$89.99
Canon PIXMA iP4000 Photo Printer	\$144.99
Epson Stylus R320 Photo Printer	\$179.99
Canon PIXMA iP5000 Photo Printer	\$183.25
HP PhotoSmart 8450 Photo Printer	\$199.99
HP PhotoSmart 375 Compact Photo Printer	\$199.99
Epson PictureMate Deluxe Photo Printer	\$249.99
Canon i9900 Photo Printer	\$398.99
Epson Stylus Photo R1800 Inkjet Printer	\$549.99

PRINTING GLOSSARY

Here is a list of terms that may be beneficial if you are unfamiliar with the terminology used in the world of photo printing.

Bluetooth: A technology that enables wireless communication between Bluetooth-compatible devices. It is used for short-range connections between desktop and laptop computers, pocket pc's, digital cameras, scanners, cell phones and printers.

CMYK: It represents the 4 major process colors Cyan, Magenta, Yellow and Black that create the color range of an image.

Color balance: Changing the overall color tint of an image when it's too red, too green, or too yellow.

DPI: Abbreviation for dots per inch. It is a measurement of print resolution that indicates the maximum number of dots that the printer can print in a square inch.

Duplexing: Printing on both sides of a page.

Duty Cycle: Number of pages a printer is able to handle in a month.

Edge enhancement: A feature that allows a printer to fill in the space between dots on the edges of lines and filled-in areas of graphics, creating straighter edges and making text, lines, and edges in graphics appear to have a higher resolution.

Gamut or color gamut: The range of colors a printer can produce. A gamut is defined by the ink colors a printer uses.

Gradient: An area in a graphic that changes gradually from one color or shade to another.

Infrared: A connection technology that allows wireless data transmission from a device such as a digital camera directly to another device such as a computer or a printer.

Input Capacity: Maximum number of pages the printer can hold.

JPEG: A standardized format used by many digital cameras for storing images. This format is commonly used for emailing and posting images on the web.

Media Size: The size range of the paper the printer can handle (letter, legal, etc.).

Megapixel: A unit equal to one million pixels.

Memory Card: A storage device used to store data, like picture and movie files, available in different sizes, such as 8 MB, 32 MB, and 256 MB.

Output Capacity: Maximum number of pages the printer can handle for one job.

Paper Trays: Number of different paper holders (one for letter, one for envelope, etc.).

Pixel (Picture Element): Each single dot in a digital photograph is called pixel.

PPM (Pages Per Minute): Number of pages a printer can produce in one minute.

Resolution: The number of pixels in a digital photograph.

Saturation: The strength or purity of a color.

Super-Tabloid-Size Paper: Any paper slightly larger than tabloid size (11 x 17 inches).

USB: An input/output bus capable of transferring data at 12 megabits; used for connecting peripherals to a microprocessor. It can connect up to 127 peripherals through a single port.

Yield: Number of pages that can be printed with one particular toner or inkjet cartridge.



Related Recommended Links:

- [Printer Ink Cartridges](#)
- [Photo Paper](#)
- [Printer Buying Guide](#)
- [Printer Resources Section](#)
- [Printer Reviews](#)
- [How to Scan Images](#)

Our gift to you: Enter the coupon code "**photoprguide2005**" at the www.printcountry.com checkout when purchasing the ink cartridges to save 5% for orders over \$50, plus get **FREE** shipping.

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