

COLOUR INKJET PRINTERS		Last month's position	First reviewed	Price (ex VAT)	Warranty	Maximum paper size	Maximum resolution	Quoted print speed	Actual print speed	Dimensions (width x depth x height)	Interface	Ink costs	Print life (pages)	Cost per page (pence)	Input tray capacity	Output tray capacity	Weight	Sample paper provided	Photo cartridge	Number of cartridges	Number of ink colours	Software
	<b>1</b> Epson Stylus C62 0800 220 546 www.epson.co.uk	NEW	Nov 02	£65	1-year	A4	1,440 x720dpi	B=14ppm C=13.9ppm	B=7ppm C=5ppm	480x260x181mm	USB, parallel	B=£11 C=£16.35	B=640 C=300	B=1.7 C=5.5	100	65	3.32kg	yes	none	2	4	Star Wars Creative Studio
	<b>2</b> HP PhotoSmart 7350 0870 547 4747 www.hp.com/uk	NEW	Oct 02	£165	1-year	A4	1,200 x1,200dpi	B=10ppm C=11ppm	B=3.5ppm C=3.5ppm	475x390x160mm	USB	B=£24.99 C=£29.99	B=400 C=400	B=6.2 C=7.4	100	50	8.1kg	yes	included	2	6	HP Direct
	<b>3</b> HP DeskJet 3820 0870 547 4747 www.hp.com/uk	NEW	Nov 02	£85	1-year	A4	1,200 x1,200dpi	B=12ppm C=10ppm	B=6ppm C=3ppm	445x380x197mm	USB, parallel	B=£16.45 C=£30.55	B=495 C=450	B=3.3 C=6.7	100	50	3kg	yes	none	2	4	HP Photoprinting
	<b>4</b> Epson Stylus Photo 925 0800 220 546 www.epson.co.uk	NEW	Nov 02	£205	1-year	A4	5,760x 1,440dpi (optimised)	B=8.5ppm C=8.5ppm	B=6ppm C=4ppm	492x290x228mm	USB	B=£21.92 C=£17.75	B=540 C=220	B=4 C=8	100	50	6.4kg	yes	included	2	6	Photoquick, Print Image, Photostarter
	<b>5</b> HP DeskJet 5550 0870 547 4747 www.hp.com/uk	NEW	Nov 02	£124	1-year	A4	1,200x 1,200dpi	B=17ppm C=12ppm	B=7ppm C=5ppm	456x385x156mm	USB 2.0, parallel	B=£22 C=£30.55	B=450 C=400	B=4.8 C=7.6	100	50	5.36kg	yes	none	2	6	HP Photoprinting
	<b>6</b> Canon S900 0870 514 3723 www.canon.co.uk	NEW	May 02	£280	1-year	A4	2,400x 1,200dpi	B=5.7ppm C=4.2ppm	B=4.4ppm C=1.4ppm	443x319x185mm	USB	B=£8.99 C=£44.95 (5 x £8.99)	B=270 C=270	B=3.3 C=16.6	100	100	5.8kg	yes	none	6	6	PhotoRecord, ZoomBrowser Ex, Photostitch
	<b>7</b> HP PhotoSmart P1215 0870 547 4747 www.hp.com/uk	1	Dec 01	£175	1-year	A4	2,400x 1,200dpi	B=15ppm C=12ppm	B=9ppm C=3ppm	440x204x375mm	USB, parallel	B=£23 C=£28	B=830 C=450	B=2.7 C=6.2	100	50	6.5kg	yes	optional	2	4	ArcSoft PhotoImpression
	<b>8</b> Lexmark Z55 Color Jetprinter 0870 444 0044 www.lexmark.co.uk	2	Jul 02	£84	1-year	A4	3,600x 1,200dpi	B=17ppm C=13ppm	B=9ppm C=7.5ppm	440x318x197mm	USB, parallel	B=£25.94 C=£22.23	B=600 C=450	B=4.3 C=4.9	100	50	3.3kg	no	none	2	4	none
	<b>9</b> Lexmark Z35 Color Jetprinter 0870 444 0044 www.lexmark.co.uk	3	Aug 02	£50	1-year	A4	2,400x 1,200dpi	B=11ppm C=6ppm	B=5.4ppm C=2.6ppm	445x206x130mm	USB	B=£22.08 C=£18.92	B=410 C=275	B=5.3 C=6.8	100	50	2.2kg	no	none	2	4	none
	<b>10</b> Epson Stylus Photo 950 0800 220 546 www.epson.co.uk	4	Aug 02	£323	1-year	A4	2,880x 1,440dpi	B=8.8ppm C=8.5ppm	B=6.4ppm C=5.4ppm	515x333x209mm	USB, parallel	B=£8.55 C=£41.75 (£8.35x5)	B=370 C=440	B=2.3 C=9.4	150	65	7.6kg	yes	none	6	6	Colour Matching

