

Hi everyone.

Can you believe it? Back-to-school season is just around the corner, which means great deals are coming for school supplies. Paper, pencils, erasers, notebooks, markers, almost everything will be up for grabs...almost everything.

Psst...did you know that there is one thing you should NEVER buy at major brick-and-mortar retailers, even during these upcoming sales?

Yup - major retailers (Staples, Office Depot, Office Max, etc) just cannot compete on this one pricey product that virtually every homeschool household needs to replace year after year.

What is it? Printer ink.

In fact, it's no secret that the reason why personal printers are so affordable is because the manufacturers make money by selling the frequently replaceable ink - the same ink that seems to run out just when you need it the most. And it just might be me, but the cheaper the printer, the more frequently you need to replace the ink - this is especially true with inkjet printers (which is why I prefer laser printers).

Now I don't know about you, but I need to replace my ink a bit before the half way mark of using up a whole box of 10 reams of paper. If you're hooked up with an inkjet, you'll definitely be replacing that ink more frequently than I will be, say every 400 pages or so. However, you don't need the math to tell you that, regardless of the type of printer, everyone most likely will be replacing that ink more than once per year, year after year.

So what's a frugal homeschooler to do?

Well, the first thing you should NOT EVER do is keep buying from the major retailers. Sure, some of them have their own brand ink, which is cheaper than the original manufacturers' products. But seriously, I honestly cannot recall the last time I felt I got a deal from purchasing ink toner for over \$40 from say, a Staples brand ink toner, compared to the original HP ink toner, which is north of \$60. I mean, 40 bucks is 40 bucks, right? Hey if you don't think that's a lot of money, feel free to send some my way...

So if I'm recommending that you not buy from the major retailers, then where should you buy from?

I'm getting around to it...and you'll get a happy ending (I promise). But first, amuse me by letting me tell my story.

So, just after the recent year-end holiday season, when our wallets and purses were feeling really light from our holiday shopping, my printer ink runs out (once again, impeccable timing). The last thing I want to do is confront the post-New Year's sales crowd. So I pop open my laptop and start searching for printer ink.

First, I enter generic search terms for printer ink sales...nothing worth writing about here - the prices were still high for me. Next, I enter the word "refurbished" in front of my searches and get some results, but there was one search term in particular that I quite accidentally stumbled upon while surfing Amazon's site.

Now, as I said, you can find these great deals at Amazon.com, but the easiest way to find them is to enter the following search term in Amazon's search box below.

[AMAZON SEARCH BOX]

The search term to enter is:

"compatible [YOUR PRINTER BRAND, SERIES, & MODEL] ink"

So for example, for me, I would enter "compatible HP Laserjet 1018 ink" (without the quotation marks) into the search box above. By the way, that search box above is the exact same search box that you'll find at Amazon's website, located at the top of the homepage. So feel free to use the search box above or go to Amazon.com directly and enter your search term into the search box at the top of the homepage.

Then, like gifts from Discount Heaven, the deals will appear!

You will find discounts from 50% to 60% off the LOWEST prices that major retailers offer. But the proof is in the pudding, right? Ok, so for the hardcore skeptics, I created this table by researching ink prices from 5 of the best selling printers off Amazon's site. These compatible ink prices were compared across the same original manufacturers' products or comparable own-brand products offered by Staples, Office Depot, and Office Max.

Check out these dollar and % savings (green columns) off the lowest prices offered among Staples, Office Depot, and Office Max:

	Printer Name & Ink Product	Type	Aproximate Ink Price				AMZN vs. Lowest Price	
			Staples ¹	Office Depot ²	Office Max ³	Amazon ⁴	\$ Savings	% Savings
1	HP LaserJet P1006 (regular toner)	Laser	\$ 67.99	\$ 67.99	\$ 68.99	\$ 26.29	\$ 41.70	61%
2	Brother HL-2170W (2,600 yield toner)	Laser	\$ 71.29	\$ 67.99	\$ 67.99	\$ 28.40	\$ 39.59	58%
3	HP Deskjet 6940 (2-pk - 1 color, 1 black)	Inkjet	\$ 66.99	\$ 45.99	\$ 53.99	\$ 18.48	\$ 27.51	60%
4	Epson WorkForce 40 Wireless (2-pk black)	Inkjet	\$ 31.99	\$ 39.99		\$ 13.44	\$ 18.55	58%
5	Canon MP610 Wireless (2-pk black)	Inkjet	\$ 34.99			\$ 15.95	\$ 19.04	54%

1 Does not include shipping or sales tax.

2 Same as 1. For Epson, used same product for C120 as approximate price. Single pack black ink for Epson is \$29.99. Single pack for Cannon is \$11.99 refurbished.

