

Inkjet Printers for Home Photo Production

Whether you are an amateur digital photographer looking to print your own photos at home, or you fancy yourself a semi-pro who wants to produce professional grade prints from your computer, it can be done easily and affordably if you know what you're doing. The type of printer, paper and ink are all factors to consider when producing your own digital photographs. However, to get started it is important to choose a printer that will suit your photo printing needs. Here are a few tips to get you started on what to look for in a photo printer.

Inkjet vs. Laser Printer

Because of the market saturation of various models of inkjet and laser printers, there are many affordable options for those looking for an affordable quality printer. Therefore, it is important to consider first, which of the two types of printers will work best for your specific needs.

Laser printers are usually more expensive than inkjets. However, they are faster and can create more vibrant prints. Laser printers do not use the same type of ink cartridges as inkjet printers. Instead, they produce prints by fusing toner and dry ink with electricity into a controlled laser beam. The cost of a replacement laser cartridge may be expensive, but when you crunch the numbers, it costs eight times less to print from a laser printer than an inkjet.

Inkjet printers, as mentioned above, are cheaper, have no warm-up time and are quieter than laser printers. Inkjet printers produce prints through small nozzles through ink cartridges. Drops of ink are sprayed onto the surface of the document to create the print. The resolution and quality of the print is determined by the printer's DPI (dots per square inch) capability, which can vary by model. As technology and DPI capability advances, inkjet printers that produce a quality product are becoming more and more affordable. For that reason, most amateur and semi-professional digital photographers prefer inkjets rather than laser printers. For the purpose of this article, we will focus on inkjets as the easiest and most affordable way to print quality images from your home computer.

DPI is Important

Although it is not the only factor, the DPI capability of your printer is just as important as your digital camera's megapixel capability. For the sake of printing photos, 2,880 DPI is sufficient, but anything lower than that may affect the quality of your prints.

It is important not to confuse megapixel capability with DPI. Your camera's resolution determines how many pixels make up a certain image, while your printer's resolution determines how much ink is put out for your print.

An image taken with a 6 megapixel digital camera will always be comprised of 3,000 horizontal pixels and 2,000 vertical pixels, regardless of the size in which it is viewed on your screen. A 2,880 DPI printer will operate at 2,880 DPI no matter the image resolution. The rule of thumb for producing quality prints is to maintain a ratio of 300 (pixels) to 1 (inch).

Inks

Typical commercial four-color printing uses four distinct inks to produce an image. These inks include cyan, magenta, yellow, and black (CMYK). While many low-end printers offer only two ink cartridges (one for color and one for black), these set-ups are usually not conducive to photo printing. Look for printers with at least four cartridges featuring the CMYK components. Although it can be pricey, especially if you do a lot of printing, avoid buying third-party inks and stick to the inks specifically manufactured for your printer.

Paper

Inks and screen resolution mean nothing if you do not use the right paper for your prints. Unfortunately, it is not the initial product you have to worry about, but its longevity. Light, air, temperature and humidity can all affect your print down the road. There are arrays of paper products on the market that will resist such environmental damage, as well as papers that are meant to work only with certain printers. Be sure to check the manufacturer's specifications on a particular paper product and see if you can find a paper manufactured by the same company that made your printer. The compatibility of paper to printer can make all the difference.

Printer Speed

If you are impatient, do not rely on the speed specifications that are prominently placed on the printer package. These numbers usually refer to the printing of text and graphics. Be sure to look for the printers speed when it comes to photo printing.

Formatting

Not all printers are capable of producing borderless prints. If this is a must for your work, be sure that the printer you are considering can produce a borderless print.

Remember a photo is only as great as the print you can produce with it. Do not be afraid to spend a little extra money for a good photo printer. The first time you present friends and family with a photo you took, you will be thankful that you did.

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About the Author

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