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 (pgs)
1 **Epson Stylus C62** 0800 220 546 www.epson.co.uk LAST MONTH 1	• £67 ex VAT • 1-year warranty • First review Nov 02	A4	5,760x720dpi	B=14ppm C=13.9ppm	B=7ppm C=5ppm	492x290x228mm	USB, parallel	B=£23 C=£19	B=600 C=300
		A great combination of low price, good-quality output and cheap running costs puts the Epson Stylus at the top of the chart. All our printing tests above draft mode yielded great results and in fairly speedy times. More importantly, though, it's a low-maintenance printer and is easily the cheapest to run.							
2 **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 low-cost 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 takes about 15 minutes, but it's worth the wait. Colours are lush and details are sharp.							
3 **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 DeskJet 3820 is one of the smallest and lightest models we've had in our Test Centre. The maximum resolution is 1,200x1,200dpi with an optimised mode of 4,800dpi for photo printing. It doesn't feature HP's PhotoRet technology, but still produces good results for a cheap model.							
4 **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	5,760x720dpi	B=8.5 C=8.5	B=6ppm C=4ppm	480x181x260mm	USB	B=£19 C=£15	B=540 C=220
		The Stylus Photo 925 is a costly, feature-rich printer that can be used with or without a PC. It can print photos at an optimised resolution of 5,760x1,440dpi (dots per inch). Such high quality can take time to print but you won't be sorry. Detail is sharp and the colour palette is natural.							
5 **HP DeskJet 5550** 0870 547 4747 www.hp.com/uk LAST MONTH 5	• £124 ex VAT • 1-year warranty • First review Nov 02	A4	1,200x1,200dpi	B=17ppm C=12ppm	B=7ppm C=5ppm	456x385x156mm	USB 2.0, parallel	B=£22 C=£31	B=450 C=400
		The 5550 is a mid-range printer with some good features and specifications. However, it's expensive to run and not comparably better. It's more than twice as slow as the claimed speeds and on the fastest print settings we could only push it to 7ppm (pages per minute) in colour and 5ppm in monochrome.							

	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 no	14ppm	13ppm	345x395x215mm	USB, parallel	£26	4,000
		Oki combines simple design with 13ppm, 300dpi printing, which is just as good for text or graphics. The paperfeed system generates crease-free output, while the control panel is comprehensive and easy to use. Add to this cheap running costs and you have yourself a Best Buy.							
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 no	16ppm	13ppm	380x362x221mm	USB, parallel	£71	3,000
		The E320 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 inkjet-style rear-mounted paperfeed. Graphics and text reproduction is clean and precise at 600dpi and the print speeds remain close to 13ppm.							
3 **Brother HL-1850** 0870 830 4000 www.brother.co.uk LAST MONTH 3	• £425 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 HL-1850 falls short of its stated 18ppm it's still impressive. The design is clean and uncluttered and its paper tray can hold up to 250 pages. Its intuitive installation routine means operation is simple. This isn't the cheapest printer, 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 no	12ppm	10.2ppm	515x362x381mm	USB, parallel	£70	6,000
		While the cost of the 1,200dpi 1200W might look like a bargain, it does have its flaws which keep it at number four. Paper handling is poor as there's no paper tray, just a less robust plastic support. And its top speed of 10ppm isn't the fastest on offer.							
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 no	16ppm	12.6ppm	389x441x259mm	USB, parallel	£70	6,000
		The 1250E is a good choice for the home or office, although its fragile casing isn't that robust. It handles text and graphics well, giving most similarly priced printers a run for their money. Speed was relatively good, but it did drop to more average rates at the highest resolution.							

Buying advice: inkjet printers

For a good all-purpose mid-range printer we'd suggest you pay around £100; there's certainly no point in paying over £150 if you only want to print text documents. However, if you're after photo-quality output, you'll need to spend more.

When choosing your machine, make sure it'll connect to your PC. A lot of printers still come with a parallel connection but that's now being phased out in favour of USB connections. Of the two, USB is easier to install and quicker to use.

If you're only printing text or graphics there's not much point in printing beyond 600x600dpi for the best results. Photo printing will require a minimum resolution of 1,200x1,200dpi (dots per inch).

Speed depends on the resolution at which you're printing. On average, 6ppm (pages per minute) or higher in monochrome and 3.5ppm or higher in colour are good. But remember, many manufacturers quote print speeds far in excess if what the hardware is capable of.

Always check the page coverage and expected print life of ink cartridges. If you have a mid-range inkjet you shouldn't pay more than 4p per page for black printing or 7p per page for colour.