3 Same as 1. For Epson, single pack black ink is \$17.99. For Cannon, single pack black ink for MP500 is \$19.99.

4 Compatible ink. Includes shipping.

Alright, so based on this quick research, the price may be right, but how about the quality?

Excellent question.

Not only should product quality be questioned but so should customer service and other factors that you expect from major retailers.

Now the sellers on Amazon have their own policies, which vary. And yes, you will have to research which ones you're most comfortable with before making your purchase. But I've found that generally, these sellers offer very attractive terms on their ink products. Here are examples of the sales terms I've found:

- 1) High Quality - Product meets or exceeds the original manufacturer's standards in quality and/or yield (yield is the approximate number of pages that the ink product will produce).
- 2) Product Guarantee - I've seen some sellers guarantee their ink for a full year, which is longer than the ink typically lasts.
- 3) Frequent & Relevant Communication - your orders can be tracked by you at every point of sale, from initial order to final shipment, with regular email updates from the seller on the status of your order.
- 4) Low or No Shipping Fees - I loathe shipping fees, but even when you include them to these heavily discounted prices, I don't seem to mind...and some sellers don't charge shipping at all. By the way, Amazon's prices in the table above include shipping fees.

Just in case you didn't catch it, I want to make a quick point on #1 above. The compatible ink products I've come across can produce at least as many pages as the ones offered by the original manufacturers' products. And sometimes, the sellers offer more yield, up to 25% more. In fact, for my ink product, I've found that sellers on Amazon offer yields up to 2,500 pages compared to 2,000 page yields offered by standard HP ink for my printer. So, if you do

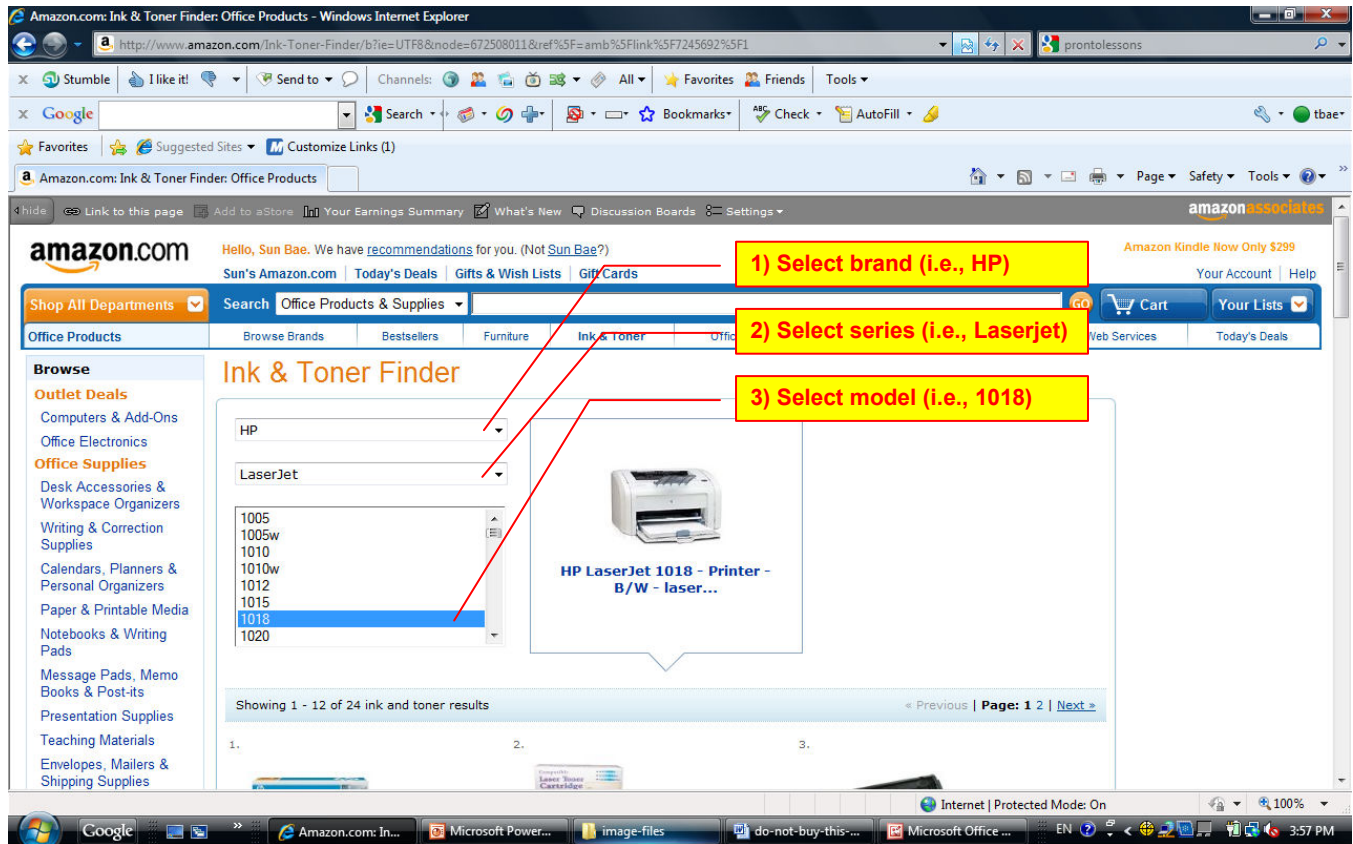
Do Not Buy this Homeschool Product at Stores (7/11/09)

