

A note on pricing: Like many products in the electronics industry, inkjet printer prices can fluctuate over time and manufacturers' suggested list prices may be very different from street prices, due to rebates, trade-in discounts or other reasons. For the most accurate pricing, I recommend checking a few reputable resellers.



Photos © Andrew Darlow

(Left) An example of what bronzing looks like on a semi-gloss paper (circled in blue). (Center and right) A simulation of how the same print might look if it had poor color constancy under two different types of light, or under lights with two very different color temperatures.

All printer photos throughout this chapter are courtesy of the respective printer manufacturer. Also, when a printer's "width" is mentioned, that stands for the maximum sheet width that should be inserted into the printer.

TIP 40 Fill out the InkjetSelector checklist.

Choosing an inkjet printer (or printers) is kind of like choosing a car. Many models will do the job, but only a select few will meet most of your requirements. To get started, on the following pages is the super-powerful InkjetSelector, a form I created with 70 parameters to help you choose your ideal printer. Feel free to copy the form (for your own use only of course), then fill it out, bring it to a store that sells inkjet printers, or send it to a reseller or consultant who knows a lot about inkjet printers and who can give you advice. Now sharpen your pencils and happy searching!

After filling in the first 9 lines, either check the box next to each item that is an important feature or rate each item with a 0–5 (0 = not important/not applicable, 3 = nice to have, but not necessary, 5 = must have feature, or ? = I don't know or I have no idea what you're talking about).

InkjetSelector Checklist

- Cost must not exceed \$ _____.
- Printer's max. sheet width must be at least _____ inches.
- Printer must weigh under _____ pounds.
- Must accept individual cartridges at least _____ ml _____ not applicable.
- Must accept single sheets at least _____ mm thick, or _____ gsm thick.
- Must make a photo quality 4 × 6 print in under _____ seconds.
- Must make a photo quality 8 × 10 print in under _____ seconds.
- Must make a photo quality 16 × 20 print in under _____ seconds.
- Must be these brands only _____.
- Must be an all-in-one device (fax optional). YES NO
- Must be an all-in-one device w/ fax. YES NO

Ink and Longevity Related

- Must have individual cartridges.
- Must have pigment-based inks (all colors).
- Must have some or all dye-based inks.
- Must have on-board matte black and photo black pigment inks (no swapping necessary).
- Must have a gloss enhancer "ink."
- Must have at least one gray ink in addition to a black ink (for better monochrome output).
- Must have at least two gray inks in addition to a black ink.
- Must produce water-resistant prints on compatible glossy inkjet papers.
- Must have longevity ratings under normal gallery conditions of at least 20 years on at least one paper.
- Must have longevity ratings under normal gallery conditions of at least 40 years on at least one paper.

- Must have longevity ratings under normal gallery conditions of at least 70 years on at least one paper.
- Must have longevity ratings under normal gallery conditions of at least 70 years on many matte and glossy papers.
- Must have a user replaceable ink maintenance tank.
- Must have an automated print head alignment option.
- Must have an automated head cleaning option.

Stand and Paper Feed

- Must come with a stand.
- Must have an optional stand.
- Must be able to be placed on a table.
- Must be able to feed heavy sheets (300 gsm+) from the top feed tray.
- Must have a top feed tray that holds multiple sheets.
- Must have a straight paper path for single heavy sheets.
- Must have a paper cassette.
- Must come with a roll feed system.
- Must have an optional roll feed system.
- Must have a take-up roll (good for print jobs to be laminated).
- Must have a built-in cutter.

Software Connectivity

- Must have built-in or optional USB 2.0 connectivity.
- Must have built-in or optional FireWire connectivity.
- Must have built-in or optional Ethernet connectivity.
- Must have built-in PictBridge connectivity.
- Must come with software or a driver option that optimizes black and white and toned monochrome printing.
- Must come with layout/nesting software for Mac.
- Must come with layout/nesting software for Windows.
- Must come with poster making software (layout tools and clip art).
- Must come with a Photoshop plug-in for direct printing from high-bit files.

- Must come with a plug-in for direct printing from RAW camera files.
- Must be compatible with ColorByte Software’s ImagePrint RIP.
- Must be compatible with the ColorBurst RIP.
- Must be compatible with Ergosoft’s StudioPrint RIP.
- Must be compatible with the Harrington QuadTone RIP.

Color Management

- Must have a built-in densitometer.
- Must have a built-in spectrophotometer.
- Must come with printer profiles.
- Must have a driver that has a “no color management/application color management” option.

Other

- Must be able to print on CDs/DVDs.
- Must have a built-in color LCD screen.
- Must be able to print borderless on cut sheets.
- Must be able to print borderless on roll paper.
- Must be able to print borderless on roll paper and cut sheets.
- Must have scanner/fax capability.
- Must have automatic duplexing.
- Must have built-in media card slots (from digital cameras).
- Must have a color screen on the printer for computer-free printing.
- Must have Bluetooth wireless capability (standard or as an option).
- Must have Wi-Fi capability (standard or as an option).
- Must have infrared wireless capability (standard or as an option).
- Must have a built-in battery-powered option.
- Must be relatively quiet (almost silent with minimal fan noise) when printing.
- Must have an on-site one year parts/labor warranty included.