

THE H-P INSTANT INK SUBSCRIPTION SERVICE

An educational presentation by
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Agenda

- H-P color inkjet printing and my photos
- H-P ink costs went up a lot during the pandemic
- The subscription prices of H-P Instant Ink
- Not all H-P printers are eligible for H-P Instant Ink
- What counts as a printed page?
- The tech of H-P Instant Ink
- The Welcome Pack
- The process of H-P Instant Ink

H-P Color Inkjet Printing and my photos

I have been using H-P inkjet printers for 20+ years

- I have won many blue ribbons for my photos printed at home in the Arlington County Fair, the Virginia State Fair, and the Delaware State Fair.
- Good quality glossy photo paper is expensive but not nearly as much as the color ink.
- I created my first month-per-page photo calendar in 2009 for the year 2010, as gifts for family and friends.
- I used an online service to design and print the calendars. That was very expensive.

Color ink is the dominant expense

- My calendar table pages are black & white.
- I use glossy brochure paper so I can print on both sides.
- I can print all the calendar table pages for 24 calendars using a single H-P Black XL cartridge and still have lots of ink left.
- Using H-P's color XL cartridges, I could print four sets of color calendar pages with one set of three cartridges.
- To create 24 calendars, I used six sets of 3 color XL cartridges.

Color ink prices rose during the pandemic

- In 2021, I paid about \$400 for calendar ink.
- In 2022, I paid about \$450 for calendar ink.
- That trend cost was not a good one. Something had to give.
- In 2023, I tried an H-P Instant Ink subscription.
- My ink expense was reduced to \$90.

H-P Instant Ink Subscription Prices

The service levels

- Choose a service level based on how many pages you intend to print in color per month.
- This table appeared on the H-P web site on Nov 11.
- <https://www.hp.com/us-en/shop/cv/instantink>

Ink plans				
		Recommended for homes		
Recommended for homes	Recommended for small businesses			
\$1.49 per month	\$4.99 per month	\$6.99 per month	\$13.99 per month	\$27.99 per month
Up to 10 pages	Up to 50 pages	Up to 100 pages	Up to 300 pages	Up to 700 pages

Pick a monthly subscription print plan for your printing needs.

Extra sets of 10-15 pages only cost \$1.

Not all HP Inkjet printers are eligible

- If you use an HP printer and want to find out if your printer can participate in HP Instant Ink, that same web page has a **button** for you.
- Also you see all inkjet printers compatible with HP Instant Ink.

Is my printer Instant Ink ready?

Most HP printers manufactured in the last 5 years with a Wi-Fi connection are compatible with Instant Ink. Not sure? you can check your printer compatibility or shop our HP+ printers.

Check my printer

I need an Instant Ink ready printer

Shop now



What counts as a printed page?

- One side of a sheet.
- If you print both sides of a sheet, it counts as two pages.
- I print $24 \times 13 = 316$ Color pages and 316 Black & White pages to make 24 calendars.
- Total of 632 pages to make 24 calendars.

The tech of HP Instant Ink

- HP Instant Ink arrives in special cartridges, not available from retailers.
- Each box also includes a prepaid USPS envelop for returning empty cartridges to HP.
- My impression is that the color ink cartridges contain somewhat more ink than the retail XL cartridges contain.
- Each cartridge includes a chip that reports ink levels to HP. Frequency of the reports is not known.
- The printer itself counts pages printed and sends that to HP. Frequency of the reports is not known.

HP Instant Ink advertisements

- I found this advertisement on CNN.com in mid-2023.
- Note the last words **“before you run low”**.
- I emphasize the word BEFORE.
- That was not my experience. It ***never*** arrived before I ran low.

Sponsored by HP Instant Ink



This monthly subscription automatically orders ink and delivers it to your door before you run low

The start of H-P Instant Ink

- Initially, HP sent me a set of four cartridges in a **Welcome Pack**.
- The purpose was to put the cartridges in use quickly in my printer, so the chips and page counting could work.
- In theory, before cartridges run low, HP sends a replacement set.
- Not in practice.

