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# How to clean the printhead on a hp photosmart printer

You probably don't spend a lot of time worrying about printer maintenance. When you need to print something, you just turn the printer on, send the print command from your computer and wait for the printed sheets to stack up on the printer's tray. Maybe you wipe the dust off the top of your printer once in a while, but beyond that, how much maintenance can a printer possibly require?Depending on what type of printer you have, there may not be too much printer cleaning involved at all -- in fact, the printer will pretty much take care of that itself. But if you use an inkjet or laser printer, you might need to undertake some fairly involved cleaning procedures now and then to keep your printer running smoothly. From the microscopic ink nozzles in an inkjet printer to the mirror and rollers in a laser printer, there are some complicated parts that need occasional maintenance.Cleaning your printer when needed will prolong its life, give you better printing results, and allow you to get the maximum number of printed pages out of your ink cartridges. Considering the cost of printer ink, keeping your printer running at full efficiency could be a major money saver. That's why we're going to break down why, when and how to clean your printer. By Elizabeth Mott Inkjet printers can command eye-poppingly low purchase prices, but their buy-in cost advantages disappear when you add in your investment of ink cartridges over the printer's lifespan. That investment becomes even more expensive when inkjet manufacturers, such as HP, produce cartridges that no longer print after they reach a specific age. However, some HP Photosmart printers include secret override procedures you can use to bypass those devices' ink-expiration warnings. Some HP inkjet printers use cartridges with encoded expiration dates. These cartridges stop working after a specific time interval, relative either to when you install them or to the warranty date printed on their packaging. HP Photosmart printers affected by this ink-expiration policy include an override procedure that enables you to continue using past-date cartridges. However, HP warns that expired ink may damage your device's printhead, which will void any remaining warranty coverage on the printer itself. Each HP printer that includes an expired-ink override procedure, including the Photosmart series, provides instructions on how to perform the override in at least one of three ways. You may see a warning message on a built-in display, identifying both the problem and the control-panel keys to press to continue printing. Printers that lack display screens may show a pattern of blinking indicator lights that point to the keys to press. The user guide that accompanies your HP Photosmart device may also provide instructions on how to perform the override. If you continue to print with out-of-date cartridges, your HP Photosmart may experience an ink system failure that lacks any obvious override procedure. Some Photosmart printers include a hidden restoration sequence that can bring these devices back to life. The key-press operation involves a complex ink initialization made up of multiple key presses, followed by unplugging the printer from electrical power for 30 seconds. After you plug the printer back in, it completes a one-time procedure that removes the hardware failure. Although using expired cartridges can void your warranty, if you experience an ink hardware failure for other reasons while your printer remains under warranty coverage, you can contact HP support for the proper override procedure for your Photosmart model. Refilled and remanufactured ink cartridges offer a tempting bargain when you compare their more modest cost to the price of HP's new cartridges. Whether you consider buying a refill kit and recharging your cartridges yourself or purchasing from a refill service, you must balance the savings against the prospect that faulty refilling causes damaging leaks or that inferior ink lowers the quality of your output. Likewise, overriding the expiration dates on HP cartridges may look like a money-saving proposition, unless and until it compromises the working life of your hardware. By Steven Symes The HP Photosmart C4280, like HP's other Photosmart printers, uses ink jet technology to print both in color and black and white. If you notice the printer's print quality has become splotchy or spotty, you should clean the printer's nozzles. These nozzles spray tiny droplets of ink onto pages as they pass through the printer. Sometimes the droplets of ink dry and collect in the nozzles, blocking them partially or completely. HP's Solution Center software will clean the printer's nozzles, freeing them of any dried ink deposits. Turn on your HP Photosmart C4280 and the attached computer. Wait for the printer to finish its warm-up procedures. Click on "Start" on the computer's screen, then "All Programs." Find the folder labeled "HP" and click on "HP Solution Center." Select the "Settings" tab in the Solution Center software. Hover the mouse over "Printer Settings" so a drop-down menu appears, then click on "Printer Toolbox" in the list. Select the "Device Services" tab and click on the button labeled "Clean the Print Cartridges." If after one cleaning you are not satisfied with the print quality, click on "Clean Again" until you are pleased with the test page. HP's Photosmart D7560 color inkjet printer is one of the better inkjet printers we've