



THRIFTY PRINTER
The Brother DCP-J140W, a CR Best Buy, did well at conserving ink.

The case of the disappearing ink

Printer ink may be one of the most expensive liquids you buy, costing anywhere from \$10 to \$70-plus an ounce. That's more than, say, great Champagne or a 15-year-old single-malt Scotch.

But our latest tests of new inkjet printers have found that many use ink even when they're not actually printing. With some models, that can get expensive.

Readers told us that ink seemed to be disappearing faster than expected with light printer usage. So we started measuring how much excess ink is used to print pages intermittently compared with printing the same number of pages at once. And we figured out the cost of this extra ink usage per year (see the chart below).

Where the extra ink goes

Many printers gobble up ink for cleaning print heads and other maintenance chores, especially if they're preparing to print after sitting idle for some time. Our tests confirmed that some printers use much more ink than others. Only one brand, Brother, has models that were consistently frugal with ink during

maintenance. Most other brands varied widely depending on the line of products.

For example, with HP, the Envy series of printers used relatively little ink for maintenance tasks, but the Photosmart series used a lot more. The two machines with the highest excess usage, a Lexmark and an HP, used about five times more ink in occasional use compared with continuous printing.

Bottom line. If manufacturers can make some frugal printers, we think they should design all their models to use ink efficiently, no matter how often they're used. Several all-in-one inkjet models from our latest tests fit the bill and are also fine performers overall. The \$80 Brother shown above is one of them, along with two Epsoms: the XP-800, \$180, and XP-600, \$100.



BEHIND OUR TEST OF PRINTER INK

Use your smart phone to download the RedLaser or ShopSavvy app and scan the code for video.



The extra cost of occasional printing

Printer	*Estimated annual cost of excess ink
Brother DCP-J140W	\$ 0
Epson XP-800	14
Brother MFC J4510DW	15
Brother MFC-J4410DW	16
HP Envy 120	18
Canon Pixma MX522	20
Epson XP-600	20
HP Officejet Pro X451DN	23
Epson Workforce WF-2530	25
HP Officejet Mobile 150	25
Canon Pixma MX392	28
Canon Pixma MX452, MX455	31
Epson Workforce WF-3540	35
Epson Workforce WF-3520	36

Printer	*Estimated annual cost of excess ink
Canon MG4220, MG4250	\$ 40
Canon MG2220, MG2250	43
Canon MG3220, MG3250	47
Canon MG5420, MG5450	61
Canon iP7220, iP7250	62
HP Photosmart 6520	82
Canon Pixma MX922	86
Epson Expression Photo XP-850	100
HP Photosmart 7520	108
Lexmark OfficeEdge Pro4000	122
HP Officejet Pro 8600	126

*Estimate is based on printing 30 pages (20 pages of text and 10 pages of graphics) intermittently over three weeks and comparing the ink used (and ink costs) with printing 30 pages continuously. Printers were turned off between jobs.

How to save on repairs

When faced with a washer that won't wash or a similar appliance affliction, CONSUMER REPORTS readers are a brave bunch. More of them tried to fix the appliance themselves rather than call a manufacturer or retailer for help, according to our survey results. Owners who took that route saved more than those who tried a different approach.

The survey, conducted by the Consumer Reports National Research Center, analyzed people's experiences getting help for 21,107 appliances between January 2011 and June 2012.

Half of the time the appliance was working, according to our readers in the survey, but improperly. In 31 percent of the cases it was out-and-out broken.

How did they cope?

- 29 percent said that they tried to solve the problem themselves.
- 24 percent contacted the manufacturer.
- 22 percent contacted the retailer that sold them the appliance.
- 13 percent used a local independent repair shop.
- 3 percent used social media to solicit help from someone else.



How successful were they?

About half of the do-it-yourselfers ultimately fixed the appliance. Most turned to the owner's manual for help, and 40 percent relied on their own experience. About a third searched Google, and 15 percent used YouTube or other online video for repair tips.

Owner-repaired appliances were more likely to be fixed at no cost than other methods. And when an expense was involved, owner repairs had the lowest median cost: \$99 vs. \$193 for a manufacturer's solution. But it's possible that the problems the owners took on were relatively simple.

Repair costs

What appliance owners paid varied by how they solved their problem*	Amount paid	% with no cost
Owner	\$ 99	43
Local shop	135	7
Multiple sources	146	22
Retailer	190	19
Manufacturer	193	17

*For broken or malfunctioning appliances up to three years old with no warranty.