## 1 Epson Stylus C62

While there are many excellent inkjet printers available, there are only a few manufacturers that have the market sewn up. Canon, Lexmark, Epson and HP provide an array of models to cover the printing requirements of most users. Whether you're looking for a high-quality photo printer or a text model with cheap running costs you'll be catered for. We've assessed some of the best new models and a narrow winner is the entry-level Stylus C62 from Epson. This Best Buy won't appeal to all users but is ideal for anyone looking for their first printer. A great combination of low price, good quality output and cheap running costs ensures it sits at the top of the chart.

The C62 is a lightweight U-bend feed printer that connects to your PC via a USB or parallel connection. It comes with a quick-start guide and setup is a simple process thanks to onscreen prompts. The maximum resolution varies depending on the type of print job and the onboard print interface doesn't give away exact resolution settings but offers a choice between draft, text, photo and best photo.



← A great first-time buy, the Epson Stylus C62 is a value-for-money printer with low running costs

The maximum resolution for printing on plain paper is 1,440x720dpi (dots per inch) and for best photo printing the C62 offers an optimised resolution of 5,760x720dpi. In draft text printing the ink is thinly spread and resolution drops considerably. While it's okay on text there were banding problems on coloured graphics. That said, it saves a lot of money printing in this mode and all the problems can be eradicated when you choose a higher quality.

All our printing results above draft mode gave great results and in fairly speedy times. For photo printing we suggest getting the best photo paper as results depend on this. We used premium photo glossy paper and the results were as good as printers costing twice as much.

While the C62 doesn't live up to its quoted print speeds it's still above average, pulling in 7ppm (pages per minute) for monochrome and 5ppm for colour. More importantly, though, it's low maintenance and is the cheapest to run by quite a margin.

## 2 HP PhotoSmart 7350

The 7350 is designed for use without a PC and HP claims that the PhotoRet technology combined with its six ink colours will offer the best in digital image printing. We're awarding the PhotoSmart 7350 a Recommend buy because it's a cheap photo printer. But while image quality was impressive we thought running costs were prohibitive.

The 7350 is a well built model with great specifications. It has two USB ports – one for connecting to a PC and another for attaching HP-only cameras. Setup is an automatic process with onscreen prompts so it's simple to manage. There are several



← HP's PhotoSmart 7350 is a photo printer, and as such outputs high-quality digital images

card slots compatible with nearly all storage media, including Sony's Memory Stick, and it sports some onboard functions via a control panel and LCD (liquid crystal display). Using PhotoRet IV technology means the maximum 1,200x1,200dpi (dots per inch) true resolution can be bumped up to an optimised resolution of 4,800dpi, although this option is only offered when using photo paper.

Factors that usually apply when choosing a good inkjet, such as speed or running costs, don't apply so much here because the PhotoSmart 7350 is purely a photo printer. HP claims speeds of around 10ppm (pages per minute) but we could only muster 4ppm in draft mode, for both colour and black printing. The reason colour and black printing have the same count is because HP only bundles tri-colour photo cartridges so the monochrome is a composite black built up from the other colours. As a result it's slower to print and doesn't look as sharp as text from a true black cartridge. But then that's not what this printer is meant for.

When it comes to printing high-resolution digital images the 7350 is excellent. Printing on A4 using an optimised resolution of 4,800dpi with PhotoRet IV takes about 15 minutes, but it's worth the wait – colours are lush and details are sharp.

## 3 HP DeskJet 3820

Snatching third place is another model from HP but this time it's at the other end of the scale. The DeskJet 3820 is one of HP's first forays into the sub-£100 market and it successfully gains a Recommended award. While not quite as good as Epson's Best Buy, the 3820 is still an impressive debut and will satisfy novice users.

