



Before I go any further, I should mention that InkSaver works with most Hewlett-Packard, Epson, and Canon inkjet printers only and does not work with laser printers. Fortunately, I have a Hewlett-Packard inkjet printer, so I was able to use the program.

Now, for those of you who haven't immediately skipped on to the next article and who are still with me, I can report that the InkSaver installation was one of the easiest and quickest that I have ever experienced. It comes in a one CD plastic case with a four page "Quick Start Guide." After inserting the CD into your CD-ROM, a few clicks of the mouse takes you to the section where you can select the printer or printers that you want to use with Ink Saver. Then, you come to an optional section where you can calculate your expected savings through using InkSaver. I feel that any calculations at this point are just very rough ballpark estimates since you don't even know what savings level you would be using. Anyway, after restarting, you can print out a sample page that has black text, color graphics, and a color photo, each one set at nine different savings levels ranging from 0% savings to 75% savings. Then, you can register yourself online with the company, thereby qualifying for one free technical support inquiry and for receiving future update information. Additional inquiries are \$5 per incident.

Installation through registration took me less than 10 minutes. Once installed, an InkSaver icon appears on the taskbar. When you hover the cursor over the icon, it tells you what the current ink savings levels are set at. When you right click the icon, you can disable InkSaver or easily re-configure the savings levels. Once InkSaver is on, however, the settings are applied to every print job, and you do not have to re-set them.

On my printer, I have three printing modes-draft, normal, and best. InkSaver works in all three modes. I was using different settings in each mode to try to determine when a "noticeable change in print quality" appeared (very subjective anyway), and it struck me that the really important distinction I needed to make for myself was at how high a savings level did I find the output acceptable. Almost all my printing is text documents for personal use, so I found that draft mode at the 45-50% InkSaver savings level worked for me, even though a noticeable change occurred at a lower level.

I don't do any color graphics or photos, but based on the lab test conclusions and on the sample page printouts, I would guess that a savings level of 20-25% in the normal mode would be acceptable to me. Individual preference, paper and ink quality, and printer models are all factors, however.

Compared to ink refill kits, the savings from InkSaver are much less. However, the latter is neat and clean, and you will never have to contend with cleaning up spilled ink. You can use InkSaver in conjunction with refill kits, but your payback period would be longer.

In conclusion, I would say that the appeal of InkSaver is its ease of installation and use. If you don't use refill kits and use as few as one black and one color ink cartridge per year, you would recover your cost for the program in about two years. A higher usage rate would mean quicker cost recovery. If you use refill kits, the cost recovery period may be longer than you

InkSaver

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Since almost every PC user has at least one printer and every one seems to feel that printer ink is too expensive, any purported way to save on ink is a welcome item. InkSaver is a program designed to save ink by allowing the user to control the amount of ink used by one's printer. The range of control runs between zero and 75% savings, can be set independently for both black and color ink cartridges, and works with multiple printers.

When I received my evaluation copy of the product, it came with a recent review performed by a third party testing lab. The lab's results confirmed that the calibration on the estimated savings was fairly accurate at all levels. For instance, if a full ink cartridge would produce 100 printed pages of an image without the InkSaver program, it would produce approximately 200 pages of that same image with the InkSaver program set at 50% savings.

A second part of the test related to print quality. Though admittedly very subjective, the lab concluded that there was no noticeable change to print quality up to about 25% savings for a black text document and up to about 20% savings for a business graphic or color photo document. No specifics were given as to how a "noticeable change to print quality" was determined.

