

Ink Cartridge Care

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Since my introduction to the ink and toner cartridge business, I've learned about ink cartridge care. Here are some hints and troubleshooting tips for care and maintenance of inkjet printers and printer cartridges as well as tips to make your inkjet cartridges last longer.

1. Perform your printer cleaning and maintenance cycles every time you replace your ink cartridges. Your printer needs regular care and maintenance. Specific instructions for maintaining most printers are found in the printer manual. If you misplaced your manual, many manufacturers have printer manuals available on their websites.
2. Keep your printer free from dust and debris. Taking the printer cartridge out and wiping the cartridge and the printer cartridge holder can often fix some printing problems. Sometimes a small particle of dust can interfere with your printer's communication with your computer.
3. Attempting to print with a cartridge that has no ink might result in damage to the print head. If the print head is damaged on the cartridge, the cartridge cannot be refilled. If the print head is damaged inside your printer, you may have to replace your print head or your printer.
4. Most printers warn users when ink is running low. We recommend purchasing a back up cartridge when the warning appears. To get the full page yield out of your cartridge, change the cartridge as soon as parts of letters are missing from your print job.
5. To prevent the print head from drying, store empty cartridges in a sealed plastic bag. Store unused or unopened cartridges in a cold place. Use the refrigerator, if possible. If stored properly, refilled cartridges have a shelf life of up to three years.
6. Try not to mix different brand cartridges together as each manufacturer uses different ink formulas that are specifically designed for their own brand. Ink formulas are patented and cannot be duplicated. Mixing brands may result in poor print quality.
7. Always have a spare set of cartridges available when you are ready to change your cartridges. You should never remove an old cartridge without immediately replacing it. If the cartridge is not immediately replaced, the print head may dry out, which could permanently clog and damage it.
8. To correct print problems, perform the printer cleaning procedures and maintenance procedures found in your printer manual.
9. If the cleaning cycle fails to produce a quality print, it may be necessary to "prime" the cartridge. Lightly place print head (where the ink comes out) on a paper towel moistened with warm DISTILLED or FILTERED water until ink begins to bleed onto the paper towel then reinstall the cartridge. Do not wipe the print head, blot only.
10. If printer gives an error message perform the following steps exactly; remove all cartridges, unplug printer from wall while it is turned on and wait AT LEAST 10 MINUTES (timing VERY important; it takes 8 -10 minutes to clear error). While waiting, take a pencil eraser and gently rub over the contact area (area where cartridge communicates with printer). DO NOT RUB PRINT HEAD (where the ink comes out). Plug printer back in and install cartridges.
11. Turn your printer off and unplug it when not in use. Some printers go through cleaning cycles if they are left on that uses up your ink.
12. If your printer tracks your ink levels, we recommend disabling this function if you wish to use recycled cartridges. Ink cartridges with this technology are only programmed to estimate ink levels once. This technology cannot be reset or reprogrammed. Some printers get confused when trying to read ink levels of a recycled cartridge. These printers may give you a message that the cartridge is empty, not recognized, or your printer may stop printing.
13. Paper quality has a lot to do with the life of your cartridge. Lower quality paper is more porous than a higher quality paper and will use more ink.

14. When switching to a new brand of cartridges, change your print quality settings to a low quality print setting such as “draft” or “normal” to see if that setting is satisfactory to you. “Draft” and “normal” settings use less ink. If you are satisfied with the quality of the print job under “draft” or “normal” settings, your cartridge will last longer.

Caboodle Cartridge, 2008 Entrepreneur of the Year for the Queen Anne’s County Chamber of Commerce, is a reliable resource for certified remanufactured and compatible toner and ink cartridges. Contact Courtney Estelow, owner at 410-758-0300 or by email at cc.caboodle@verizon.net.