Five Ways to Extend Your Printer's Life

Stay out of a jam

Yanking a sheet of paper out of a jammed printer might feel satisfying, but it could lead to future printing issues.

- When you encounter a jam, you should refer to your printer model's instruction manual. However, a general rule of thumb is to slowly pull out the paper with both hands so you do not cause damage or leave torn bits of paper inside the machine.

- Jams are inevitable, but you can stave them off by not overfilling the printer tray and using paper that has been stored in a dry place and is not wrinkled or torn.

Choose the right locale

You're about to place your new printer in that perfectly sized nook…that's right next to a heating vent? Yeah, don't.

- Printers don't do well next to heat sources, so keep them away from vents, radiators, or other machines that produce a lot of heat. In addition, definitely keep it away from a window—direct sunlight will cause problems.

- Keep the feeder tray folded in when it is not in use so it doesn't get damaged.

- Give your printer some personal space. If you place it in a high-traffic area, people will bump into it—or put their coffee cup on it and then bump into it. Not good.

Clean your machine

It's dirty work, but someone's gotta do it. Here's how to get started.

- Safety first. Shut down, unplug your printer, and let it cool for at least an hour before you start to avoid burns and accidents.

- Ready to clean the insides? First remove the paper trays. Next, clean the interior department with a toner vacuum. These are better than compressed air cans because they actually remove the dust instead of blowing it around.

- You are starting to see white, streaky lines across your printouts even though your printer cartridge is full. The culprit? A clogged printer head. Some printers have a self-cleaning tool while others need to be cleaned manually, so check your manual for specifics.

- Wipe down the exterior regularly with a clean, dry cloth, and occasionally with a wet cloth. Avoid spraying it with ammonia-based cleaners. If your printer resides in a dusty environment, put a plastic cover over it when it's not in use.

Use the right ink cartridges

You wouldn't fill your car with watered-down gasoline. The same goes for clogging your printer up with a second-rate ink cartridge. Always use HP genuine ink cartridges for the best results.

- Remember to keep ink cartridges sealed in their original packaging until you need them so they do not dry out.

- Cartridges can handle a relatively wide range of temperatures (around 5 to 95 degrees Fahrenheit). Just like printers, make sure they aren't stored next heat sources. (Do not put them out in a blizzard, either.)

- Always turn your printer off using the power button, then wait until the power light goes off before you unplug it. This gives the printer time to move the cartridges into a capped position.

- If you have to remove a cartridge for any reason, put it back in as soon as you can so it does not dry out.

Make sure your driver's up to date

It's important to occasionally check and see if your printer is running the latest version of its software.

- HP provides free print drivers and updates over at 123.hp.com. These can include performance enhancements, bug fixes, and new printer features.
Keep your printer going strong by investing in a maintenance kit and HP genuine replacement parts over at parts.hp.com.