

Laser Printer Buying Basics



Laser printers provide the highest-quality text and images available today. They are ideal for small businesses and home offices, and there are reliable low-cost models that are perfect for everyday printing in your home. This guide will help you decide which laser printer is right for you.

Which laser printer you choose will depend not only on how much you're willing to spend, but also on your particular requirements for print quality, speed, and special features. Here are some logical ways to narrow your choices.

Advantages of HP LaserJet Printers

If you are looking for a personal-desktop or home-office workhorse, consider purchasing an HP LaserJet printer. These machines are designed for the long haul. They can turn out a high volume of pages per month at fantastic speeds, and they are capable of producing extremely high-quality text and graphics (including color). Plus, they are easy to set up and use.

Resolution and Color

The standard resolution in most laser printers today is 1,200 dots per inch (DPI). This is well-suited for everyday printing, including small desktop publishing jobs. (A high-end production printer might have a resolution of 2,400 DPI.) And don't think laser means only black and white: HP offers full-color laser printers that produce crisp text, bold graphics, and vivid pictures.

Speed

Lasers still hold the high ground in terms of speed: You can get full-color results as fast as 17 pages per minute (PPM), and black-and-white output as fast as 25 PPM (or 45 PPM on high-performance machines!).

But when it comes to actual printing, laser printers may take a little while to warm up. When a laser printer receives data from a computer, it takes 5 to 30 seconds to prepare the printer. This is in addition to the time it takes to actually print the document. When the printer is turned on, it needs time to warm up the fuser to operating temperature. If the printer has a standby mode or is turned off between printing jobs, the warm-up time becomes even more important.

To reduce waiting time, look for a laser printer that has "instant-on" fusers, which are designed to reduce warm-up time. An instant-on fuser can deliver the first page in 15 seconds!

Paper Handling, Size and Capacity

Paper handling is important when shopping for a laser printer. Most laser printers use letter-size, cut-sheet paper. Additional paper trays or feeders can be added to increase the capacity or variety of media. High-end production printers use continuous-feed paper.

Laser printers can print on a variety of papers sizes, types, and weights, such as transparencies, labels, and card stock. They can also handle non-traditional media like envelopes. But be aware that many specialty papers, such as iron-on transfers, are not suitable for laser printers, because the heat used in the transfer process can damage the paper and gum up your printer.

A laser printer with duplex printing can print on one side of the paper, then turn the paper over and print on the other side. Most laser printers, however, use the simpler manual duplex printing.

Learn More

HP offers a wide range of laser printers: from reliable low-cost models for everyday use to network-ready models for business needs. They are available with both black-and-white and color capabilities. Some models offer infrared/wireless printing. Others are multifunction products that allow you to print, copy, scan, and fax, offering a complete document-management solution right on your desktop. Whatever you choose, you can't go wrong with an HP laser printer.