

Title:

Avoid Sticker Shock when Buying Ink Cartridges

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Summary:

I resented being gouged by manufacturers inflated prices, and so did some of my own research about OEM print cartridges and alternatives. Here's what I discovered...

Keywords:

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Article Body:

Over the past year, I've had the dubious pleasure of buying two different printers: a black-and-white laser printer and a dual-purpose copier and color inkjet printer. My laser printer gets a good workout on a daily basis, while I usually reserve my color inkjet printer for photos.

Although both printers are well made and carry brand names (HP and Brother), they were incredibly inexpensive. In fact, one of the primary reasons I bought both was because of their bargain prices. Imagine my chagrin, then, when I had to replace the toner cartridges in my laser and the ink cartridges in my inkjet, and discovered that each cartridge cost about half of what I paid for the printer.

I quickly - and correctly - surmised that printer manufacturers sell printers at or below the cost of making them, and generate profits from the sale of original equipment manufacturer (OEM) ink cartridges. With dire warnings of possible damage to the printer or voiding the printer warranty, the manufacturers insist that consumers buy only OEM printer cartridges. I resented being gouged by their inflated prices, and so did some of my own research about OEM print cartridges and alternatives. Here's what I discovered:

Option One: Compatible Ink Cartridges

Contrary to popular belief, compatible ink cartridges are not recycled. Rather, they are brand new, generic versions of OEM cartridges. They have all of the quality and reliability of OEM cartridges, but cost only a fraction of the price.

Option Two: Remanufactured Print Cartridges

As the name implies, remanufactured ink cartridges are, indeed, recycled. However, the old cartridges aren't simply refilled. Rather, they are disassembled, inspected, cleaned, reassembled, filled with ink, and individually print tested to meet or surpass the specifications associated with OEM ink cartridges.

Cost Savings

I was astounded when I saw the price differences between OEM, compatible, and remanufactured ink cartridges. For example, one black and one colour ink cartridge for an HP DeskJet 920C might cost £50.45 for the OEM cartridges, but only £16.95 for remanufactured cartridges. A pack of four ink cartridges (black, cyan, magenta, and yellow) for the Brother DCP117C might cost £31.80 for OEM, but only £8.95 for the compatible version. Over the lifetime of a printer, those kinds of savings really add up!

Cartridge Life

Typically, remanufactured ink cartridges have a shorter "shelf life" than OEM or compatible cartridges. A remanufactured cartridge will be good for about six months, whereas a compatible cartridge is vacuum-sealed and will be viable for years.

Suppliers

I also discovered that it's important to purchase compatible and remanufactured ink cartridges from a reputable dealer. When shopping online, look for a supplier that uses top-quality ink, has been in business several years, offers free UK delivery, and doesn't require a minimum order.