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PCL Laser Printers

The PCL laser printers that met the requirements for the PC/Computing 200 are small-footprint printers that occupy an area of 350 square inches or less (measured in width by depth) and use either Hewlett-Packard's PCL 4 laser printer language or its newer, enhanced language, PCL 5.

Product

ActionLaser II
Epson America
20770 Madrona Ave.
Torrance, CA 90509
(800) 922-8911
(310) 782-0770
Price: \$999

LaserPrinter 6
Lexmark International
740 New Circle Rd.
Lexington, KY 40511
(800) 258-8575
Price: \$1,895

LaserPrinter 5E
Lexmark International
740 New Circle Rd.
Lexington, KY 40511
(800) 258-8575
Price: \$1,595

C.Itoh ProWriter Personal
Laser Printer CI-4
C-Tech Electronics
2515 McCabe Way
Irvine, CA 92713-9673
(800) 347-4017
(714) 833-1165
Price: \$1,245

HP LaserJet IIP Plus
Hewlett-Packard Co.
19310 Pruneridge Ave.
Cupertino, CA 95014
(800) 752-0900
Price: \$1,249

Okidata OL400
Okidata
532 Fellowship Rd.

Mount Laurel, NJ 08054
(800) 654-3282
(609) 235-2600
Price: \$999

MT908
Mannesmann Tally Corp.
8301 S. 180th St.
Kent, WA 98064-9718
(800) 843-1347
(206) 251-5524
Price: \$1,995

LaserPrinter 4
Star Micronics America
420 Lexington Ave., Suite 2702
New York, NY 10170
(800) 447-4700
(212) 986-6770
Price: \$1,395

HP LaserJet IIIP
Hewlett-Packard Co.
19310 Pruneridge Ave.
Cupertino, CA 95014
(800) 752-0900
Price: \$1,595

Ektaplus 7008
Eastman Kodak Co.
901 Elmgrove Rd.
Rochester, NY 14653
(800) 344-0006
Price: \$1,395

Evaluation	Score
<p>Our top pick, the ActionLaser II, offers everything you could want from a PCL laser printer, including an incredibly low list price of \$999. The ActionLaser II is the only printer we tested that allows you to upgrade its memory with standard DRAM, which is available at great street prices. With its professional-looking output, easy expandability, and unbeatable price, this 6-page-per-minute printer sets a standard that other printer manufacturers will find hard to match.</p>	82
<p>With its Print Quality Enhancement Technology (PQET), Lexmark's LaserPrinter 6 offers exceptional text output and is the only printer in our survey to offer a processor upgrade (to 10 ppm). At \$1,895, it's significantly more expensive than our top scorer, but if you plan to upgrade to PostScript or anticipate needing a faster printer down the line, the LaserPrinter 6 is well worth the investment.</p>	72
<p>For the best of several worlds, check out Lexmark's LaserPrinter 5E. It's a 5-ppm printer at a 4-ppm price, and it provides excellent output quality and expandability for \$1,595. If you'll want to upgrade to PostScript, this is your printer.</p>	71.80
<p>Priced at just \$1,245, C-Tech's CI-4 covers the bases: You get a standard PCL printer configuration with 512K of memory, PCL 4, serial and parallel ports, and a 100-sheet paper tray. In addition to the 14 resident bit-mapped fonts, C-Tech is bundling Atech Software's Publisher's Powerpak, which provides an extra 30 scalable fonts and a screen driver. The CI-4 is a solid 4-ppm printer.</p>	71
<p>Hewlett-Packard wrote the book on no-frills personal laser printers with the LaserJet IIP Plus. The IIP Plus and the CI-4 scored almost the same across our criteria. The IIP Plus lacks a serial port, but that's no great loss in a personal printer, where the fastest printing goes through the parallel port, anyway. The list price is just \$1,249, and you'll find further discounts on the street.</p>	70.80
<p>The Okidata OL400 utilizes LED technology rather than traditional laser printing. Output quality remains constant, though, and the OL400 actually performed slightly better than its 4 ppm rating at 4.2 ppm. Unfortunately,</p>	70.50

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this printer isn't easy to upgrade. There isn't a PostScript upgrade, and adding fonts requires buying Okidata's font cards. Still, the low \$999 price makes this printer difficult to pass up.

The highest-rated output came from Mannesmann Tally's MT908. Its text was sharp and clear, and its grayscales were well differentiated. Rated at 8 ppm, it tested just under that at 7.5 ppm. At a list price of \$1,995, the MT908 is a great value. 70.30

The \$1,395 Star LaserPrinter 4 is a clone of the HP IIP Plus. It's easy to upgrade, and it takes advantage of the large number of third-party products available for Hewlett-Packard's printers. This 4-ppm printer ships standard with parallel and serial ports (one more than the IIP Plus). 69.50

Hewlett-Packard's LaserJet IIIP offers 4-ppm printing with PCL 5's built-in font-scaling technology for \$1,595. The suggested list is somewhat high for a 4-ppm printer, even one with PCL 5, but given the popularity of the LaserJet printers, street prices will be significantly lower. 68.50

Priced right at \$1,395, Kodak's 8-ppm Ektaplus 7008 tested slightly slow at 7.4 ppm, but it printed quality text and graphics. Its lack of a PostScript upgrade is a drawback (you have to go up to the Ektaplus 7016 for that), but if PostScript isn't in your plans, the Ektaplus 7008, at \$600 less than the Mannesmann Tally, may be your answer. 67.30