



Personal laser printers

WE PUT TEN COLOUR AND MONO PERSONAL LASERS FROM JUST \$132 TO THE TEST.

Modern inkjets can make impressive claims about speed and running costs, but when it comes to getting real work done there's still no substitute for the real thing. Laser printers offer an unbeatable combination of speed, sharpness and print permanence, coupled with a lower cost per page than an inkjet. Historically, the downside has been the high cost of the printer itself – 20 years ago the first HP Laserjet cost the equivalent of over \$10,000 in today's money – but over time prices have steadily fallen, to the point where even a colour laser is now a realistic option as a personal printer.

In this Labs, we look at ten laser printers (five monochrome and five colour) all costing less than \$500 – and in some cases substantially less. A printer in this price bracket could be suitable for a home business that doesn't keep its printer churning all day, but occasionally wants to run off multipage documents without waiting

around for an inkjet. In the workplace, a personal laser at this price point is ideal for someone who needs to print confidential documents that can't be entrusted to a shared printer. Several of the printers on test feature Ethernet as standard, so one of these offerings could appeal to a small workgroup with a limited budget.

Even if the price is appealing, a personal laser won't suit everyone; if you want to print photos then, despite the trade-off of speed and running costs, you should consider an inkjet. Several of the lasers on test produced impressive photographic results, but inkjet printers can combine liquid inks to produce an almost limitless range of vivid colours, while lasers must rely largely on dithering, inevitably impairing the results.

For many users, however, one of the ten personal lasers here could prove to be the right choice at the right price. To help you determine which would best meet your needs, we've put each one through our exhaustive speed and

quality tests, and considered running costs in depth on page 56. Read on to find out which personal laser printers made the grade.



DARIEN GRAHAM-SMITH
"When considering running costs, be realistic about your usage. A cheap printer with expensive consumables could be the most cost-effective choice if you'll only ever print a few thousand pages."

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How we test

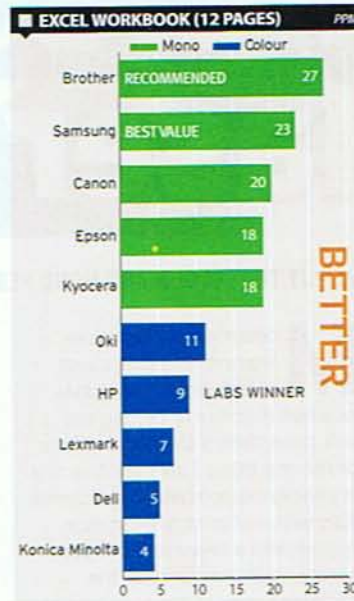
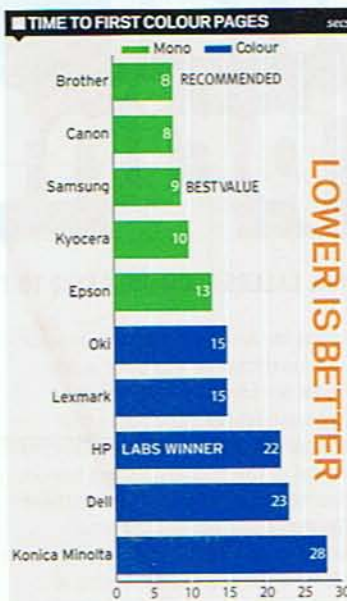
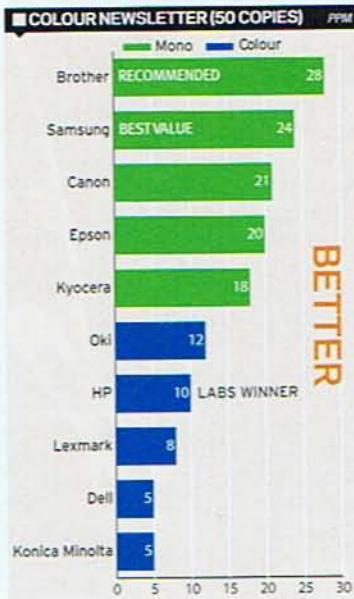
PLUS HOW WE WORK OUT THE RATINGS.

At the bottom of each review there are five star ratings: Quality, Speed, Features & Design, Value for Money, and a final Overall rating. These scores are calculated according to a combination of performance tests, objective scores, costs and subjective quality ratings.

The printers in this month's test are aimed at the budget-conscious user, so we carry out our tests using standard 80gsm copier paper. In our first test, we set each printer to output 50 copies of the single-page business letter included in the recently published ISO sample document. Though there's no single standard for calculating toner coverage, by most measures the ISO page is around 5% coverage, providing a rough approximation to everyday use. Due to the way laser technology works, the amount of toner on a page makes very little difference to the print speed, though naturally the more you use, the sooner you'll need to replace the cartridge. The ISO document features a small red graphic, but we print in monochrome even on the colour printers to ensure a level playing field for this test.

