

Get More from Your Printer



Teachers spend gobs of their paycheck on their classrooms, and we want to get all that we can out of the materials—both freebies and commercial items—that we have. One of my larger expenses used to be printer ink, but not anymore. I found a few simple ways to get a lot more from my classroom printers.

1. Change the Default Print Setting

Every printer that I've ever had came with 3-4 different print settings. You'll find them in the printer *Properties*.

My Brother printer's settings are

- fine,
- normal,
- fast normal, and
- fast.

My art quality, large format Canon printer's settings are

- high,
- standard,
- fast, and
- custom.

The factory default setting for many printers is the highest print level, the one that uses the most ink. You can change the default setting of the printer so that it automatically prints at a lower setting. Print out a page at each level for comparison purposes, and then choose the lowest setting with an acceptable print level. For me, the 3rd level on each of my printers is perfect. It saves LOTS of ink (and printing time), and the print level is perfectly fine for most of my purposes. I never use the 1st level for anything, and I save normal or standard levels for special items like art prints or game boards.

To change the default settings, open the printer through "Devices and Printers", go to printer *Properties*, and locate the page with the default settings. Each printer is a little different so you

may have to click around a little to find the right page, but it will be there. Once you've changed the default, all your pages will automatically print at the lower setting, unless you change the level at the time you start the print run.

To change the printing level at the print run, select *Print* from the **File Menu**, select *Properties*, find the page with the quality levels, and click the quality you want for that particular item. Most printers will "remember" the quality settings for each item you print, so when you print that item next time, it will print at the new level until you change it.

2. Use Photo Paper for Games and Center Materials

Photo paper can get a much better image from lower ink settings than plain paper. It is perfect for center materials and games. I use the double sided Matte Photo Paper from Staples. It has a great weight, prints beautifully on both sides, and you can get 50 sheets for \$10-\$12. It makes great covers, and center materials, for about \$.25 a page. You can get glossy photo paper at Walmart for 100 sheets for \$10.00; it doesn't have the weight of the Staples paper, and you can only print on one side; I use it for art prints and game boards.

3. Change the Way You Shop for Printers

The other thing that HUGELY decreased printing costs for me was to purchase my printer based on the cost of the ink cartridges! I've done this for the last 3 printers I've purchased. First, I shopped for ink. When I found the cheapest ink, I then shopped among the printers that used that cartridge. My ink costs went from hundreds of dollars a year to less than \$25.00. The Brother printer that I use now costs about \$9.00 for 12 cartridges (3 each of black, yellow, cyan, and magenta). My husband's printer is a little more expensive—it's about \$12.00 for 12 cartridges. Still, that's way less than the \$35-\$50/cartridge we were paying for our old printers. We use generic ink cartridges in each of these printers.

My Canon large format art printer ink is still fairly expensive, in my opinion, but it was the lowest I could find. It takes 8 different cartridges and each one costs \$13-16. I can't use generic cartridges because they don't work in that printer. Even still, using the "fast" quality setting, I can use it for duplex printing (which I do a lot) without breaking the bank—I can print 200 pages without a noticeable decrease in ink. I still spend about \$100-\$150 dollars a year in ink for that printer, but I'm very satisfied with that expense, considering all the things I'm able to do with it.

You do have to be aware of HOW MUCH ink is in the cartridge you are buying—sometimes the vendors don't tell you, and what you think may be a bargain isn't all that great.

Conclusion

These tips have saved me lots of money in ink expense. I haven't been able to verify these techniques from expert sources (aside from lowering the print quality), but I can't see why they wouldn't work for you as well as they have worked for me.