

How to Recycle Inkjet and Toner Cartridges

Over 500 million printer cartridges are sold each year in the United States, and as many as 375 million are sent to landfills. Inkjet and toner cartridges are both recyclable and reusable. Reusing them can reduce the need for oil used to make the plastic and ink by as much as 50%, lowering the overall environmental impact of printing ink by 30%.

Two convenient options for keeping printer cartridges out of landfill are recycling or refilling them. Refill services are available at reasonable prices or you can do the job yourself with a refill kit designed for the type of [inkjet cartridge](#) or [toner cartridge](#) you have.

The photo departments of a few participating Walgreens stores will clean and refill HP, Canon, Fuji, Samsung, Brother, Lexmark, and Epson cartridges for \$10 for black ink and \$25 for colored inks. Call first to make sure your local Walgreens participates, to avoid a wasted trip.

Costco's [Canadian stores provide refill services](#) but U.S. stores ended the program in late 2021. Business users have a variety of choices for mail-in refill services, including Doorstep Ink, which Earth911 [reviewed in January 2022](#).

You can also refill cartridges on your own by following these steps:

1. Buy a printer cartridge refill kit at an office supply store or from an online retailer. These often include plastic or glass bottles that carry their own carbon impact.
2. Wear rubber gloves to prevent getting ink on your hands.
3. Remove the cartridge from your printer and locate the two refill holes or toner refill port, which might be under the label. You'll inject the ink using a refill syringe included in the kit.
4. Follow the directions included with the kit to determine how exactly to fill the cartridge you use.
5. Reseal the ink cartridge.
6. Clean the ink refill syringe after each use.

If you want to recycle your ink cartridges, [Office Depot](#) and [Staples](#), and most [Best Buy](#) and [Target](#) stores collect used cartridges for recycling. Use the [Earth911 recycling locator](#) to find options in your area, and be sure to call ahead as these policies change, often without notice. Also, please check the mail-in program information below for major manufacturers.

Note that if the cartridge is not made by the printer manufacturer or a third-party company that explicitly labels their products "recyclable," it may not be recyclable. When purchasing an inkjet or toner cartridge, avoid products described only as "compatible" to ensure they can be recycled after use. Buying cheap cartridges might save you money but they will likely end up in landfills, where they break down into microplastics and nanoplastics but never decompose.

When storing ink and toner cartridges, we advise you to put them in leak-proof bags, as the contents can leak out and cause a mess. Similarly, package them carefully to avoid leakage when transporting or shipping them.

Not sure whether refilling or recycling is the right option for you? Read on in our FAQs to see when each situation makes the most sense.

[Find Recycling Guides for Other Materials](#)

Frequent Ink Cartridge Recycling Questions

Is it better to recycle or refill ink cartridges?

Refilling ink cartridges creates less waste, but they cannot be reused indefinitely. Many people say it is more convenient to refill printer cartridges than to buy new ones each time because they are refilled to the top and last longer, unlike some new ink cartridges. If you do refill your cartridges, make sure you recycle them at the end of their useful life.

How many times can I refill my printer cartridges?

Toner cartridges can only be refilled two or three times before they need to be replaced. If you have an inkjet printer, avoid letting the cartridge run out of ink completely before refilling it. Once the inkjet sponges dry out, they cannot be refilled.

How can I earn rewards for recycling ink cartridges?

You have a variety of options, depending on the cartridge manufacturer and which office stores are in your area. [Staples](#) and [OfficeMax/Office Depot](#) provide cartridge recycling programs that can earn you rewards. At Staples, recyclers earn \$2 in rewards when recycling ink cartridges and spending at least \$50 on ink or toner. OfficeMax and Office Depot programs allow you to qualify for 200 reward points for each recycled ink cartridge when making a qualified \$10 purchase in the same month.

Do ink and toner cartridge manufacturers have recycling programs?

HP's [cartridge recycling program](#) lets you drop off printer cartridges at participating office supply stores or ship them free of charge. The cartridges are part of a closed-loop recycling program, so the company reuses the materials itself. HP also handles recycling services for [Samsung ink and toner cartridges](#).

Canon's recycling program allows participants to drop off cartridges at FedEx locations. There are separate steps for [inkjet](#) and [toner](#) cartridges.

Lexmark offers a free [mail-in cartridge recycling program](#). Seal the old cartridge in the bag your new cartridge arrived in, then [request a free mailing label](#).

Epson provides [prepaid FedEx shipping](#) labels to help you return used cartridges, which must be dropped off at a FedEx location.

Brother recycles inkjet, toner, and drum cartridges through a free mail-in program. Place your old cartridge in the packaging your new cartridge arrived in and [print a free shipping label](#).

Are there programs to recycle ink cartridges and benefit a charity?

Yes. [Cartridges for Kids](#) is a program that allows a charity or school to collect cartridges and receive money in return.

Additional Reading

- [How to Refill Inkjet Printer Cartridges](#): Step-by-step instructions on how to inject toner into your cartridges to save money and reduce waste.
- [Circular Ink and Toner From Doorstep Ink](#): Learn about this easy-to-use circular printer ink service for business.