tested. It offers pleasing print quality and features galore, making it an excellent choice for the home user and amateur photographer.Not surprisingly, the $149 (as of 3/3/09) Photosmart D7560 excelled at printing color output on HP-brand photo paper, showing natural, though slightly yellow, images. On plain paper, the same photos and graphics exhibited some graininess and dark colors, but text samples looked nicely black and uncommonly crisp. Print speeds were average or better for all but one test.The Photosmart D7560 is packed with features and easy to use. We particularly liked the 3.5-inch, tiltable, color touchscreen LCD. Menus and instructions display on screen in easily readable text and vibrant colors. The three main, self-explanatory control buttons (Home, Print Photos, and Cancel) are arranged horizontally below the touchscreen.The media slots accept Memory Stick, SD Card, XD Picture Card, and CompactFlash; the unit supports PictBridge, too. The main paper tray holds up to 125 pages of letter-size sheets; a piggybacked photo-paper tray takes up to 20 sheets of up to 5-by-7-inch photo paper. The most notable feature is the CD/DVD labeler for printing on specially coated media. The disc caddy stores discreetly under the printer, for use with the special input tray nestled inside the printer's open front bay. You press a labeled lever to lower the tray; a menu pops up on both the LCD and your PC to guide you through the process. One high-end feature the D7560 lacks is networking--it has neither ethernet nor Wi-Fi.The Photosmart D7560's ink costs (at the time of this review) are mostly good. It ships with standard-size supplies: a 250-page black cartridge, plus four colors-- cyan, magenta, yellow, and a special photo black for greater image depth--with yields of 130 to 170 pages. Same-size replacements cost $12 for black (a respectable 4.7 cents per page) and $10 each for the others, resulting in a rather steep 22.4 cents total for a four-color page (excluding photo black). As for high-yield cartridges, the prices drop to 4.4 cents per page for a $35, 800-page black cartridge and 11.6 cents total for a four-color page (each color costs $17 and lasts 750 pages). In short, buying high-yield cartridges will cut the price of color prints in half.The Photosmart D7560 won us over with its feature-packed design and strikingly good print quality. If you don't need to print on CDs or DVDs, check out its lower-priced, higher-ranked cousin, the HP Photosmart D5460. Note: When you purchase something after clicking links in our articles, we may earn a small commission. Read our affiliate link policy for more details. This fast printer also offers cool features, including a touchscreen LCD and CD/DVD printing. The HP Photosmart A646 Compact Photo Printer offers a few surprising features for its midrange price ($150 as of 11/11/09). Compared with the Epson PictureMate Charm, which costs the same, the Photosmart A646 offers more versatility, but it falls slightly short in speed, print quality, and ink costs.The Photosmart A646 has some impressive features. Most snapshot printers take only one size of media, but the Photosmart A646 accepts three: 4 by 6 inches (the size of our test photos), 4 by 12 inches (panoramic), and 5 by 7 inches. On the inside front panel are two media slots for Memory Stick, SD Card, and XD-Picture Card. The unit also has a PictBridge port and built-in Bluetooth support. Interestingly, the printer chassis is made from more than 30 percent recycled plastic; the carrying case is constructed entirely from recycled plastic bottles. However, while the case design implies portability, HP doesn't offer an optional battery pack.On the display panel is a 3.45-inch color touchscreen LCD, flanked by touch-sensitive controls. You can browse and select menu options using your finger or the included stylus. It's fun to try the many available photo enhancements, including borders, captions, and clip art; you can also create a doodle overlay or apply a posterized or retro look.HP makes the Photosmart A646 easy to use. The Setup menu contains an extensive set of animated and text-based help topics. If you install the printer on a PC, an HTML-based Quick Help file installs with the driver. The driver is contained in the printer's firmware, so no CD is required, but you will have to spring for a USB cable.The Photosmart A646 performed pretty well in our tests. It kicked out each of our test photos in less than a minute at normal settings. Aside from flesh tones that were orange enough to be jarring, most colors were bright and well balanced. All images showed a nice level of depth and detail.For the best possible ink costs, buy the combination ink/paper packs. The unit comes with an introductory, 15-print ink cartridge. A replacement 50-photo ink cartridge costs $24, or a ridiculous 48 cents per print--not counting paper. HP's 140-sheet paper-and-ink combination pack, on the other hand, costs $47, or 32 cents per print.The print cartridge is housed in a front compartment. Simple color labels inside the cover illustrate how to remove and insert the cartridge, but it can still be tricky. After my first attempt, an error message appeared on the LCD, and an animated clip showed how to insert it properly.Is the HP Photosmart A646 the snapshot printer for you? Weigh the trade-offs. It falls a little short on flesh tones and ink costs. On the other hand, it lets you print on more sizes of paper than the competition, and it offers lots of fun, on-board editing options. Note: When you