Our second test calls for 50 copies of the ISO colour newsletter. This sample page includes black text on a variety of coloured backgrounds, including a rainbow gradient, and a photo. This exercise tests the various colour printers' abilities to produce sharp text alongside colour graphics, and exposes the speed differences between printing colour and monochrome documents. For the monochrome printers, we look at how cleanly the coloured shades are converted to greyscale: as you'd expect, the monochrome printers exhibited no significant speed

differences between this test and the



previous one.

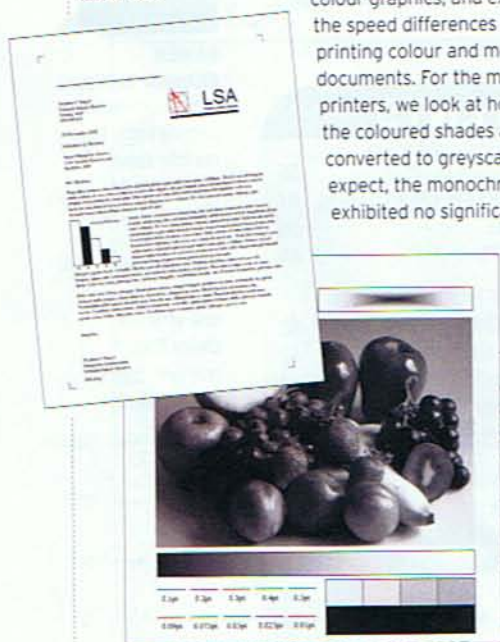
Next we print a range of coloured tables, charts and DTP layouts from Excel, Word and Adobe's Acrobat

Reader. Unlike the first two tests, these documents don't involve any repeated pages, enabling us to determine whether print speed is affected by the printer having to process each page image afresh, rather than reproducing a

single page multiple times. In general the impact is very small, though for some printers it was sufficient to affect that model's average score across all of our speed tests.

Finally, we print out our high-quality tests, based on our two standard high-resolution montages (one monochrome, one colour), consisting of photographs, shades, gradients and text at a range of sizes. For these tests we make use of any driver options that are available, in order to provide enhanced print quality; several printers here didn't offer any such options.

Left to right: the new ISO 5% letter represents a typical mono page; our monochrome test page features a photo, gradients and a variety of font sizes and styles; a business chart forms part of our 12-page Excel test.



Moving to Vista

A laser printer is an investment, and even a budget laser can be expected to last for a number of years. Therefore, even if you're happy with Windows XP for the foreseeable future, it's worth knowing that any new hardware you purchase will still be usable should you make the leap to Vista – or buy a new computer with it pre-installed. So, although not all the printers on test advertise Vista support, we've tried each one out under the new operating system as well as XP. We were pleasantly surprised by the results: eight of them successfully installed "out of the box" with all expected functionality. The other two (the Dell 3010cn and the Kyocera FS-920) worked fine once we'd downloaded updated drivers from the manufacturers' websites. Remember that, while a printer may work under Vista, it might not be fully supported by the manufacturer: the feature table on page 58 details the current state of manufacturer support.

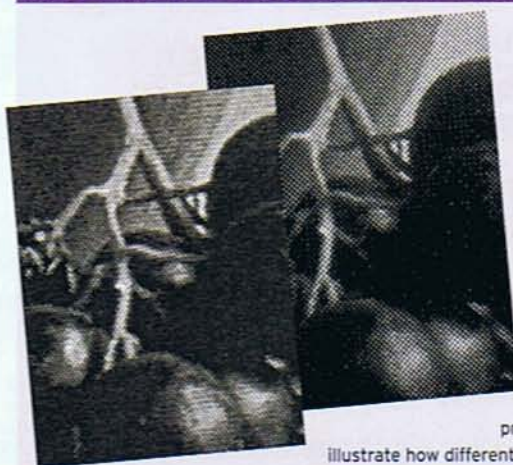
Quality

Quality is a subjective rating arrived at by two members of the PC Authority team, who independently assess the output of each printer against a range of different criteria: black text, for example, should be solid and readable, even at small sizes, while greyscales should be even and gradients should be smooth. For colour printers, we also take into account the printer's ability to blend colours and to accurately reproduce the shades you see onscreen. The table below shows how the output quality of the various printers compared across four key tests. The Quality rating awarded to each printer is a function of its total score across these tests.

Speed

Speed is traditionally a key advantage of personal laser printers over inkjets, but competing products offer a range of speeds at the same price point. Rather than relying on manufacturers' claims, we time all of our tests to find out how swiftly each printer handles various types of real-world print jobs. Our measurements represent the actual print time, from the moment the first page is taken up to the moment the last page drops into the output tray.

NOT ALL LASERS ARE CREATED EQUAL



More even dithering allows the HP to print smoother images (right) than the higher-resolution Kyocera (left).

