TOP 10 PERSONAL PRINTERS

Colour inkjet printers		Max paper size	Max resolution	Quoted print speed	Actual print speed	Dimensions (wxdxh)	Supported interface types	Ink costs	Print life (pages)
1 Canon Bubble Jet i850 0870 514 3723 www.canon.co.uk NEW	• £140 ex VAT • 1-year warranty • First review Apr 03	A4	4,800x1,200dpi	B=22ppm C=14ppm	B=9ppm C=7ppm	418x274x159mm	USB, parallel, infrared	B=£23 C=£19	B=600 C=300
	Canon delivers on all fronts: speed, quality and ink nozzle technology but it doesn't come cheap. The i850 is loaded with a generous software bundle, supports USB as well as parallel and is quiet across all print jobs. The i850's forte, though, is high-resolution photo printing, producing detailed and natural-coloured images.								
2 Epson Stylus C62 0800 220 546 www.epson.co.uk LAST MONTH 1	• £67 ex VAT • 1-year warranty • First review Nov 02	A4	5,760dpi optimised	B=14ppm C=13.9ppm	B=7ppm C=5ppm	480x181x260mm	USB, parallel	B=£23 C=£19	B=600 C=300
	Epson offers a top combination of low price, good-quality output and cheap running costs. All our printing tests above draft mode yielded great results and in fairly speedy times, although for photo printing choose high-quality paper. More importantly, this low-maintenance printer is cheap to run.								
3 HP PhotoSmart 7350 0870 547 4747 www.hp.com/uk LAST MONTH 2	• £165 ex VAT • 1-year warranty • First review Oct 02	A4	1,200x1,200dpi	B=10ppm C=11ppm	B=3.5ppm C=3.5ppm	475x390x160mm	USB	B=£25 C=£30	B=400 C=400
	The PhotoSmart 7350 can be used with or without a PC. With two USB ports, you can connect it to a PC and HP camera. When printing high-resolution images the 7350 is excellent. An A4 print at 4,800dpi (dots per inch) takes about 15 minutes, but it's worth the wait. Colours are lush and details are sharp.								
4 HP DeskJet 3820 0870 547 4747 www.hp.com/uk LAST MONTH 3	• £85 ex VAT • 1-year warranty • First review Nov 02	A4	1,200x1,200dpi	B=12ppm C=10ppm	B=6pm C=3ppm	445x380x197mm	USB, parallel	B=£16 C=£31	B=495 C=450
	The lightweight DeskJet 3820 has a small footprint and setup is easy – an ideal model for novices. It doesn't feature HP's PhotoRet technology but still produces reasonable results. Running costs could mount up as the ink is laid down thickly but then the 3820's cartridges are the cheapest in the chart.								
5 Epson Stylus Photo 925 0800 220 546 www.epson.co.uk LAST MONTH 4	• £212 ex VAT • 1-year warranty • First review Nov 02	A4	5,760dpi optimised	B=8.5ppm C=8.5ppm	B=6ppm C=4ppm	492x290x228mm	USB	B=£19 C=£15	B=540 C=220
	The costly, feature-rich Stylus can be used with or without a PC and prints photos at an optimised resolution of 5,760x1,440dpi. Such high-quality images take time to output but it's worth the wait. The six-ink system means detail is sharp and the colour palette is natural. A great model if you've got the money.								

Mono laser printers		Memory installed maximum	Resolution hardware software	Quoted A4 print speed	Actual print speed	Dimensions (wxdxh)	Supported interface types	Cost of toner	Print life (pages)
1 Oki OkiPage 14ex 01753 819 819 www.oki.co.uk LAST MONTH 1	• £272 ex VAT • 1-year warranty • First review Sep 02	4MB 36MB	600x1,200dpi n/a	14ppm	13ppm	345x395x215mm	USB, parallel (opt)	£26	4,000
	The OkiPage's basic design works in its favour: the simple paperfeed system outputs uncreased pages, while the built-in control panel lets you adjust important settings without touching a PC. In terms of performance, this cheap-to-run model offers impressive fine text definition and detailed graphics reproduction.								
2 Lexmark E320 0870 444 0044 www.lexmark.co.uk LAST MONTH 2	• £239 ex VAT • 1-year warranty • First review Sep 02	4MB 68MB	600dpi n/a	16ppm	13ppm	380x362x221mm	USB, parallel	£69	3,000
	The Lexmark delivers exceptional speed and image quality for a low price. It operates more like an inkjet than a laser printer thanks, in part, to the rear-mounted paperfeed. It's in performance that the E320 shines: graphics and text reproduction is clean and precise at 600dpi and print speeds stay close to 13ppm.								
3 Brother HL-1850 0870 830 4000 www.brother.co.uk LAST MONTH 3	• £549 ex VAT • 1-year warranty • First review Sep 02	16MB 144MB	600dpi 1,200dpi	18ppm	14ppm	425x424x275mm	USB, parallel	£51	6,500
	Even though the Brother HL-1850 falls short of its stated 18ppm it's still an impressive model. The design is clean and uncluttered, its paper tray can hold up to 250 pages and operation is simple. Brother's mono laser offering may be the most expensive printer in the chart, but it compensates with low running costs.								
4 Minolta-QMS PagePro 1200W 01784 442 255 www.minolta-qms.co.uk LAST MONTH 4	• £169 ex VAT • 1-year warranty • First review Sep 02	8MB 8MB	1,200dpi n/a	12ppm	10.2ppm	515x362x381mm	USB, parallel	£70	6,000
	Costing a mere £169, the budget PagePro's resolution support of 1,200dpi is truly amazing. Its graphics output is unimpressive, but at 600dpi and above text is well defined. Its top speed of 10ppm is also reasonable. However, paper handling is poor as there's no tray – just a less-than-robust plastic support.								
5 Minolta-QMS PagePro 1250E 01784 442 255 www.minolta-qms.co.uk LAST MONTH 5	• £295 ex VAT • 3-year warranty • First review Sep 02	16MB 144MB	1,200dpi n/a	16ppm	12.6ppm	389x441x259mm	USB, parallel	£70	6,000
	The 1250E is a good choice for the home or office, although its casing is fragile. It handles text and graphics well, giving most similarly priced printers a run for their money. Speed is reasonable, but the Minolta-QMS did drop to more average rates at the highest resolution.								

Buying advice: mono laser printers

Be cautious when looking at the print speeds quoted by the manufacturer; they are unlikely to tally with real-world performance. Expect the true pages per minute, or ppm, result to be at least a couple of figures less.

Quality is harder to divine from a specifications sheet, but the best indicator you have is the print resolution. Measured in dots per inch, or dpi, this tells you how many dots of toner the printer can squeeze into a square inch. The more dots it can print, the finer and more detailed the printout should be. Only pay attention to the true hardware resolution, rather than the software enhanced figure, and look for a model with a minimum true resolution of 600x600dpi.

The purchase price is only part of the cost of running a printer. Find out the cost of consumables (toner cartridges, drums) and how long they last. Cheap printers invariably have high running costs. The more memory a printer has, the faster it can work its way through print jobs. Most devices come with 4MB-16MB. If you are likely to want more memory in the future, ensure the printer can be upgraded.