

# Master Your Printer (Not the Other Way Around)

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By Michael Lasky on April 4, 2017 in [Best Hardware](#), [Best Practices](#), [Top Story](#), [Windows Secrets](#)

“I hate printers, but I love what they can do!” That’s the mantra recited by just about anyone who has a printer attached to their computer. Of all the peripherals that connect to our PCs printers seem to be the number one troublemaker.

But it doesn’t have to be that way. Paper jams, overpriced ink, print spooler logjams, wasted paper – these are just a few of the hassles whose remedies will be addressed here. If your love/hate relationship with your printer is more hate than love, read on as maybe, *just maybe*, we can switch that around with these eight printer tips and tricks.

## How to Print With an ‘Empty’ Inkjet Cartridge

When my six page document stopped printing after page three, the reason was an empty blue ink cartridge. I was surprised since I hardly ever print in color and in fact generally print in draft mode with black ink only. So why the hell did the *blue* ink disappear?

The answer is relatively simple and applies to almost all brands of inkjet printers. You are probably well aware of the mechanical noise the printer makes each time you turn it on or right before it processes a print request. It is running a preprogrammed maintenance check, print head and nozzle cleaning. Each time it does that it eats a little bit of ink from each color cartridge.

So even though you might not be ‘using’ color cartridges, they might be used up thanks to the preprogrammed maintenance checks, thus your print jobs are held hostage until they are replaced. Even when you select grayscale printing, which would only use the black cartridge, the printer won’t budge. Even more annoying is when printers flash low ink warnings when there is about 10 to 20 percent ink remaining.

For most printer brands there is a way to force the printer to print even with an empty cartridge error message. The solution is as close as a Google or Bing search for *how to print with empty inkjet cartridges*.[\[site\]](#) Dozens of YouTube videos, some generic, others specific to particular printer brands and models, provide simple hacks which when applied let you continue to print. Most involve putting some opaque tape to cover up a window on the cartridge.

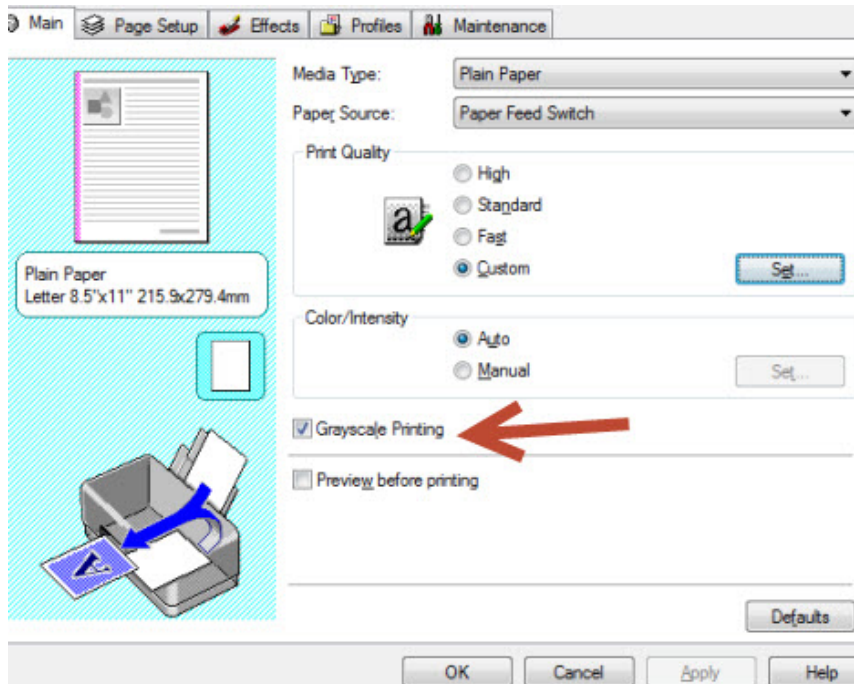
That we should be forced to hack our printers should wake us up to the reality that we are not buying ink from printer manufacturers, but we are buying printers from ink companies. As printers get cheaper, they are sold as loss leaders. Much like razor blades are pricier than the razors themselves, ink is where the enormous profits are.

### **The Number One Way to Reduce Ink Use – And Costs**

As mentioned above, every time you power on your printer, it will use a trickle of ink in its maintenance and cleaning routine. The solution: don’t turn your printer off. Inkjet printers use a imperceptible trickle of electricity when left on in idle mode. Canon told *Consumer Reports* in June 2013 that “if the printer is switched off then it may do a longer clean” when powered on. Of course if you have a multi-function printer with fax capability you would probably want to leave the machine on as a matter of course to receive faxes.

Another method to reduce ink costs is to set your default print mode to draft or economy mode. Each printer brand has different terminology for this print setting. On yours it might be ink saving, Fast, or Custom.