Laser printers have always set the benchmark for high-quality text printing, and as you can see from our quality scores, monochrome letter quality was good across the board.

But when it comes to images, be they charts, maps or simply clip art, quality can vary significantly. Since laser printers can only output solid black (plus, in the case of colour lasers, solid cyan, magenta and yellow), shades of grey and colour must be represented through dithering.

The two images above are close-ups of two prints of our high-quality monochrome tests, which illustrate how different printers cope with dithering. The sample on the left, produced by the Kyocera FS-920, suffers from slightly uneven dithering, leading to a blotchy overall appearance and a visible canvas-texture effect. To the right is the same area as printed by the Brother HL-5240: despite having a lower resolution, its more even dithering produces a smoother, more professional-looking result.

Dithering isn't the only point of differentiation between laser printers when it comes to printing images. Some of the printers on test suffered from horizontal banding – lighter and darker stripes across the page, typically caused by an imperfect paper-feed failing to move the paper through the print mechanism at an even rate. Colour printers are also vulnerable to issues such as unwanted tinting on mono images, as we found with the Oki C3300n, or an inadequate colour gamut to accurately reproduce what you see onscreen, as seen with the Dell 3010cn.

Start-up time can, however, significantly affect a printer's effective overall speed, so we also consider the time to the first colour page (that's the time we had to wait between hitting "print" and receiving a printed sheet when the printer was in a "ready" state). This figure is partly based on the speed of the host PC and the nature of the document, but since our tests use the same computer to send the same document to each printer it helps identify which laser printers are quick off the mark and which take a more leisurely approach.

Features & Design

The Features & Design rating is calculated by allocating points to a wide number of criteria. We're looking for both technical features – such as built-in Ethernet, software functions and front-panel controls – and practical benefits, like warranties and the amount of toner initially included at purchase with each laser printer.

We also consider ergonomic and

aesthetic issues: is this a printer you'd want on your desk? Would it even fit?

Value for Money

This score represents the overall "bang-per-buck" delivered by each model on test. Naturally we look at the cost of the printer itself, but then we also factor in a calculation of the long-term running costs. Toner is the most obvious variable, but there are other parts in a laser printer that may eventually wear out, such as the fuser, image drum, transfer belt and waste toner bottle. In this sector of the market, it may be uneconomical to replace a worn-out part, and we take into account how this could affect your investment. The overall cost of owning the printer is then weighed against its scores in the other categories to give a rating out of six.

Overall

The Overall rating is a straight average of the other four scores, though it may sometimes appear higher or lower than expected due to rounding.

QUALITY RESULTS (OUT OF 10)

* Results are not comparable between mono and colour printers

Print engine	Brother HL-5240	Canon LBP-3300	Epson EPL-6200L	Kyocera FS-920	Samsung ML-2510	Dell 3010cn	HP Colour LaserJet 2605	Konica Minolta 2500W	Lexmark C500n	Oki C3300n
	Monochrome	Monochrome	Monochrome	Monochrome	Monochrome	Colour	Colour	Colour	Colour	Colour
Monochrome letter	9	8	8	8	9	9	10	10	9	9
Colour newsletter	7	6	6	6	7	6	9	9	8	7
Photomontage*	8	6	6	4	7	6	9	8	8	7
Mono quality test	7	6	5	4	7	5	8	9	6	6

