BILL'S HOME TECH

Home & Small Business Tech Solutions

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When a $60 Printer Isn't Worth Fixing

The honest fix-or-replace decision — and how to spend less, not more

Plain-English printer help from:

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Tech Made Simple. Service Made Personal.

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SUMMARY

The 60-Second Version

A $60 printer is often not worth fixing, because a full set of replacement cartridges can cost more than a whole new printer. The quick test: if a set of ink costs more than half the price of a new printer, replacing is usually smarter — the new one comes with ink and a warranty.

But first rule out the free fixes (a stuck job, a Wi-Fi hiccup, a low cartridge, the wrong default printer), and keep any quality printer — a good all-in-one, a tank, or a laser — that is worth repairing. If you do replace it, a refillable tank printer or a laser costs far less to run.

Recycle the old one at a store, not the trash.

- Decline ink subscriptions and HP+ at setup unless you understand them — they can lock you in.
- After switching, remove the old printer from your devices so pages don't go to the wrong place.

1 The Short Version

Your inexpensive printer is acting up again — jamming, refusing ink, streaking, or just not connecting — and you are wondering whether to keep fighting it or let it go. Here is the honest truth a repair person will tell you: a $60 printer is often not worth fixing, because a single set of replacement cartridges can cost more than the whole printer did. Knowing when to repair and when to replace saves you money and a great deal of aggravation.

This guide gives you a clear-eyed way to decide, the real math on cheap printers and ink, what to look for if you do replace it, and how to recycle the old one responsibly and move your setup to the new printer. No pressure to buy anything — just the honest picture.

- A cheap printer's replacement ink can cost more than the printer did — that changes the math.
- Some problems are quick, free fixes; others are a sign to let the printer go.
- If you replace it, a refillable "tank" or a laser printer often costs far less to run.
- Recycle the old printer responsibly — do not just put it in the trash.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
> Before deciding, rule out the free fixes: a stuck job, a Wi-Fi hiccup, a low cartridge, or a wrong default printer. Many "dying" printers just need a two-minute fix, not a funeral — the other guides in this set cover those.

2 The Hard Truth About Cheap Printers

Very inexpensive printers are built to a price. The manufacturer sells them at little or no profit, expecting to make its money on the ink you buy afterward. That business model has two consequences that matter when yours breaks: the printer was never built to last many years, and the ink is deliberately expensive relative to the hardware.

So when a $60 printer develops a real fault, you are weighing a repair or a pricey set of cartridges against simply buying a newer, often better printer for not much more. That is why the honest answer is frequently "let it go" — not because the problem is unfixable, but because fixing it costs more than it is worth.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
> This is not cynicism, it is just how the market works. Understanding it frees you from feeling you must rescue every printer — sometimes replacing is genuinely the thrifty, sensible choice.

3 Signs It's Probably Not Worth Fixing

Certain problems tip a cheap printer over the line from "worth a try" to "time to replace." If you see these, replacement is usually the better value.

- A print head that stays clogged after a couple of cleanings and a fresh cartridge.
- Repeated paper jams caused by worn rollers that no longer grip.
- Cracked gears, grinding noises, or a carriage that no longer moves smoothly.
- An error that the maker's own support says requires a service center.
- A printer so old its maker no longer offers software for current computers.

WATCH OUT

Be especially wary of paying for a repair on a cheap printer — a service visit or a mailed-in repair can easily cost more than a new printer, and there is no guarantee the next part will not fail soon after. For inexpensive models, repair rarely pencils out.

4 The Ink-Costs-More-Than-the-Printer Math

The clearest way to decide is to do the simple arithmetic on ink. It often makes the choice obvious.

1. Look up the cost of a full set of replacement cartridges for your printer (every color it needs).
2. Compare that to the price of a brand-new printer of the same type.
3. If a set of ink costs more than half the price of a new printer, replacing is usually the smarter move.
4. Factor in that a new printer comes with a starter set of ink and a fresh warranty.

GOOD TO KNOW

It genuinely happens that a full set of cartridges costs $70 while a new printer with ink included is $80. In that case, buying the whole new printer for ten dollars more — with a warranty and fresh everything — is the obvious value.

5 When It IS Worth Keeping

Replacement is not always the answer. Plenty of printer troubles are quick, free fixes, and some printers are well worth hanging onto. Do not discard a good machine over a solvable hiccup.

