

A Greener Office- Ink and Toner

Source: The Green Office (www.thegreenoffice.com)

Today's conventional printer cartridges are made from virgin materials that deplete the Earth's limited resources. They are typically discarded after use, and thereby added to the waste stream. In addition to the impact of the cartridges, the inks inside are often petrochemical-based, potentially toxic and non-renewable. During the 1980's and 1990's various companies tried to capitalize on the increasing environmental concern over the use of ink and toner cartridges. Several provided more conscientious products but unfortunately did not perform well. More recently, great improvements have been made resulting in more economically viable, environmentally friendly options.

Buying Guide

When buying printer cartridges, look for those that contain recycled content and/or that are remanufactured. Just as important as buying recycled and remanufactured is whether the new cartridges can themselves be remanufactured and/or recycled. The most environmentally friendly practice is to refill the cartridges on-site. This option can be somewhat time intensive as well as potentially hazardous, and many companies opt to simply purchase recycled or remanufactured cartridges which are usually 20-50% less expensive than virgin cartridges. Reliable manufacturers and re-manufacturers now exist that provide high-performance recycled-content, recyclable, remanufactured and remanufacturable cartridges.

Cartridge Type	Recommendation	Description
Refillable	Good	Refilling your own cartridges is the most sustainable option, however it is time intensive and does involve potential exposure to chemicals.
Remanufactured	Best	Manufacturers reclaim spent cartridges, replace worn parts, refill the ink reservoirs and repackage them for use.
Recycled	Good	When remanufactured cartridges are not available, use a cartridge that has recycled content.
Soy Ink	Best	Only available for commercial printing.

Best Practices

Along with purchasing responsible products, try to reduce unnecessary printing volume:

- Do not print documents that could be just as easily used in their electronic version.
- If printing is necessary but the document is not for circulation, change your printer settings to the low-ink option often called the "Draft" option.