FEATURE TABLE

Personal laser printers



	Brother HL-5240	Canon Laser Shot LBP-3300	Epson EPL-6200L	Kyocera FS-920	Samsung ML-2510
OVERALL RATING	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★★
Mono/Colour	Mono	Mono	Mono	Mono	Mono
Price ¹	\$298	\$325	\$285	\$310	\$132
Price of delivery ²	From \$12	From \$13	\$10	\$10	\$10
Supplier	www.jantechcomputers.com.au	www.printers.com.au	www.dontpayretail.com.au	www.dontpayretail.com.au	http://umart.net.au
Manufacturer's website	www.brother.com.au	www.canon.com.au	www.epson.com.au	www.kyocera.com.au	www.samsung.com.au
Basic warranty ³	1yr on-site	1yr RTB	1yr on-site	1yr RTB	1yr C&R
PHYSICAL FEATURES					
Dimensions (WxDH)	371 x 384 x 246mm	370 x 258 x 376mm	378 x 275 x 274mm	380 x 390 x 245mm	354 x 246 x 297
Weight	9.5kg	12kg	7.9kg	9.5kg	8.9kg
Maximum power consumption	610W	436W	825W	315W	390W (average)
Peak acoustic noise level	53dBA	53dBA	54dBA	49dBA	53dBA
Status display	4 LEDs	5 LEDs	2 LEDs	2 LEDs	2 LEDs
Interfaces	USB, parallel	USB	USB, parallel	USB, parallel	USB, parallel
GENERAL SPECIFICATIONS					
Print technology	Laser	Laser	Laser	Laser	Laser
CPU speed	266MHz	Not stated	48MHz	266MHz	150MHz
Installed memory	16MB	8MB	2MB	32MB	8MB
Maximum memory	52MB	8MB	2MB	28MB	8MB
Maximum true resolution	1200 x 1200dpi	600 x 600dpi	600 x 600dpi	1800 x 600dpi	1200 x 600dpi
Enhanced resolution (if applicable)	N/A	2400 x 600dpi	N/A	N/A	N/A
THROUGHPUT (CLAIMED)					
Colour speed (on A4)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Mono speed (on A4)	28ppm	21ppm	20ppm	18ppm	24ppm
Warm up time	Less than 18 seconds	7 seconds	21 seconds	16 seconds	15 seconds
Time to first print from warm	Less than 8.5 seconds	9 seconds	Less than 12 seconds	11 seconds	9 seconds
Toner saving	●	●	●	●	●
DUTY CYCLES					
Maximum duty cycle	20,000 pages	10,000 pages per month	15,000 pages per month	15,000 pages per month	10,000 pages per month
Engine life	200,000 pages	Not stated	Not stated	100,000 pages	Not stated
Drum life	25,000 pages	Built into cartridge	20,000 pages	100,000 pages	Built into cartridge
Fuser life	100,000 pages	Life of printer	Not stated	100,000 pages	Approx 50,000
Transfer belt	N/A	Not stated	Not stated	100,000 pages	Built into cartridge
Toner life	3500/7000 pages	2500/6000 pages	3000/6000 pages	6000 pages	3000 pages
Toner life as shipped	3500 pages	2500 pages	1500 pages	3000 pages	1000 pages
Waste toner bottle life	N/A	Not stated	N/A	N/A	N/A
CONSUMABLES PRICING					
Black toner cartridge	\$75 / \$105	\$82 / \$156	\$139 / \$211	\$107	\$90
Colour toner cartridge	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Image drum	\$188	Built into cartridge	\$126	Life of printer	Built into cartridge
Fuser	N/A	Life of printer	Life of printer	Life of printer	N/A (replaceable under warranty)
Transfer belt	N/A	Built into cartridge	Life of printer	N/A (replaceable under warranty)	N/A
Waste toner bottle	N/A	Built into cartridge	Life of printer	N/A	N/A
Price per mono page (cents) ⁴	1.5	2.6	3.5	1.8	3
Price per colour page (cents) ⁴	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
PAPER HANDLING					
Standard input tray capacity	250 sheets	250 sheets	150 sheets	250 sheets	250 sheets
Standard output tray capacity	150 sheets	125 sheets	100 sheets	100 sheets	100 sheets
Maximum A4 paper weight standard tray	105g/m ²	120g/m ²	163g/m ²	105g/m ²	90g/m ²
Multipurpose feed input (pages)	50	1	N/A	1	1
Maximum paper weight multipurpose tray (g/m ²)	161g/m ²	163g/m ²	N/A	163g/m ²	165g/m ²
LANGUAGE SUPPORT & EMULATIONS					
PCL level	6	N/A	N/A	5e, 6	N/A
PostScript level	N/A	N/A	N/A	3	N/A
OS SUPPORT					
Windows 98 SE/ME/2000/XP/Vista	●●●●●	●●●●○	●●●●●	●●●●○	●●●●●
DRIVER & SOFTWARE FEATURES					
Software included	○	○	○	○	○
Real-time status display	○	●	●	○	○
Toner levels	N/A	○	●	○	○
Watermark	●	●	●	●	●
Multiple pages per sheet	Up to 25	Up to 16	Up to 4	Up to 25	Up to 16
Poster printing	Up to 25	Up to 4 x 4	○	Up to 5 x 5	Up to 4 x 4
Scaling/zoom	25-400%	25-200%	50-200%	20-500%	25-400%
Different first page source	●	●	○	●	○
OPTIONAL COMPONENTS					
Optional duplex unit	N/A	Built-in	○	○	○
Optional paper trays	\$199	\$120	○	○	○
Optional networking	○	\$170	○	\$188	○
Optional hard disk kit	N/A	○	○	○	○

Key: ● Yes, ○ No. ¹ Price correct at time of going to press. ² May increase for regional areas. ³ Warranty is parts and labour, Australia only, unless otherwise stated. ⁴ Prices are the lowest of the time of going to press from various online retailers. ⁵ 5% coverage, excluding paper. ⁶ 5% coverage per colour, excluding paper.