At only 3kg this is one of the smallest and lightest models we've had in our labs, so if you're after a desktop spacesaver this could be it. HP has kept things simple with just three hardware buttons on the righthand side – one of which offers an instant cancel. Setup is an easy-to-follow process but, as with most models in our Top 10, you'll have to pay extra for a parallel or USB cable.

→ The sub-£100 DeskJet 3820 from HP is ideal for novice users



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The maximum optical resolution is 1,200x1,200dpi (dots per inch) and it offers an optimised print mode of 4,800dpi for photo printing. Unfortunately, the 3820 doesn't come with HP's latest PhotoRet technology, but even without it we saw amazing photo printing results with this cheap model. We used some of the sample paper in the box and, although the HP is no speed demon, the results were vibrantly coloured.

The DeskJet copes well with all print jobs. There was some banding on lower resolutions, but this soon disappeared when the resolution was bumped up. Even draft mode printing for black text was sharp. The down side, however, is higher running costs as the ink is laid down quite thickly. Fortunately the 3820 has cheaper cartridges than most and HP's online support makes finding consumables easy.



← The feature-rich Epson Stylus Photo 925 can be used as a standalone unit



#### 4 Epson Stylus Photo 925

Our last Recommended award goes to Epson's new photo printer. The Stylus Photo 925 is a costly, feature-rich printer that can be used with or without the use of your PC. If you want some of the best results in photo printing the 925 will be a good choice.

Because it can be used as a standalone unit, the 925 has some impressive hardware features. A small LCD (liquid crystal display) screen offers a menu with as many options as the software interface and it's easily navigated with a couple of buttons. Round the back is a port for an optional monitor preview so you can view photos on a storage card. There are three slots for storage media including SmartMedia, CompactFlash II and Memory Stick. If you have a camera with Secure Digital or Multimedia cards there's an optional card reader. Next to the USB connection port there's another port for extra storage devices should you wish to back up your digital files.

The Stylus Photo 925 can print photos at a maximum optimised resolution of 5,760x1,440dpi (dots per inch). Such high quality takes time to print but it's worth the wait. Detail is sharp and the colour palette is natural thanks to the six-ink colour system. Draft mode printing is light with no banding issues, but should only be used if you want to save money. It's not a fast printer and, thankfully, Epson makes no wildly exaggerated page per minute claims.

#### 5 HP DeskJet 5550

The 5550 is a mid-range printer with some good features and specifications. However, it's expensive to run and not comparably better – it just didn't stand out. It's a shame this isn't a beauty contest because if it was the DeskJet 5550 would win hands

down. The black and grey finish looks great and the body is low-slung with rounded edges. Inside is a 1,200x1,200dpi (dots per inch) printer with an optimised resolution support of 4,800dpi for photo printing. It comes with HP's PhotoRet IV technology to enhance photographic prints and supports the faster USB 2.0 standard. You'll have to buy your own cable, though. Photo printing is aided by the six-ink colour setup in two cartridges, but for the best results we suggest buying the optional photo cartridge. That said, our test showed that the DeskJet 5550 had no trouble coping with demanding digital prints.

HP tends to boast exaggerated print speeds and the 5550 is no exception. 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. While running costs are high for a model that's not a dedicated photo printer, it does provide excellent quality over all print jobs.



↑ The good-looking DeskJet 5550 wins hands down in the style department, but it's expensive to run

#### 6 Canon S900

The S900 is the flagship model in Canon's range of photo printers. No one would doubt the quality of printing and the innovative features but the S900 just isn't an economically viable option for most people.

This Canon model simply doesn't offer a speedy output. Printing a 10-page monochrome document in draft mode worked out at 4.4ppm (pages per minute), slightly less than Canon's claimed 5.7ppm. A five-page colour PowerPoint presentation gave a 1.4ppm print speed, which was significantly lower than the claimed 4.2ppm.

However, when it comes to photo printing – the real job this printer was designed for – your patience is rewarded. The S900 is a six-ink printer, which breaks down into black, cyan, magenta, yellow, photo cyan and photo magenta. The system uses separate ink tanks, so there's no need to throw away ink you haven't used. On the down side, colour cost per page is prohibitive: £8.99 for a cartridge doesn't sound much but there are five colour cartridges to replace and they only have a yield of 270 pages. At 16p per page that's twice as much as the second most expensive colour printer, a title held by the Stylus 950.

