

Digital Pictures

**Printing Pictures**

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*By Wayne Halm*

**Still a Need**

Having pictures on a CD suitable for viewing on a computer screen greatly reduces the need for printing them. However the need to print some of the pictures still exists. Below are some of the things that I've learned about printing digital pictures.

**Ink Jet Printers**

Ink Jet printers are inexpensive easy ways to print digital pictures. These printers are fantastic, most will do an acceptable job of printing pictures. A couple of points to be aware of: (1) 720dpi is probably the lowest setting you will want to use, (2) on printers that offer a choice of "true black" or "composite black" you will want to use the "composite black" setting for printing pictures.

There is some truth to the notion that companies give away the printers in order to sell the ink cartridges. But don't let that scare you, it's not all that bad, and when you need a picture printed it's usually well worth the ink.

Ink Jet printed pictures have a limited life span. Over the years they fade - a lot depends on the amount of light that falls on the pictures, and various companies make varying claims about it - but they fade. This is not an insurmountable problem as fresh ones can always be printed.

**The Paper**

The paper used in printing digital pictures on Ink Jet printers does make a difference. The use of "photo quality" paper and higher dpi settings does produce noticeably better pictures. Use it when there is a need.

Perhaps oddly, many ink jet printers will produce inferior pictures at dpi settings higher than 720 when using regular paper. This has to do with the amount of ink and saturation.

One nice thing about ink jet printers is a relatively straight paper path. This allows most to handle thick paper such as 110lb Index Stock. The thick paper gives printed pictures a nice feel of substance.

**Size does Matter**

**Topic 236 Article 2 PAGE 2 August 17, 2002**

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The size of the printed picture and the dpi needed to produce acceptable results are linked. Pictures printed in smaller sizes (maybe 3x5) tend to be viewed close up and a higher dpi setting is required to prevent a grainy appearance. However pictures printed in larger sizes (maybe 8x10) are normally viewed from greater distances and the grainy nature of 720 dpi will not be noticed. "Older" folks with less than perfect vision frequently prefer the larger physical size to higher dpi settings.

**Professional Printing**

Many of the fast photo places can now print digital pictures. The results they produce are as good as the results from film. Some will voice disclaimers about quality, but they can produce perfectly acceptable 3x5 photographs from 200kb JPG files.

**Not a Problem**

Fears that digital pictures are for the computer only are unjustified. Getting acceptable "hard copies" is not a problem.

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