Dell 3010cn	HP Colour Laserjet 2605	Konica Minolta magicolor 2500W	Lexmark C500n	Oki C3300n
★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★
Colour	Colour	Colour	Colour	Colour
\$499	\$495	\$414	\$445	\$488
Free	From \$12	\$10	\$10	\$10
www.dell.com.au	www.macrotechnology.com.au	www.dontpayretail.com.au	www.dontpayretail.com.au	www.dontpayretail.com.au
www.dell.com.au	www.hp.com.au	www.konicaminolta.com.au	www.lexmark.com.au	www.oki.com.au
1yr on-site (NBD)	1yr RTB	1yr on-site	1yr on-site	1yr on-site
420 x 424 x 432mm	407 x 412 x 370mm	430 x 502 x 341mm	480 x 420 x 385mm	376 x 479 x 290mm
25kg	18.6kg	18.9kg	29kg	21kg
340W	251W	1100W	650W	400W
66dBA	60dBA	52dBA	53dBA	50dBA
2-line LCD + 2 LEDs	2-line LCD	6 LEDs	2-line LCD	3 LEDs
10/100 Ethernet, USB	USB	USB	10/100 Ethernet, USB	10/100 Ethernet, USB
Laser	Laser	Laser	Laser	LED
300MHz	300MHz	96MHz	200MHz	200MHz
64MB	64MB	32MB	64MB	32MB
576MB	320MB	32MB	64MB	32MB
600 x 600dpi	600 x 600dpi	2400 x 600dpi	1200 x 600dpi	1,200 x 600dpi
2400 x 600dpi	2400 x 2400dpi	N/A	N/A	N/A
5ppm	10ppm	5ppm	8ppm	12ppm
25ppm	12ppm	20ppm	31ppm	16ppm
37 seconds	Instant on	45 seconds	45 seconds	60 seconds from power on; 40 seconds from power save
16 seconds mono; 25 seconds colour	20	14 seconds mono; 23 seconds colour	13 seconds mono; 19 seconds black	12 seconds mono; 15 seconds colour
●	●	○	●	●
60,000 pages per month mono; 45,000 pages per month colour	35,000 pages per month	35,000 pages per month	35,000 pages per month	35,000 pages per month
100,000 page / 5 years	Not stated	200,000	N/A	Not stated
42,000 pages mono; 10,500 pages colour	Lifetime of cartridge	45,000 pages mono; 11,250 pages colour	30,000 pages	15,000 pages
100,000 pages	Lifetime of printer	120,000 pages; free replacement under warranty	60,000 pages	30,000 pages
Not stated	Lifetime of printer	35,000 pages; free replacement under warranty	Lifetime of printer	60,000 pages
2000 pages	2500 pages mono; 2000 pages colour	1500/4500 pages	2500/5000 pages mono; 1500/3000 pages colour	1000
2000 pages mono; 1000 pages colour	2500 pages mono; 2000 pages colour	1500 pages	1000 pages	1000
N/A	N/A	Included in drum unit	7500 pages	N/A
\$75	\$89	\$131	\$110 / \$166	\$38
\$124	\$97	\$94 / \$187	\$122 / \$148	\$59
\$236	Built into cartridge	\$212	N/A	\$209
N/A	N/A	N/A	\$351	N/A
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	\$212
N/A	N/A	N/A	\$10	N/A
3.7	3.6	2.9	3.3	3.8
22.4	18.1	15.4	18.1	21.5
N/A	250 sheets	200 sheets	250 sheets	250 sheets
250 sheets	125 sheets	200 sheets	250 sheets	150 sheets
N/A	176gm ²	200gm ²	210gm ²	120gm ²
150	1	N/A	1	1
216gm ²	176gm ²	N/A	N/A	203gm ²
N/A	6	N/A	N/A	N/A
N/A	3	N/A	N/A	N/A
●●●●●	●●●●●	●●●●●/limited support (full support planned)	●●●●●/○	●●●●●/○
○	HP Toolbox, Marketing Toolkit	○	○	○
○	●	●	○	●
○	●	●	○	○
●	●	●	●	●
Up to 32	Up to 16	Up to 16	Up to 4	Up to 16
Up to 4 x 4	○	○	Up to 4 x 4	Up to 16
25-400%	25-400%	20-400%	25-400%	25-400%
○	●	○	○	●
○	○	○	○	○
○	\$210	○	\$256	○
○	○	○	○	○
○	○	○	○	○

Running costs

THE TOTAL COST OF OWNING A LASER PRINTER.

For this month's Labs, we used unit price as a guide to which printers might be purchased as personal lasers. However, if you plan to make more than very occasional use of your printer, you should factor ongoing costs, as well as the initial expenditure, into any price comparison.