your research, you can end up **getting up to 25% more output from your purchase...all by paying 50-60% less than the price of your local retailer's lowest offer.** Not bad at all.

And the best part? These prices on compatible ink are good all year long.

Now, a related feature on Amazon.com that I want to discuss is their [Ink & Toner Finder](#) page. This is a great tool if you don't have your printer right in front of you and are trying to confirm the right ink product to buy.

Just go to their [Ink & Toner Finder](#) page and see if you can guesstimate the correct brand (i.e., HP), series (i.e., Laserjet), and model (i.e., 1018). What's great about this feature is that once these 3 steps are completed, an image of the printer that you selected appears so that you can compare that image to your own printer to make extra sure that you are purchasing the correct ink product.



Once you confirmed your printer using the [Ink & Toner Finder](#), **DO NOT** purchase from the ink products that appear as a result of completing the printer selection process – I've seen that the ink products for the printer that is selected sometimes display the original manufacturer products – you will be able to tell if the prices seem way too high.

Instead:

- 1) Make a note of the brand, series, and model of the printer you selected,
- 2) Go to the Amazon search box above, or go to the search box on the Amazon.com homepage, and
- 3) Enter "compatible [YOUR PRINTER BRAND, SERIES, & MODEL] ink" in the search box at the top of the homepage. Again, an example of what I would enter is "compatible HP LaserJet 1018 ink" (without the quotation marks) to find the ink for my printer.

So, I bought my first compatible ink toner back in January 2009 and you know what? I haven't bought from any major offline retailer since that time. The only minor problem I've had so far is that on my second compatible ink purchase in May 2009, the toner left a smidge of toner dust on the first page of my first 5 or so print jobs, easily removed by a gentle brush of the paper. After that, I found that the compatible ink performed just like the original manufacturer's product. Further, I saw no difference in quality compared to the original manufacturer ink ever since - and that's after 2 consecutive purchases.

If you want more feedback from other customers, check out the positive feedback at the product links, [like this one](#), for example.

Now, I bet this article was one of the most thorough discussions on printer ink that you ever read, a topic about as exciting as the very moment you reach when watching the 54th consecutive minute of the Weather Channel (hey, don't get me wrong, the first 10 minutes are interesting, but after that...).

But I think I've imparted some very valuable information here on where to buy one of the most valuable homeschool supplies at the best prices.

Before I finish for today however, I want to say something.

I've always been open and honest when approaching the folks on our site, so I want to let you know that I do receive a small commission (and I do mean small!) from each product that you buy once you click into any of the Amazon links above. This is true not only for ink products, but for any other product that you purchase on Amazon.com after you've clicked into my Amazon-related links above.

Now I'm not doing this to become a get-rich-quick self-made millionaire (although I wouldn't complain if that happened...oh wait, the small commissions mean that I would probably have to be doing this until I'm like...240 years old, so this won't come true, at least not in my

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lifetime), but rather, I am doing it to offset my own time and money that I put into creating this website.

Rest assured, you won't get charged extra because I receive a commission...you would pay the same price on your ink (or any other product) on Amazon whether you clicked into my links above to buy or went to Amazon directly to make your purchase.

So as long as you need high-quality ink (or anything else on Amazon for that matter) at great prices, I encourage you to use any of my Amazon-related links above to make your purchase. Doing this will not only help you obtain an indispensable product at a low price, but it will also help me in continuing to make available free high-quality content on this website that you deserve.

I think that's fair, don't you?

I'll see everyone next time!

- Sun