VareseNews

Compatible cartridges: what are they and how do I find the right one for me?

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Having a **printer** at home is a great convenience that many of us are able to enjoy. Printing documents, reports, diagrams, charts, theses, images and photos from the comfort of your own desk, instead of having to go to the print shop, is priceless.

However, the raw materials we need in order to take advantage of this source of wellbeing certainly have a specific cost in economic terms.

Having a printer at home and not using it very often means that you have to refill it with ink. But not all refills are the same. Laser and inkjet printers use two different types of refill:

- **Inkjet printers** need **cartridges**, which are capsules filled with liquid ink, which is gradually released during the printing process.
- **Laser printers**, on the other hand, use **toners**, components consisting of a tank of fine carbon powder mixed with particular polymers, such as polyesters, a metal drum and a fuser, which, by heating the powders ensure that it can be imprinted on the paper.

For both cartridges and toners, there are 4 colours, which are the three subtractive primary colours (cyan, magenta, yellow) and black; therefore, a complete refill requires the purchase of four components. For the customer, this can only mean even higher prices.

It is no coincidence that many people find themselves forced to buy cartridges or toners only for black, thereby keeping the cost to a minimum, but at the same time, forgoing any colour printing.

Savings with compatible cartridges

Considering that the average cost of a single cartridge is around €30 (the price varies depending on the printer, and can vary up to 10 times as much), and that of a toner, between €50 and €100, there may be a need to find an alternative. It was here that the market for **compatible cartridges for any type of printer** was born.

As you can already guess from the name, these **cartridges are made by third party manufacturers**, so they are not official, but thy are compatible with the recognition heads of printers of different brands: Epson, Canon, HP, Brother and others.

In terms of quality, the ink and cartridges themselves are in no way inferior to their original, "branded" counterparts, and in some cases, they are literally indistinguishable from each other.

What sets them apart, however, is the **price on the market**. It is very common to sell these products at prices that are 50% less than those of the original cartridges, and the same applies to the compatible toners.

Why rely on compatible cartridges

As in all areas, the use of non-original products is a source of doubt concerning their reliability and, therefore, the health of your printer.

The truth is that, nowadays, as this market is so widespread, and with the passing of time, **the quality of refills has increased, along with their safety**. It would be wrong to claim that they are problem-free or 100% reliable, but with the necessary precautions, it is possible to reduce risks to a minimum and enjoy excellent prints at a significantly reduced cost.

However, you should be aware of the difference between the compatible cartridges and toners we have just spoken about, and **regenerated cartridges**; these are not third-party products launched on the market as new, but cartridges that have already been used, that subsequently undergo a regeneration process (ink refill following an analysis and a test of the condition of the used cartridge). We are talking about a completely different category of products, which have a higher percentage of risk, but also even higher savings (the highest available on the market).

Finding the right balance between these two factors is achieved exclusively by considering the **needs of the consumer**.

The quality of the original products is certainly undeniable, but at this point in the reading, we have all the necessary tools to make a conscious choice, to save a considerable amount of money, without (barring exceptions) forgoing a satisfactory print.

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