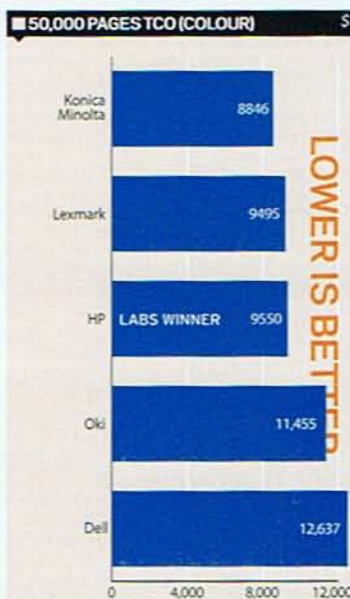
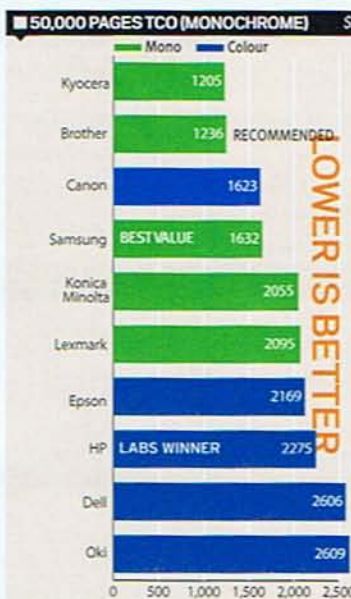
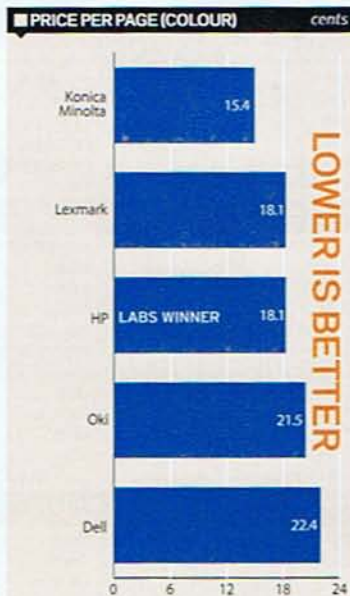
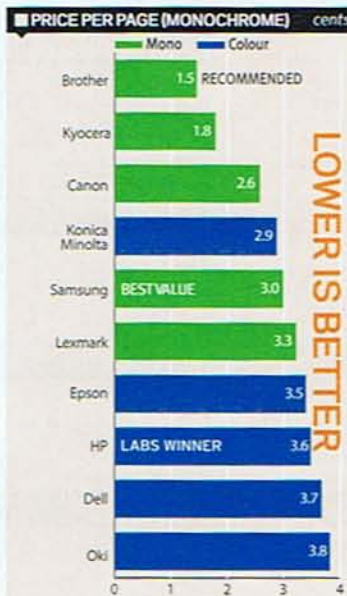
With a laser, these costs can include not only the price of toner cartridges (and with four of them in a colour laser, this can quickly add up to a surprising amount), but also the cost of replacing any parts that may wear out during the printer's lifetime, such as image drums, fuser units and transfer belts.

The graphs on the right show two different measures of expected running costs. The "price per page" graphs take into account only the cost of the toner consumed when printing an A4 page, calculated by dividing the cost of a new toner cartridge by the number of pages the manufacturer claims it will print at 5% coverage.

For colour pages, we've assumed that cyan, magenta, yellow and black are deposited on each page in equal proportions. This calculation is unlikely to accurately represent your pattern of usage, but it establishes a level playing field for the comparison of the printers on test. When considering this figure, remember that all the lasers on test include toner cartridges in the price: depending on your usage and the capacity of these cartridges, it could be some time before the price per page starts to affect you.

Since personal lasers generally receive only light use, it's possible that you'll never need to replace any internal consumable parts during the lifetime of your chosen laser (for quoted component lifetimes, see the feature table on page 58). If you're unlikely to print tens of thousands of pages then your major concerns should be the figures in the price per page graphs (which is the basic toner cost) and the purchase price of the printer.

If, however, you plan to make heavier use of your printer, perhaps as a shared workgroup printer, the cost of replacement parts becomes significant. Our second pair of graphs projects the total cost of printing 50,000 pages with each printer (5% coverage per cartridge), including the purchase of the printer itself, toner and any replacement parts necessary, according to the manufacturer's stated lifetime



of each part. This workload (equivalent to around 40 pages per working day over five years) highlights the fact that the more a printer is used, the greater the significance of running costs to the overall picture.

For example, the Kyocera FS-920 costs almost \$200 more than the Samsung ML-2510 to buy, but this is offset by a lower price for consumables, which makes the total cost of printing 50,000 pages over \$400 less with the Kyocera. You can use the pricing information in the feature table to make your own calculations of the total cost of ownership of each laser

printer based on your own expected usage patterns.

Our cost calculations are based on our own research across a wide variety of retailers to establish the best price currently available. It's likely, however, that the best price for a given item will vary over time, and for heavy users even a relatively small change in the unit price of toner could have a significant effect on your total outlay over the life of the printer. You should therefore consider these graphs only a guide, and carry out your own investigation into the pricing of parts and consumables.

RATINGS EXPLAINED

Some brands of toner cartridge are available in both standard and high-yield variants. If you're on a tight budget, you might be tempted to save money by investing in standard toner cartridges rather than high-yield models, but this is normally a false economy. In this month's test, the price penalty for choosing a standard cartridge hovered around 30% for all printers with the option. We've based our cost calculations on the larger size, and we only recommend buying a standard cartridge if you never expect to use its full capacity.