The Process of HP Instant Ink

I was running low a day or two before HP realized it

- HP Instant Ink server sent me an email saying they had decided I was running low on color ink.
- Two days later, the HP Instant Ink server sent me an email saying they had sent the shipment.
- They sent it by a low-cost ground service.
- Average delivery took 8 days from HP warehouse in Sandston VA. Total of 10 days.
- **INSTANT it is not!**

I suggested a workaround

- I suggested that HP could hold the shipment for me at Sandston, and I would drive there to pick it up.
- About 5 hours round trip from Arlington, 90+% of it interstate 95 and 64. Roughly 6 gallons of gas in my Prius.
- Better than waiting 8 days!
- HP Instant Ink agreed to that, but never actually did that.

The standard Customer Service response

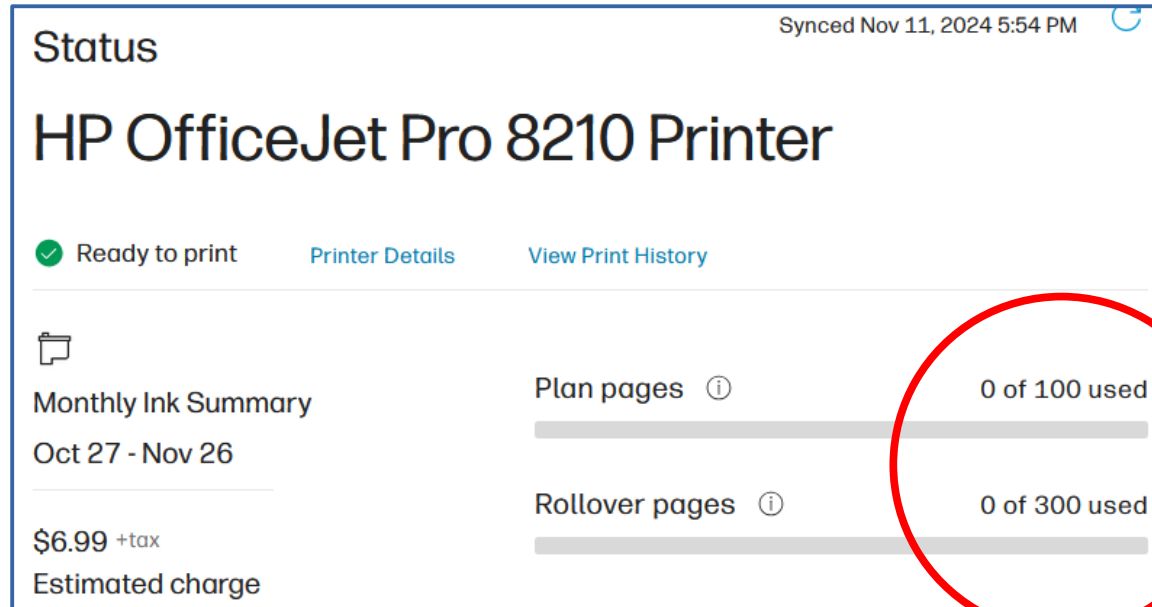
- I called HP Instant Ink Customer Service call four times to complain about the delivery delay.
- **Customer Service** always offered to initiate another ink shipment to me, as an apology for my trouble.
- By the first week of December, I almost always had **2 shipments in the “pipeline”**.
- Two arrived *after I finished* my calendar printing.
- I save those two for starting my calendar printing this month.

Rollover Pages

- After I finished the calendar, I downsized my plan to 100 pages per month.
- I chose that because I thought I would enter three photo contests this year, as usual.
- I thought I would upsize to 700 per month in November and December.
- I did not participate in any of those three contests.