To change your default print mode in Windows 7, 8, and 10, type **devices** in the Start search bar and select **Devices and Printers**. Find your printer in the Devices and Printers window and right-click on it. Now select **Printing preferences**. Using the drop-down menu for **Print Quality**, select the one that matches the lowest quality print. Click **OK**. If there is a Custom choice, select that and adjust its sub-window. To maintain just black ink use, check the **Grayscale printing** box.

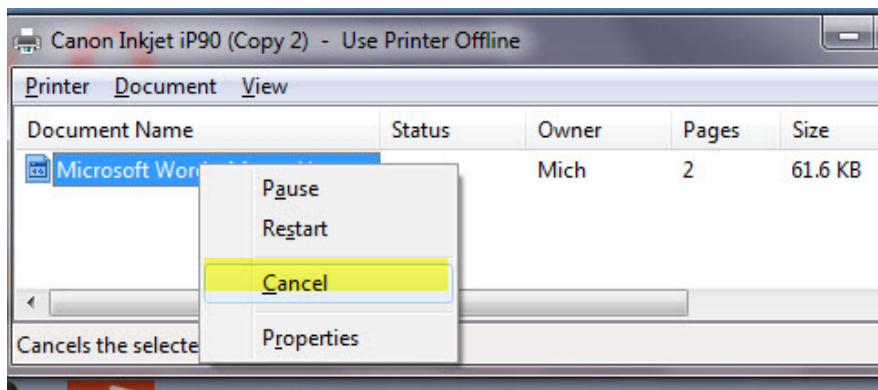


And one more advisory: Do not change an existing cartridge unless you absolutely have to or even if you are switching to a cheaper, third-party brand cartridge. Each time the printer senses a new cartridge installation, it runs through that ink-eating maintenance routine.

### How to Reset the Printer Spooler When Nothing Will Print

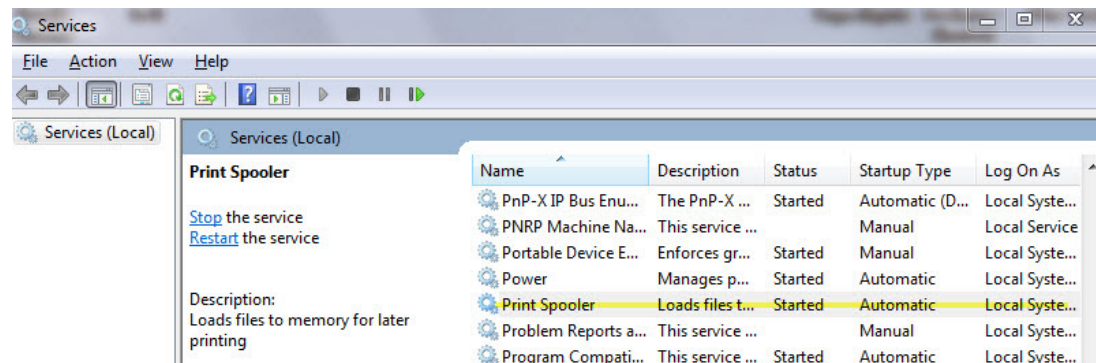
It happens to all of us. You click Print and nothing happens. The most common reason is a stuck printer spooler. Each time you click Print that print job loads in the Windows print spooler. If one job, for whatever reason, does not commence, subsequent print commands will line up like customers in a bakery.

Often you can just go to the **Devices and Printers**, right-click on the printer and select **See what's printing**. Select the document and right-click. Select **Cancel**. If there are more than one documents, repeat the process. If none of them will cancel out, more deep dive steps are needed.



The next step, then, is to clear out the print queue in the print spooler. In the Start menu address bar, type *services* and select **services** when it appears in the menu. Scroll down until you see Print Spooler. Right-click on it and select **Stop**. (You need to be logged in as Administrator for this action.)

Next you need to delete the files lined up in the spooler. In the Start menu search bar type *%windir%\System32\spool\PRINTERS*. Delete all the files in this folder. Return to the Services console, right-click on **Print Spooler** and select Start. Voila, you are ready to print normally again.



