

# Review: HP wants you to pay monthly for ink, and maybe you should

January 17 2014, by Jim Rossman

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Most of us have printers at home, and if you're like me, the trip to the store to buy ink is just depressing.

I have a pretty nice, year-old Hewlett-Packard all-in-one printer at home, and replacing the four [ink](#) cartridges costs \$55 plus tax.

The entire printer only cost \$150.

HP and the other printer manufacturers are making their profit by selling us ink, not printers.

Heck, I know some people who go printer shopping when it's time for new ink.

So when HP approached me to talk about a new model for buying printers that includes an ongoing monthly fee, I was pretty sure I wouldn't like it.

Here's the pitch: Buy an eligible printer and sign up for HP's Instant Ink service. The subscription levels and monthly fees are based on the number of pages you print, not on the amount of ink you use.

There are three subscription levels based on the number of pages you expect to print per month.

You can print up to 50 pages for \$3 a month, 100 pages for \$5 a month

or 300 pages for \$10 a month.

The printer is connected to the Internet and reports your monthly usage to HP. The printer also reports its ink cartridge levels. When you start running low on ink, HP automatically sends you a set of replacement ink.

The ink cartridge costs are included in the monthly fee, so you'll never have to go buy ink again - it just shows up in your mailbox before you run out.

I did some quick calculating. The \$5-per-month plan includes 100 pages per month, so it costs \$60 per year, which is just about what I pay for one set of ink for my printer.

My wife is a teacher, and she does a fair amount of printing at home. The 100-page plan is just about right for us.

So what sounded like a bunch of hot air - paying a monthly fee to use my printer - was starting to sound like it could save us money. We go through at least two sets of ink cartridges per year.

I know you have some questions - I sure did - so here are some answers.

**QUESTION:** What printers are eligible?

**ANSWER:** Right now there are three HP all-in-one printers that are eligible for HP Instant Ink - the HP Envy 4500, the HP Envy 5530 and the HP Officejet 4630. Prices range from \$100 to \$130 on HP's website, with some rebates available; you might find them cheaper in other places.

**Q:** What happens if you use only 50 pages or 150?

A: Unused pages can be rolled over, with some limits.

Here's how HP explains it: "If you do not use all your plan pages in a month, the unused pages will be kept in your account as rollover pages. Your rollover pages are available as long as you are enrolled in HP Instant Ink. You can continue to roll over up to the number of pages in your monthly plan (for example, you can roll over up to 50 pages if you are enrolled in a 50 page plan)."

If you go over your monthly page limit you will be charged based on your plan level.

Additional pages are available in sets of 15, 20 and 25 [pages](#), depending on your plan, for \$1.

Q: What counts as a page?

A: For the purposes of the subscription, any page that you use ink on is counted, whether it's one paragraph of text or an 8-by-10 color photo. It all is treated as one page.

Q: When does the monthly fee start? Is there a contract?

A: The printers ship with ink cartridges. Once you sign up at [www.hpinstantink.com](http://www.hpinstantink.com), they'll send you a set of ink. Once you use start using the replacement ink, your monthly fee begins.

There is no contract. You can cancel or change your plan at any time.

The HP Envy 5530 was easy to unbox and set up. I was able to get it talking to my Wi-Fi network with no problem. Setting up the Instant Ink service was also easy. The 5530 isn't the fastest or quietest printer in the world, but it works well and the prints are very nice. I wish it had a

larger paper tray; the limit is 100 sheets. It can print borderless up to 8.5 by 11 inches.

It's up to the individual to determine if this type of model for printing is right for them. It really comes down to paying a little each month or a lot more two or three times a year for my use.

I can see where HP Instant Ink will save money for us.

#### HP INSTANT INK:

-Pros: Good [printer](#), home delivery of ink is convenient. Should save money.

-Cons: Some don't like another monthly bill or someone keeping tabs on their printing.

-Bottom line: This is an interesting model. I plan to use it.

-Price: \$3-\$10 per month

-On the Web: [hpinstantink.com](http://hpinstantink.com)

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