Brother HL-5240

AN UNCOMPROMISING MONOCHROME LASER THAT GETS THE JOB DONE WITH SPEED AND PRECISION.

Brother's HL-5240 is (like HP's Laserjet 2605) the personal version of a business printer that's impressed us in the past. When we reviewed the HL-5250DN last year, we found it easy to set up, packed with features and very fast. The HL-5240 isn't as flush with features; it comes with neither the duplex unit nor the integrated network card of the bigger Brother, and ships with only 16MB of onboard memory as opposed to 32MB. Nevertheless, for personal use there's still plenty to recommend it.

The HL-5240's appeal starts with its design: while Epson and Samsung's offerings appear more compact, their space requirements are bumped up by fold-out paper trays. The Brother's more self-contained footprint is likely to fit more conveniently into your work area, although the multipurpose feed still folds out from the front, extending the printer's depth by around 120mm.

This businesslike presence is matched by no-nonsense performance:

the HL-5240 blazed through our standard tests at an average 28ppm, outclassing its monochrome rivals, yet still produced pin-sharp blacks and even gradients.

The limited onboard memory meant we couldn't perform our high-quality tests at the printer's maximum 1200dpi, but the results at 600dpi were still good, with gradients and photos appearing bold and sharp. Our only criticisms would be that some slight horizontal banding was discernible and, at just a few points along the gradient of black to white, the halftoning pattern became noticeable.

You might expect such a marriage of speed and performance to come at a premium, but although \$298 nears the upper end of the mono price range the HL-5240's high-yield consumables make it one of the most economical printers to run. We calculated print costs at just 1.5c per page (see page 60 for the full chart). Over the long haul, Kyocera's FS-920 works out slightly cheaper, owing to its longer-lasting parts, but the HL-5240 has



advantages of speed and print quality, which are worth paying a little extra for.

Whatever you want from a monochrome laser printer, this is likely to exceed your expectations. To get the best from it, invest in a RAM upgrade, but even right out of the box it's a great performer at a great price.



PRICE
\$298
SUPPLIER
www.jantech.com.au
computers.com.au



Canon Laser Shot LBP-3300

A TEMPTING OPTION IF YOU WANT TO SAVE PAPER BY PRINTING ON BOTH SIDES.

The Canon LBP-3300 cuts a pleasingly compact figure. Thanks to its sober, space-saving design, it should fit neatly into your workspace. It's easy to operate thanks to the fact that everything bar cables and the power switch is accessible from the front. The multipurpose feed is slightly fiddly, and only takes a single sheet, but the Laser Shot helps out by grabbing the paper as soon as it's inserted, rather than dumbly awaiting instructions from the computer.

There's some clever engineering under the bonnet too. Print processing times are negligible, and output speeds are decent if not exceptional (21ppm in our 5% letter test), making this mono laser an attractive choice for intermittent use. Canon's Smart Compression Architecture keeps print jobs small; although the LBP-3300 only has 8MB of onboard memory, it had no problem rendering our most complex pages at 600dpi.

What impressed us most was the built-

in duplex unit, which was a surprise at this price point. The ability to create double-sided documents reduces paper usage and saves space. There's a trade-off, though: it took around twice as long to print a document double-sided as it did to print the same document in single-sided mode.

In our quality tests, we were impressed with black text, but greys suffered from uneven halftoning, giving a mottling effect, and photographs looked stark and grainy. Colour to monochrome conversion was particularly undiscerning, with much of our rainbow rendered as a homogenous area of grey. Setting the driver to photo mode slashed speeds from 21ppm to 10ppm in our test, but barely improved print quality.

Overall, the LBP-3300's quality, speed and running costs were average. For some, its duplex unit could prove more compelling than the smoother dithering or lower print costs on offer elsewhere.



Which way the scales tip will depend on your personal priorities, however, and for that reason we can't recommend the LBP-3300 for everyone.



PRICE
\$325
SUPPLIER
www.printers.com.au

INKJET

HP Photosmart D7360



PRICE: \$255

DELIVERY: From \$12

SUPPLIER: www.jantechcomputers.com.au

INTERNET: www.hp.com.au

ISSUE: February 2007, page 50

COMMENTS: Strictly for photo printing, the D7360 lifts the print engine of the superb 8230 into a redesigned chassis, complete with a 3.4in touchscreen for navigation. Print quality is superb and running costs can nudge 65c.

SPECIFICATIONS: 4800dpi 6-colour A4 inkjet; USB 2; PictBridge port; memory card reader; 3.4in touchscreen; 100-sheet input tray; secondary 6 x 4in paper tray. Dimensions: 463 x 500 x 236mm (WDH).

ALTERNATE CHOICE

Epson Stylus Photo R800

PRICE: \$485 SUPPLIER: www.printers.com.au

ISSUE: May 2006, p49 INTERNET: www.epson.com.au

It's been around for a while but quality is exquisite and the pigment inks don't fade easily. Great for photos.