## How to Print from the Desktop Without Opening Its Corresponding Application

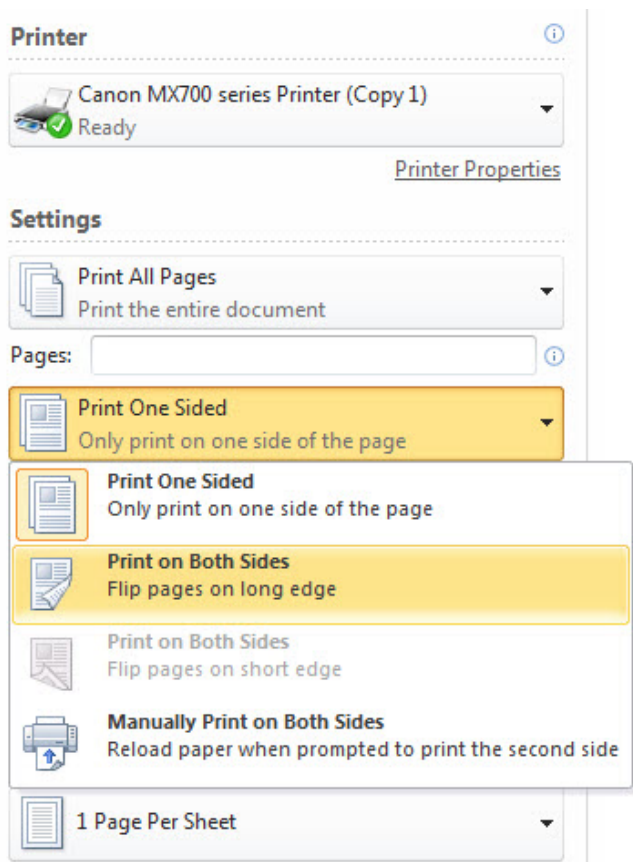
So you wrote the perfect burn letter in Word? You don't have to open the application to print out your scathing missive. You can print right from the Desktop or from the File Explorer menu. Just locate the document's icon in either place, right-click on it and select Print from the shortcut menu. Let Windows do the rest. It will open the creating application and automatically print from the default printer.

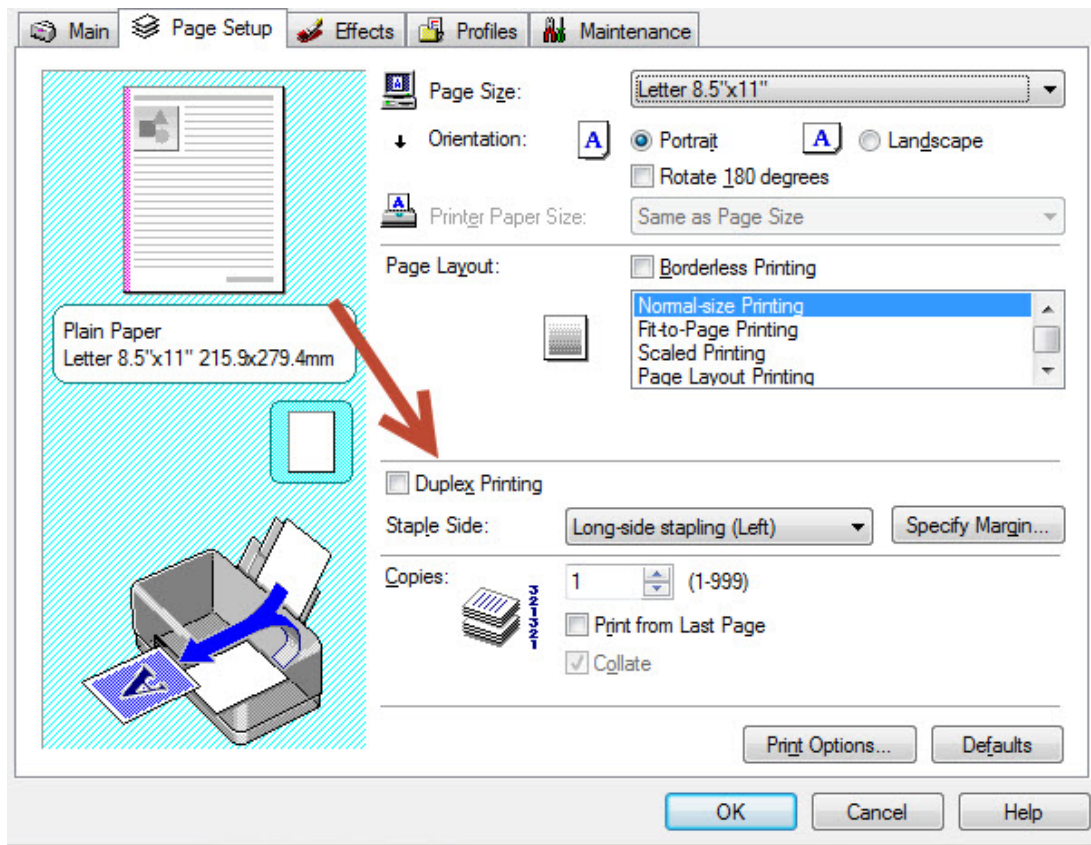
## How to Print and Save Paper at the Same Time

If you are in a paper and ink saving mood and don't really need a printout but want to view it as it would look in its final format, select *Save as* instead of *Save*. (In Microsoft Office you can press F12 to bring up the Save as menu

or from the File menu choose *Save as*. From the Save window, use the drop-down menu next to *Save as type* (it's the one right below *File name*). Choose *PDF* and, select the location you want to save in, click *Okay*. You can still print the PDF later if you really want a hard copy.

Another paper saving routine is to select *Duplex* print from the Print menu, or as it is displayed with some printer models, *Print on both sides*. With this method, the printer will draw each sheet back in to print on each side. You won't be saving ink but your paper supply is cut in half.





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