- The problem is a stuck print job, a Wi-Fi drop, a low cartridge, or the wrong default printer — all free to fix.
- It is a higher-quality printer (a solid all-in-one, a tank printer, or a laser) that cost real money — those are worth repairing.
- It just needs a good cleaning, a fresh cartridge, or a reconnection to Wi-Fi.
- It still does everything you need and only one simple thing is wrong.

> **TIP**
> A quality printer that cost $150 or more is usually worth fixing; a $60 one usually is not. The price you paid is a decent rough guide to whether a repair makes sense.

6 What to Look for in a Replacement

If you do decide to replace it, a little thought now saves years of ink costs and frustration. The cheapest printer is rarely the cheapest to own.

- Consider a refillable "tank" printer (Epson EcoTank, Canon MegaTank, Brother INKvestment) — dearer to buy, far cheaper to run.
- For mostly black-and-white text, a laser printer is cheap to run and never clogs from sitting idle.
- Make sure it supports AirPrint (for iPhones and iPads) and works simply with your computer.
- Pick an all-in-one if you also want to scan and copy.
- Read a few recent reviews focused on reliability and ink cost, not just the sticker price.

GOOD TO KNOW

Think in terms of "cost to own over a few years," not just the price tag. A tank or laser printer that costs more today often saves you far more in ink over its life — the thrifty choice, not the flashy one.

Rather not do this yourself? I'll come to your home and set it up for you — a flat $99 first visit across Portage County, Ohio and nearby communities. Outside the area? I also help remotely by phone or screen-share. Book at billshometech.com/book or call (330) 200-8042.

7 Inkjet vs Laser vs Tank — Which Suits You

The three main kinds each suit a different household. Matching the type to how you print is the single most important choice.

Type	Best for
Cheap inkjet cartridge	Very light use — but watch the ink cost
Tank inkjet (EcoTank etc.)	Regular printing, photos and color — cheapest ink per page
Laser	Mostly black-and-white text, infrequent use — never clogs

If you print rarely and mostly text, a small laser printer is wonderfully low-maintenance — the toner does not dry out the way ink does. If you print photos and color regularly, a tank printer is the long-term money-saver. The cheap cartridge inkjet suits only the very lightest users who do not mind the ink prices.

8 Avoid the Subscription Trap on a New Printer

When you set up a new printer, you may be nudged to sign up for an ink subscription or to enroll in a program like HP+. These are not always bad, but go in with eyes open so you are not caught out later.

- An ink subscription can lock you in: cancel it and the subscription cartridges stop working, so you must buy regular ones.
- Enrolling a new HP printer in "HP+" can require genuine HP ink only and keeps it tied to the internet.
- You can usually decline these at setup and simply buy ink as you need it — that keeps full control.

WATCH OUT

I steer a lot of people away from signing up for things at printer setup that they do not understand and did not need. If you have a new printer and are not sure which prompts to accept, that is a two-minute question worth asking before you tap "agree."

9 Recycle the Old Printer Responsibly

A dead printer should not go in the household trash — it contains electronics and sometimes ink that are better recycled, and many places prohibit tossing electronics in the regular bin.

- Many office-supply and electronics stores take old printers for recycling, often free.
- The printer's maker may offer a mail-back recycling program — check their website.
- Empty ink and toner cartridges can usually be recycled separately, sometimes for store credit.
- Your county may hold electronics-recycling days — worth a quick check locally.

GOOD TO KNOW

Before recycling, make sure nothing personal is stored on it — most home printers hold no data, but a networked office model occasionally caches documents. When in doubt, ask.

10 Move Your Setup to the New Printer

Switching to a new printer is easier than people fear. A few steps get everything working and the old printer cleared out of the way.

1. Set up the new printer on your Wi-Fi (its screen or the maker's app) or connect it by USB.
2. Add it on your computer, phone, and tablet the same way you would any printer.
3. Set the new printer as your default so everything reaches for it automatically.
4. Remove the old printer from your computer's list so it does not cause wrong-printer confusion.

TIP

Removing the old printer from your devices' lists is the step people forget — and it is what causes "it printed to the wrong place" afterward. Clear the old one out and the new one becomes the obvious, only choice.

11 Getting a Few More Months Out of It

If a new printer is not in the budget right now, you can often coax a little more life out of a struggling one while you plan. It is a reasonable stopgap, not a cure.

