

Common Questions About Inkjet Recycling: Do You Have the Answers?

The inkjet remanufacturing business is growing by leaps and bounds. It is projected that more than 650 million inkjet cartridges will be sold this year in the United States alone. Every day new consumers contemplate making the switch from OEM to remanufactured. They may be attracted to the cost savings and environmental benefits but have trepidation about using something with which they have no experience. In this case, ignorance is not bliss. By managing customer expectations and knowledgeably responding to questions and concerns, inkjet remanufacturers can create an environment that supports long-term, satisfactory and profitable business relationships.

Following are questions that an inkjet remanufacturer is likely to be asked. The questions are posed from the customer's point of view. The responses presented are suggested "scripts" for an inkjet remanufacturer to work from. The responses can and should be modified as necessary to ensure they are credible and truthful.

Why should I use recycled cartridges?

The cost savings alone is enough to make consumers sit up and take notice. A savings of up to 50 percent can be realized on most cartridges. Another good reason relates to the environmental impact. Of the millions of inkjet cartridges purchased annually, only 10 to 15 percent are currently recycled. The rest usually end up in a landfill, where they take many years to decompose. When remanufactured correctly, cartridges will average between five and seven refills, with some getting as many as 15 or more before their life spans are exhausted.

Will recycled/remanufactured inkjet cartridges void my OEM warranty?

No. According to the Magnuson-Moss Warranty Act,

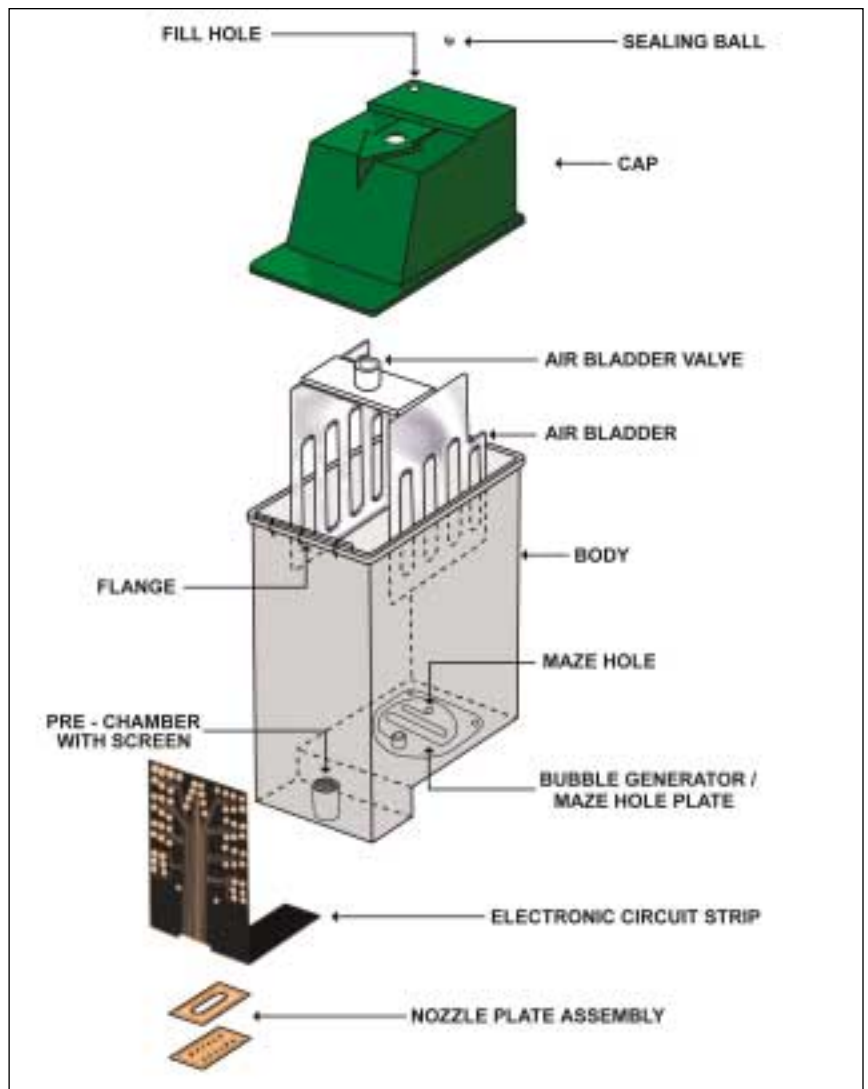


Figure 1. Components of an inkjet cartridge.