Photo reproduction on normal paper was



↑ If you've got plenty of time to spare, the Canon S900's photo printouts are worth the wait, but it's just too expensive for most budgets

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good but lacked detail, especially in dark areas. Switch to photo paper and the results are significantly better. The S900 also has the facilities for edge-to-edge printing, which means there'll be no white border.

#### 7 HP PhotoSmart P1215

HP's PhotoSmart P1215 comes complete with memory card slots, allowing you to print out your digital snaps without the need to connect to a PC. A maximum resolution of 2,400x1,200dpi (dots per inch) provides top-notch quality but it doesn't offer the advantages of HP's newer photo printer technology, PhotoRet IV. The P1215 provides facilities for CompactFlash, SmartMedia and IBM Microdrive cards, but doesn't have the advantage of optional support for other cards.

The detailed LCD (liquid crystal display) is good, giving instant access to myriad options. In terms of output quality, the PhotoSmart P1215 offers outstanding performance, with vibrant graphics and clean character definition, and its actual print speeds are reasonable.

HP's installation routine isn't the fastest in the world, but printer newcomers will welcome the selection of videos and detailed tutorials that help you get the printer up and running.

#### 8 Lexmark Z55 Color Jetprinter

Lexmark once had the monopoly on entry-level printers but Epson and HP are providing serious competition in an increasingly cutthroat market. The Z55 was once an outstanding sub-£100 inkjet printer but the new entries have pushed it down to eighth place. The Color Jetprinter is not as sturdy as it should be and the quick print engine makes it louder than most of the Top 10 entries. The plain finish might appeal to users looking for an office feel, though.

The Z55 may, at first glance, seem overshadowed by its cheaper sibling, the £50 Z35, but this Jetprinter offers better performance and cheaper total cost. In fact, at 4.9p a page, colour printing is cheaper than on more expensive models. At top speed, the Lexmark Z55 can generate 9ppm (pages per minute) of text and 7.5ppm of colour graphics. The printer supports a resolution of 3,600x1,200dpi (dots per inch) on glossy media or 3,600x600dpi using standard paper.



↑ The PhotoSmart P1215's memory card slots means that you don't need a PC to print out your snaps



↑ The Z55 Color Jetprinter offers better performance and cheaper print costs than its cheaper sibling, the Z35

#### 9 Lexmark Z35 Color Jetprinter

Lexmark is renowned for offering low-cost inkjet printers and the Z35 is no exception.

Like other similarly low-priced models, the Z35's running costs soon mount up. While 6.8p per page for colour printing is about average, 5.3p per page for black ink printing is very expensive and may turn potential buyers away.

It's a competent performer, with print speeds of 5.4 and 2.6ppm (pages per minute) for mono and colour, respectively. But quality results won't be found until you bump up the Z35 to its maximum resolution of

2,400x1,200dpi (dots per inch). In fact, the Lexmark's photo results were good but text and graphics looked dull on the lower quality settings. If you must opt for the top resolution setting it does slow down things quite a bit. What stops the Z35 from coming higher in our chart is the build quality, which struck us as distinctly flimsy.

#### 10 Epson Stylus Photo 950

This is a high-end photo printer and the most expensive in the chart. Aimed at the professional market, the Photo 950 is the perfect choice for those after top print quality above all else. The 950 includes hardware for automatically trimming paper, paper rolls and versatile sheetfeeding options that cover almost every conceivable type of media.

Performance figures are lacklustre, and the 6.4ppm (pages per minute) of text are hardly impressive although this is a photo, not text, printer. Therefore it's in graphics mode where the 950 shines. Image quality is fantastic at top-quality modes and the high-resolution support of 2,880dpi (dots per inch) and glossy paper are impressive. Times are good, too – even at the highest quality settings it takes about five minutes for a full print.

We can't recommend the Stylus Photo 950 to the everyday user, but its wealth of printing and media options combined with fantastic graphics reproduction will endear it to photographic and graphics professionals.



↑ The Z35 Color Jetprinter comes with a price tag of just £50, but its running costs soon start to add up



↑ The Stylus Photo 950 is a high-end photo printer that is only suitable for professionals

→ Turn over for our Inkjet printer buying advice