

It's More Expensive than Blood: How to Squeeze More Ink out Of Your Printer

By Christian Cawley

From time to time, I find myself having to print documents. Despite being the owner of a tablet, a smartphone and a desktop computer, sometimes having material in print is necessary.

It might be to sign contracts (which are then frustratingly re-digitised in a scanner and e-mailed!) or to issue an invoice, but I'd much rather that I didn't have to rely on my printer. The reason is largely one of cost – ink is an expensive but necessary burden for most printer owners.

Although things are getting better (some printer manufacturers have radically reduced the cost of ink) as far as the owners of many sub-\$100 printers are concerned, the price of ink is staggeringly close to the price of the printer. This underlines the manufacturers' attitude to the devices – that they're consumables, intended to last just a couple of years before being replaced.

For most of us, however, replacing any hardware every couple of years is an unnecessary distraction, regardless of the price. Most important is squeezing as much performance out of the device as possible – and in the case of printers – ink!

There are several ways in which you can force your printer into sharing a bit more ink with you – particularly when you have a large document that needs printing.

Laser Printer Toner Cartridges

Not all printers are the same. A quick glance at the catalogues of major printer manufacturers will reveal expensive laser printers and cheaper inkjet devices. Different techniques are used by each to get the ink onto the paper, and as a result different types of ink are required.



Most types of laser printer toner cartridges are full of a dry ink, fine enough to be electrostatically attracted to the paper during printing (the refined nature of the toner makes it potentially dangerous if inhaled).

When a toner cartridge has apparently run out, you can often get several more pages of standard text from it by giving it a good shake. The dust-like ink settles over time in the printer, and by shaking the cartridge you break up and settling, enabling the cartridge to eject the toner as required.

Oh, and next time you put a new cartridge in your printer, shake it first!

Use a Hairdryer on Your Ink Cartridges!

As amazing as it might seem, the common household hairdryer can be used to squeeze a little more ink out of your inkjet cartridges.



Whenever you receive a notification that ink has run out or is low, or that output to the paper is stripy, pale (or even non-existent) you should consider this method as a means of squeezing out enough ink to finish the document – or at least the page.

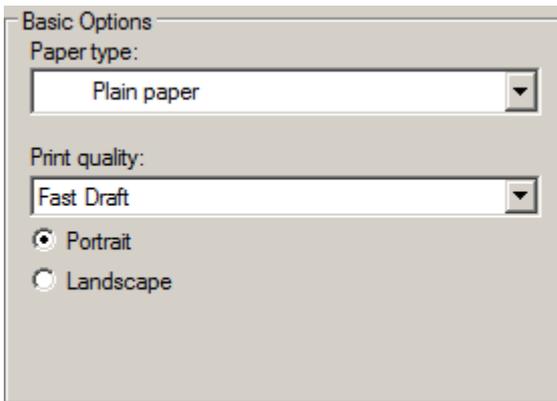
Do this by removing the cartridge from the printer and identifying the spot where the ink comes out (easily recognised by the sight of coloured patches and what appears to be a circuit printed on adhesive tape). It is this spot that you should heat with your hairdryer for 2 to 3 minutes, the aim being to clear any blockages in the tiny nozzles of the cartridge.

When done, replace the cartridge in your printer and continue the document – you should now see much better print!

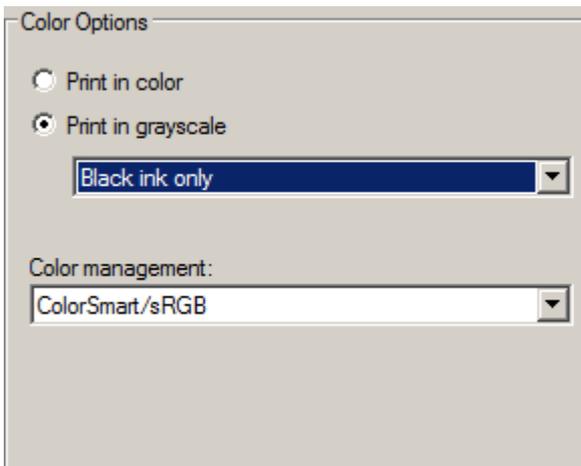
Managing Your Printer Ink

Printers will inform you when ink cartridges need replacing, either with a flashing light, a desktop notification, or both. However, it is important that you ignore these if you want to get the most ink out of the cartridge. Instead, continue using the cartridge until you see a noticeable degradation in the quality of the output. Using the suggestions above you should be able to get even more use from the cartridge even after this.

There are other ways to make sure your printer uses as little ink as possible for print jobs, thereby making it last longer.



I'm a big believer in making use of draft mode when printing, partially due to speed but also because it uses far less ink. Configuring the right printer settings for low ink use is relatively easy, and requires that you open the printer settings and select the draft mode before printing.



I also make sure that text is printed in black ink, something that can be done by opening your printer properties (although this changes from printer to printer).

Conclusion

As ecological and economic as squeezing printer ink down to the last particle might be, eventually you will have to admit defeat and buy a new cartridge. No amount of hairdryer action and shaking will force your print cartridge to become a bottomless pit of ink!

However, the jury remains undecided on the benefits of refill kits and non-manufacturer cartridges. In my experience, no cartridge is perfect, however, and refill kits differ from device to device. If your printer is still in warranty, using an approved manufacturer ink cartridge is safest, just in case the device leaks.

Finally, Tina's article on making printer ink and toner last longer (<http://www.makeuseof.com/tag/how-to-make-printer-ink-and-toner-last-longer/>) is an excellent resource, explaining the advantages of using fonts specifically designed for minimalistic printing and avoiding printing until the document has been assessed and ink use projected.

Source: http://www.makeuseof.com/tag/its-more-expensive-than-blood-how-to-squeeze-more-ink-out-of-your-printer/?utm_campaign=newsletter&utm_source=2012-12-10