

How to choose a printer



It's easy to spend hours creating something on a computer. Be it a long letter, an edited image or even your first novel, you'll eventually run up against the same problem: how do you get it out of the computer? One solution: use a printer.

Choosing a printer is no mean feat – there are a dizzying array available, all with different features. Well, here's a guide to help you through the confusion!

Follow these step-by-step instructions on how to choose a printer

Step 1: Decide what you're planning to do with your printer. If you just want to get letters down on paper or print out the occasional website, you'll probably want to go with an **inkjet printer** – that is, one that creates images by propelling tiny drops of ink on to paper. These printers can be as cheap as around £30 – though many have extra features that push up the cost, and the ink cartridges can be very pricey.

Step 2: Ask yourself if you want to print large numbers of copies. If you're writing a novel or if you're a student printing out endless essays, the number of pages can quickly add up. In this case, we'd recommend getting a **laser printer**, which works in a way similar to a photocopier. The initial cost is higher than for an inkjet (closer to £100), but you'll save a lot of money in ink costs as the toner cartridges have to be replaced far less frequently.

Step 3: Figure out how much room you have and how much you want to spend. Strapped for space or cash? You might want to get an **all-in-one printer**. This combines a scanner and photocopier (plus sometimes a fax machine) with an ordinary inkjet or laser printer. Costing around £50, they've become so popular that it can be difficult to buy a printer without all these features!

Step 4: Decide where you want your printer to be. If you're going to keep it right near your computer and mainly use it yourself, a more traditional (and cheaper) **wired version** (that is, one with a wire between the computer and the printer) will probably suit you. However, if you want to put your printer in another room entirely and/or will be sharing it with others, a **wireless version** would probably be best. However, with the latter, you have to be sure that your wifi connection is adequate.

Step 5: Are you a budding photographer or even a bit more serious about it than that? If so, you'll probably like to print up your own pics. The usual type of printer is perfectly capable of printing a photo on to paper, but to get the glossy look of the lab-processed photo, you'll need a **specialist photo printer**. Cost varies a great deal, but you should be able to pick one up for around £50. Remember, though – you can't use this to print documents!

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