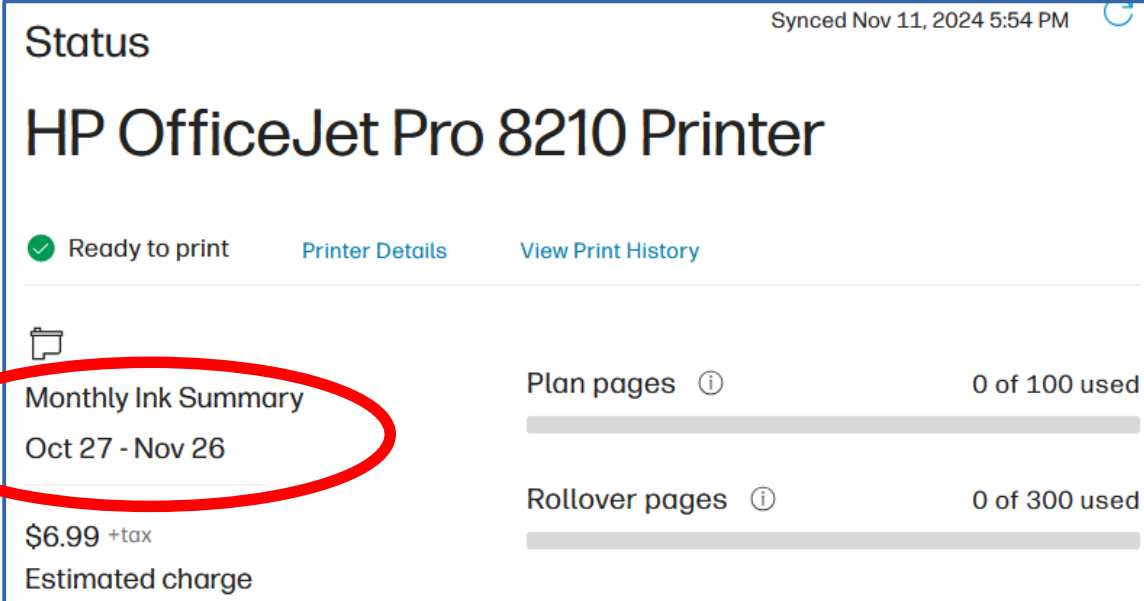
Rollover Pages

- Each service level allows you roll over some of your unused pages.
- Your personal HP Instant Ink account page shows you both plan pages for and your rollover balance.



The Plan Month

- The plan month begins on the day you sign up, and renews every month on that same day.
- I started mine on October 27.




The screenshot displays the HP OfficeJet Pro 8210 Printer status page. At the top, it says 'Status' and 'Synced Nov 11, 2024 5:54 PM'. Below this, the printer model 'HP OfficeJet Pro 8210 Printer' is listed. A green checkmark indicates the printer is 'Ready to print'. There are links for 'Printer Details' and 'View Print History'. A red circle highlights the 'Monthly Ink Summary' section, which shows the period 'Oct 27 - Nov 26' and the estimated charge of '\$6.99 +tax'. To the right, there are two progress bars: 'Plan pages' (0 of 100 used) and 'Rollover pages' (0 of 300 used).

Status Synced Nov 11, 2024 5:54 PM

HP OfficeJet Pro 8210 Printer

✓ Ready to print [Printer Details](#) [View Print History](#)

 Monthly Ink Summary
Oct 27 - Nov 26

\$6.99 ^{+tax}
Estimated charge

Plan pages ⓘ 0 of 100 used

Rollover pages ⓘ 0 of 300 used

Rollover pages

- That 400 total page count for November will let me print all the month table pages of the calendar without paying another cent.
- If I print 313 pages before November 27, about 80 pages will roll over on November 27.
- I can upsize to the \$13.99/300 page subscription as of that date, with a total page count of 380, which is sufficient for printing all the color pages of the calendar.
- I will downsize again on December 27.

Does the magic button still exist?

- In December 2023, on the HP Instant Ink web site, I believe I found a page including an **ORDER INK** button.
- Now I cannot find that button. That button would be a way to work around the unknown algorithm used by HP to decide when you are running out of ink.
- Maybe my experience will be different this time. Perhaps their algorithm learns from experience.