PERSONAL MONO LASER

Brother HL-5240

NEW ENTRY



PRICE: \$298

DELIVERY: From \$12

SUPPLIER: www.jantechcomputers.com.au

INTERNET: www.brother.com.au

ISSUE: September 2007, page 55

COMMENTS: With pin-sharp blacks and even gradients at a fast speed of 28ppm, this is a no-nonsense mono printer. And ignore the purchase price - running costs of just 1.5c mean the HL-5240 is great value.

SPECIFICATIONS: 1200 x 1200dpi A4 mono laser; 28ppm claimed speed; USB and parallel ports; 250-sheet input tray; 150-sheet output tray; drivers for Windows 98 onwards; 371 x 384 x 246mm (WDH); 9.5kg.

ALTERNATE CHOICE

Samsung ML-2510

PRICE: \$132 SUPPLIER: <http://umart.net.au>

ISSUE: Sep 2007, p55 INTERNET: www.samsung.com/au

If you don't need the frills of a dearer model, the ML-2510 offers decent quality and speed at a low price.

ALL-IN-ONE

HP Photosmart 3110



PRICE: \$234

DELIVERY: From \$18

SUPPLIER: www.digitalyes.com.au

INTERNET: www.hp.com.au

ISSUE: July 2006, page 71

COMMENTS: The 3110 from HP is the best, all-round multifunction device we've seen. The scanner is superb, and the print engine is identical to the 8230 (left).

SPECIFICATIONS: 4800 x 1200dpi six-colour thermal inkjet; A4 photo in 4 mins, 20 secs; max tested speed in draft: 15ppm; 4800 x 4800ppi scanner; Fax; transparency adapter; 2.5in colour LCD; USB 2.

ALTERNATE CHOICE

Lexmark X5470

PRICE: \$144 SUPPLIER: www.jantechcomputers.com.au

ISSUE: Feb 2007, p48 INTERNET: www.lexmark.com.au

A cheaper alternative, especially with high-yield cartridges, and ideal for mostly mono printing.

PERSONAL COLOUR LASER

HP Color Laser Jet 2605



PRICE: \$495

DELIVERY: From \$12

SUPPLIER: www.macotechnology.com.au

INTERNET: www.hp.com.au

ISSUE: September 2007, page 55

COMMENTS: An unrivalled blend of speed, quality and features mean the slightly pricey TCO of the 2605 can be ignored, particularly for light users. The only major flaw is the 12ppm mono speed, which may put off some buyers.

SPECIFICATIONS: 600 x 600dpi single-pass A4 laser; 10ppm quoted colour speed; 12ppm quoted mono speed; USB port; 250-sheet input tray; 125-sheet output tray; Windows 98 onwards; 407 x 412 x 370mm (WDH); 18.6kg.

ALTERNATE CHOICE

Konica Minolta magicolor 2500w

PRICE: \$414 SUPPLIER: www.dontpayretail.com.au

ISSUE: Sep 2007, p55 INTERNET: www.konicaminolta.com.au

The best print quality available at this price and, despite colour speed of just 5ppm, it's great value.

GOLDEN GEAR AND GADGETS

Logitech Laser Mouse G5

Designed for gamers, Logitech's G5 is actually the ultimate mouse for anyone. It's exceptionally well built, has a fabric-coated cable and Polytetrafluoroethylene feet and feels like it will last forever. Resolution can be quickly switched to 400, 800 or 2000dpi, it's fully programmable, you can adjust x and y-axis sensitivity and even adjust its weight and balance with an adjustable weight cartridge.

PRICE: \$90

DELIVERY: From \$12

SUPPLIER: www.jantechcomputers.com.au

INTERNET: www.logitech.com

ISSUE: February 2006, page 80.



BUSINESS CLASS LASER

HP Laserjet 4350dtn



PRICE: \$3140

DELIVERY: From \$30

SUPPLIER: www.digitalyes.com.au

INTERNET: www.hp.com.au

ISSUE: April 2003, page 52

COMMENTS: The mono 4350dtn reached speeds of 68ppm in our tests - phenomenal for a machine of this size. We were impressed with its print quality in all areas too, and its build quality and networking features are high.

SPECIFICATIONS: 1200 x 1200dpi mono laser; 45ppm claimed speed; 460MHz CPU; 96MB RAM; 500-sheet input, 100-sheet multipurpose tray; duplex; 10/100 Ethernet; USB 2; Parallel; PCL6, PCL5C and PostScript3 emulation.

ALTERNATE CHOICE

Lexmark C522n

PRICE: \$332 SUPPLIER: www.pcau.com

ISSUE: Oct 2006, p82 INTERNET: www.lexmark.com.au

Not the cheapest to run but the C522n colour laser came top in our tests thanks to top quality and all-round speed.