purchase something after clicking links in our articles, we may earn a small commission. Read our affiliate link policy for more details. The wide variety of paper sizes and editing options available on the A646 may make up for a few other shortcomings. Versatile paper handling; editing options Color touchscreen LCD No battery option Orangey flesh tones (Pocket-lint) - There used to be a time when printers were big and beige. But can a colour change to gloss black really make you want to sign up for the new HP C4780 all-in-one printer? We get printing and scanning to find out. Sitting in the mid- to low-end of the printer scale the HP Photosmart C4780 is not pitched as a work horse, but aimed at someone that wants to do the odd printing from time to time. Take the paper for instance. The input tray can hold around 80 sheets of standard paper while the photo tray can handle a mere 15 sheets. Paper is loaded in via the front and spat out on top. Doesn't sound like a deal breaker, however in reality with no paper catcher, it means that you've got to be there really to catch your prints as they churn out at a top speed of 29 pages a minute for black and white. If you're printing lots then it's going to be an issue. A printer isn't just about paper handling, although that is a big part of it, it's about usage in our minds. Here you get wireless connectivity meaning you can hide the lump of black in a cupboard never to be seen again. It's a good thing too, for while HP has clearly put some design thought into the product, the black gloss design attracts dust like nothing we've seen before. We're surprised it doesn't come with a duster, it really is that bad. Back to the wireless functionality and it's not all plain sailing as you might expect. While once you've got it set-up it's a breeze to use, we had difficulty at first doing so. Why? Because the initial set-up process has to be hardwired via USB. While we have to admit it means that you have to know little about setting up networks to get this working (it does it all for you) it does mean that you've got to find somewhere to perch the printer on your desk or lap to begin with. Only to then unplug it all to put it in its final destination. So you've got it set-up, loaded in the paper and then turned it on. The good news is that it's pretty much straightforward from there on out. The printer comes with a card reader, although the choices are limited to MemoryStick and MemoryStick Duo, SD XD and MMC cards. No Compact Flash support for DSLR users or microSD card support for phone owners. There's no Bluetooth either, although we do like the fact that it works perfectly with the iPhone HP iPrint application. If you aren't accessing and controlling the printing via your computer (Mac or PC), or your iPhone, you're left with a touch-sensitive panel. It's small (1.45-inches), but with only basic instructions offered it is just about large enough to get the job done. We certainly would have liked something larger. Beyond the printer functionality you also get a flatbed scanner. The technical specs of the scanner include a scan resolution of 1200 x 2400 dpi with optical scanning up to 1200 dpi. It's not the fastest scanner in the world, but as with the whole model should be seen as a nice feature to have rather than something you would invest in to digitise the last 20 years of photos you've collected. Depending on whether you've opted for the accompanying software, pressing the scanner button loads up the software on your computer automatically. You can scan to a PC or directly to a memory card. So what's the performance like? Well the HP Photosmart C4780 all-in-one printer isn't a workhorse by any stretch of the imagination and therefore printer speeds and options reflect that here. The print quality for black and white and colour prints is good with little blurring, bleeding or smudging. As for photos, the quality again is average rather than outstanding. We printed out images on HP's Everyday photo paper (4 x 6) and Canon's Photo Paper Plus Glossy paper (A4) and while the images were okay to share, we would think twice about framing them. The colours looked a little flat to what we would have liked on our numerous test shots. Verdict It's clear from out tests and living with the C4780 that it's a "I've got a printer for the odd print" kind of printer rather than aimed at someone who still believes in paper. The standard document printing is good enough for the odd letter, homework, or document you want to reference and the photo element will be good enough to share prints but not really to frame. If that sounds like what you are looking for then for the price you are unlikely to go wrong, however if you're hoping for something more "officey" or more "full featured", you would be better off looking elsewhere. Average. Writing by Stuart Miles. Originally published on 22 September 2009. Recommended for you Best gaming laptops 2021: Alienware, Asus ROG, Razer, Acer Predator, HP Omen and more By Max Freeman-Mills · 2 August 2021 Best laptop under $500/£500 for 2021: Amazing budget and mid-range notebooks By Max Freeman-Mills · 2 August 2021 Thunderbolt 5 secrets spilled: Will be capable of 80Gbits per second By Dan Grabham · 2 August 2021 Best laptop 2021: Top general and premium notebooks for working from home and more By Dan Grabham · 2 August 2021 Asus ROG Zephyrus M16 review: A gaming gladiator By Cam Bunton · 2 August 2021 Microsoft Windows 11: Features, release date and more for the next generation of Windows By Dan Grabham · 2 August 2021