Some questions remain

- It is generally known that all printer makers make a ton of money on the consumables (ink), and not much on printer hardware. Call that profit imbalance the Gillette model.
- Does HP make money on this service? If so, it implies that the cost of making a cartridge is quite low.
- I have a guess: by preventing reloaders from obtaining empty cartridges, relabeling them and reloading them with cheap ink for sale.
- How does HP Instant Ink affect retailers who sell “normal” HP inkjet cartridges?

Reloaders and Copyright law

- It is possible that HP might decide to pursue a copyright claim against reloaders based on defacing HP ink cartridges.
- The US Copyright Office recently granted a “**right of repair**” **exception** for office equipment when the original equipment maker claimed their copyrights prohibit repairs of their branded equipment by third parties.
- This may have been the maker’s way of insisting only their own very expensive repair service was authorized.
- That Copyright Office logic might also give reloaders a way to avoid an HP copyright claim.

Not every HP inkjet printer does 2-sided printing well

- Two years ago, my first HP Officejet Pro 8210 failed catastrophically, spraying and spilling black ink.
- As a replacement, I bought a \$100 HP Envy series printer that claimed to do 2-sided printing.
- The printer produced brown streaks on side 2 no matter what I tried.
- After 3 hours on the phone with HP Customer Service, demonstrating the brown streaks, they admitted the Envy series could not print reliably on two sides of HP glossy brochure paper.

Tech stuff made offshore and the coming tariffs

- Just about every digital device we enjoy, including printers and ink cartridges, are made offshore. Not always in the PRC, but offshore.
- The Washington Post published an article on November 11 pointing out that Apple lobbied for and got exemptions to the tariffs in 2017.
- I would not be surprised to see Apple, HP, Dell, Toyota, Samsung, Hyundai, Kia, and many other digital makers lobbying for similar exemptions in 2025.

Hardware considerations

I do not need a printer with scan/copy/fax

- My computer workspace is crowded.
- I have a very high quality (9600 dpi) flatbed scanner.
And who uses fax anymore?
- I do not have room for the added bulk of such a printer.
- HP is not making many standalone printer models any longer, and has abandoned 13-inch wide-carriage desktop printer models that I used for printing posters.
- Now I am using my second HP OfficeJet Pro 8210, which is no longer manufactured.

The HP 8210 printer driver and borderless photo printing

- For years, the Photosmart and DeskJet printer drivers from HP used the term **Borderless** to identify the driver option for filling the page with a photo.
- I could not find that word Borderless in the HP 8210 driver.
- On my third try with Customer Service, I got lucky. One savvy HP Customer Service guy told me to try “**Edge-to-Edge**”. That is the new term. It works.

If my second 8210 printer breaks down

- Among the current HP inkjet models, I would likely buy the **OfficeJet Pro 9110b**.
- No scan/copy/fax in that one! And it is eligible for HP Instant Ink.
- **\$149 Black Friday price** (applies as of Nov 11)
- \$30 off regular price on HP's site.
- Can be connected using ethernet, Wifi, and USB 2.0.
- Staples, Amazon and Office Depot have matched that price.

Schedule management with HP Instant Ink

- If you have a deadline for a high-volume print task, like I do, start about 2 months before the deadline.
- If you run out of ink before the Instant Ink shipment arrives, then call Customer Service to complain, so they send a second shipment. I hope that is still their policy.
- Plan to do something else until the shipment arrives. Buy holiday gifts, walk the dog, other exercise, geocaching, etc.

Mixing retail and Instant Ink cartridges

- One day in December 2023, I ran out of yellow ink.
- I again complained to HP Instant Ink Customer Service because they did not deliver ink before I ran low.
- I bought an HP Yellow XL retail cartridge so I could resume printing color pages. I was printing with a mix of retail and Instant Ink cartridges.
- HP was not not OK with that. Apparently their system cannot count the pages printed with a cartridge mix.