- Use it gently — avoid thick paper and big jobs that strain worn parts.
- Keep the ink from drying by printing a page every week or two.
- Connect it by USB if Wi-Fi is the flaky part — a cable sidesteps the wireless trouble.
- Keep a spare cartridge on hand so a sudden empty does not strand you.

GOOD TO KNOW

None of this fixes a genuinely failing printer, but it can buy you time to shop carefully rather than grab whatever is cheapest in a panic — and a careful choice saves far more in the long run.

12 A Buyer's Checklist for the Store

If you have decided to replace the printer, a short checklist keeps you from being upsold or walking out with another throwaway. Take this with you — on paper or on your phone — and you will shop with confidence.

- Ask the real cost of a full set of ink or toner for the model you are considering — that is the number that matters most over time.
- Ask whether it is a tank, cartridge, or laser printer, and match it to how you actually print.
- Confirm it prints wirelessly and supports AirPrint if you use an iPhone or iPad.
- Decide in advance whether you want scanning and copying (an all-in-one) or print-only.
- Politely decline the ink subscription and extended warranty at checkout unless you have thought it through — you can always add them later.

WATCH OUT

Do not let the lowest sticker price decide for you. Ask the ink-cost question first — a printer that costs twenty dollars more but half as much to run is the real bargain, and the one you will be glad you chose a year from now.

13 When to Call Bill

Deciding whether to fix or replace a printer is exactly the kind of honest judgment call that is hard to make alone — especially when the printer companies would rather you just keep buying ink. I will give you the straight answer, with the real numbers, and no pressure to buy anything from anyone.

On a visit I will diagnose what is actually wrong, tell you plainly whether it is a free fix or a lost cause, and — if replacing makes sense — recommend a printer that will cost you far less to run, set it up, move everything over, and recycle the old one properly. You end up spending less, not more.

- You are not sure whether the problem is a quick fix or a real failure.
- A set of ink costs nearly as much as a new printer and you want honest advice.
- You want a recommendation for a printer that is genuinely cheap to run.
- You would like the new one set up and the old one cleared out and recycled.

CHEAT SHEET

Everyday Cheat Sheet

Keep this handy. The cheapest printer is rarely the cheapest to own.

I want to...	Do this...
Decide fix or replace	If a set of ink costs more than half a new printer, replace it
Rule out a free fix first	Check for a stuck job, Wi-Fi drop, low ink, or wrong default printer
Know when to keep it	A quality all-in-one, tank, or laser printer is worth repairing
Spend less long-term	Choose a refillable tank printer, or a laser for black-and-white
Avoid the ink trap	Decline subscriptions/HP+ at setup unless you understand them
Dispose of it right	Recycle at an electronics/office store — not the household trash
Get help	Call Bill: (330) 200-8042

BEFORE YOU GO

A Note From Bill

A quick note from Bill. I write these guides to make home tech a little less frustrating, and I do my best to keep every step accurate and up to date. Still, every home, device, and setup is a bit different, so I can't promise a guide will match yours exactly or fix your particular problem. These guides are for general information only — they're not professional, legal, or financial advice, and they don't replace your device's own manual or the manufacturer's instructions. Please go slow, use your own good judgment, and use everything here at your own risk. If a step involves electrical wiring, a gas appliance, a water heater, plumbing, or climbing a ladder — or if anything just doesn't feel safe — please stop and call a licensed professional (or give me a call at 330-200-8042). Bill's Home Tech and Bill Davis can't be responsible for any damage, data loss, or injury that results.

HOW I CAN HELP

Your Visit — and My Promise

You don't have to remember all of it — just that a friendly, patient person is one call away, whenever you'd rather have a hand.

KEY SPECS

In your home — $99 flat for the first visit, no contracts and no surprises, with a 30-day come-back-free follow-up. In-home visits cover Portage County, Ohio and nearby communities.
Outside the area? Remotely — $49 for a screen-share session (free for Support Plan members, $39/mo), refundable if I can't fix it — and credited toward a visit if you'd rather have me in person. Book either at billshometech.com/book.

GOOD TO KNOW

My promise — If you're not 100% satisfied with your visit, I'll come back at no charge, or refund the full $99. No questions, no awkwardness. That's how I'd want to be treated.

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