

---

When purchasing ink or toner for your printer, you may consider whether you should buy original or compatible cartridges. Here we try to help you decide.

#### Definitions:

An **original** cartridge is manufactured by the same brand that manufactured the printer. e.g. an original cartridge for a Cannon printer is manufactured by Cannon, they are Original Equipment Manufactured (OEM).

A **compatible** cartridge is manufactured by a third party company, i.e. the cartridge fits the Canon printer, but it is not manufactured by Canon.

**Refilled** are original cartridges which have been *used once, returned, cleaned and refilled*.

**Remanufactured** are original cartridges which have been used once, returned, cleaned, all working parts replaced and then refilled, more common with toner cartridges due to the wear and tear that occurs during the operation of the printer.

#### Price Differential

OEM cartridges tend to be priced fairly highly as the manufacture may price the printer fairly low in order to attract the custom in the first place. Compatible cartridges cost less as they do not have to offset the cost of printer manufacture.

#### Will compatibles affect printer warranty?

There are very few ways a cartridge can break a printer. Harlequin fully guarantee all cartridges sold, they will replace them free of charge if faulty and in the unlikely event of the cartridge harming the printer they will repair or replace. Check the guarantee with your cartridge supplier.

OEM's are legally required to provide a 1-year guarantee on electrical products and are not allowed to supply with anti-competitive terms. In other words, OEMs cannot insist that the user only uses their brand of ink cartridge. If there is a fault with the printer, they must prove that the third-party cartridges caused it. The OEM should arrange for an engineer to visit and determine the fault and its cause. If the printer was at fault, it is their responsibility to fix the problem. If it is the cartridge that was faulty then the supplier of the printer may still be accept responsibility and repair is usually covered in the form of a guarantee.

#### Extended warranty

These optional warranties are provided by the manufacturer and they can set their own terms. This means that they can void the warranty on the printer for using third party cartridges. If this is the case, there are remedies available:

- Contact the manufacturer as the problem may be a known printer fault (e.g. Kodak printheads cracking)
- If the OEM refuses help, contact the supplier of the printer explaining the problem.
- If the consumable caused the problem, they may arrange for an independent engineer to fix the issue and find the fault (as they should guarantee their products)
- If the cartridge was the cause the suppliers guarantee should cover it
- If the printer is at fault, you have an engineer's report to talk to the manufacturer about.

#### Is there any difference in print quality?

No. Ink formulation in a compatible will be incredibly close to that of an OEM cartridge. Colour reproduction, accuracy of print and ease of use, will be as good as the OEM product at a fraction of the cost.

Evidence supplied by an Independent Reviewer; Simon Williams conducted an independent study of compatibles vs OEMs and found the following:

### **A direct head to head: Originals vs compatibles**

Simon printed a series of sample pages and photos to see how a cross section of people rate them. By printing with a series of different printers using both OEM and compatible consumables, and comparing them in a double-blind trial. Four mid-range all-in-one printers were used to print samples of mixed black text and colour graphics on plain paper and both landscape and portrait photos (subject matter as well as orientation) on photo paper.

The samples were displayed randomly and a focus group was set up of typical printer users, who were asked to examine the samples and score them out of 10, bearing in mind a series of factors. The tests were conducted under good, overhead fluorescent light and neither tester nor focus group knew which sample came from which printer or which ink was used.

**Plain paper print results** - The difference in average scores was incredibly close, in fact the Canon and Lexmark compatibles results actually beat the OEM versions. Independent test subjects, with no idea which prints they were looking at, ranked compatible printouts above the genuine cartridges for quality and finish. Even where OEM's beat the compatibles the difference was minimal.

**Landscape photo print results** - The difference between the highest and lowest average scores in this category was very low, the scores using compatible ink are incredibly close to the OEM performance for photo printing.

**Portrait photo print results** - This uses a colour print which is reliant on flesh tones and natural colour, typically a very hard thing to print, but the compatibles still shone strongly in the user ratings. Ultimately, compatible ink photo prints were almost impossible to differentiate from genuine prints even when printing 'flesh' portrait photos.

**Conclusions:** Taking all three categories together, compatibles were used in six of the top nine prints, so overall our focus group rated prints using them more highly than those using OEM consumables.

### **Cartridge Use**

If printing on a normal – frequent usage patten and the majority of what you print is text, compatibles will save a huge amount of money. They typically contain more ink than originals, at a lower price, so costs drop considerably. Compatibles are also brilliant for everyday photo printing.

### **Conclusion**

Compatibles are just as reliable as genuine cartridges and will save money on your printing costs without impacting print quality or the performance of your printer. If you purchase from a reputable cartridge supplier like Harlequin Printer Supplies, the products you purchase will be covered by warranty and guarantee so you will also have peace of mind and more money left in your pocket!