“No warrantor of a consumer product may condition his written or implied warranty of such product on the consumer's using, in connection with such product, any article or service (other than an article or a service provided without charge under the terms of the warranty) which is identified by brand, trade or corporate name; except that the prohibition of this subsection be waived by the commission if:

(1) The warrantor satisfies the Commission that the warranted product will function properly only if the article or service so identified is used in connection with the warranted product, and (2) The Commission finds that such a waiver is in the public interest.”

HP addressed this issue specifically in the Hewlett-Packard Ink Cartridge Refill Statement (04/20/95), which says, “The use of refilled print cartridges alone does not affect either the warranty or any maintenance contract purchased from HP for its inkjet printers.”

Why shouldn't I use a refill kit instead of buying a remanufactured cartridge?

Have you tried to refill your own cartridges? Besides the fact that refill kits can be extremely messy and time-consuming, there are several additional reasons to use a commercial remanufacturer:

- Kits create additional waste with packaging alone.

- Many cartridges work on a pressurized system. Introducing new ink into an empty cartridge without first properly cleaning the nozzles and removing the old ink can cause problems with cartridge performance. Commercial remanufacturers have state-of-the-art equipment to address that.

- A proper remanufacturing process allows for more successful refills of a cartridge. This is true recycling.

Will my print quality remain consistent, and will I get the same number of pages printed with a remanufactured cartridge?

Our company uses only the highest quality inks available, which are manufactured specifically for inkjet cartridges. We guarantee that you'll be happy with the print quality or we'll fix it — whatever it takes.

All cartridges have a specific amount of ink to begin their lifespan and that determines their printing capacity. Each cartridge is weighed for the correct amount of ink during processing and re-checked during quality control. You'll have the same amount or more ink in the cartridge every time you recycle.

(Note: This response should be modified, if necessary, to reflect what is true for a particular remanufacturer.)

How does an inkjet cartridge work?

A very popular inkjet cartridge, the HP 51626A, is a good example and will help you to understand the important basics. Figure 1 on the previous page shows the breakdown of the parts of the cartridge.

The print head and circuitry, which perform most of the work for the inkjet printer, are contained on the ink cartridge itself. There are 48 nozzles (jets) in the print head on the bottom of the cartridge. Each nozzle is smaller in diameter than a human hair. Under each nozzle is a heater (resistor) that

heats the ink inside the cartridge. When the ink is heated, a bubble forms that bursts, shooting the ink through the jets onto the paper.

The resistors on most cartridges will continue to fire until they burn out, about every sixth time the cartridge is recycled. This is the average, but not the rule. The reality is that up to 5 percent of all inkjet cartridges cannot be recycled even once, and some can be recycled many more than five times.

Is it OK to keep printing when my cartridge is showing signs of running out of ink?

Like the gas tank in your car, don't let the tank run empty! Ink helps keep the resistors from overheating. Printing with an empty cartridge can cause irreparable heat damage to the resistors.

With tri-color cartridges, this applies even if only one of the colors runs out. You risk damaging the cartridge if you continue to use it with one tank empty.

What are some signs that my cartridge is running out of ink?

The two most common signs are (1) white streaks where there should be black ink and (2) lighter-than-normal print. Sometimes these also can be signs of clogged nozzles, bad circuitry or worn internal components. Your cartridge remanufacturer can make that determination.

How can I get more recycles out of my empties?

Proper care and handling of empty cartridges may add to the number of recycles you can get. You want to protect the body, especially the circuitry. When the cartridge is empty, the best option is to reuse the clip. Never put adhesive tape on the circuitry or print head. If shipping, wrap them individually in bubble wrap. And don't keep printing when the cartridge is out of ink.

What do I do with a cartridge that is no longer recyclable?

One sure rule is that all inkjet cartridges will eventually reach the end of their life cycles. And they don't ever seem to fail at the same time that they run out of ink! You eventually will need to buy a new cartridge or obtain another empty that can be refilled. But don't throw away the old one. Your cartridge remanufacturer can dispose of ink and cartridges properly.

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Being prepared with accurate, easy-to-understand answers to consumers' questions is the first step in customer education. Next month, we will focus on empowering customers with troubleshooting tips they can perform themselves. **□**

Contact Rick Lacey at rick@inkjetfills.com and Denise Montana at dmmontana@aol.com.