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HP ENVY Photo 6255 printer is printing everything in a streak manner in that it prints normally but has lines where the ink randomly fades, proceeds as normal, fades again rinse and repeat. I've already tried to clean the cartridges, aligned the cartridges, and cleaned page smudges but none worked. I've also checked and the cartridge is half full still and was brand new when this problem began. While modern printers excel at creating high-resolution documents that are useful in nearly any scenario, they are still susceptible to printing issues. A printer printing streaks on a page can be caused by a number of issues, including dirty printer heads, low ink or toner, low-quality ink or toner, and more. Instead of returning to the market and getting a new high-quality printer, you can try these simple tips first. Streaks refer to various smudges within the text when it comes to a printed document. These can range from mild to severe and typically impact inkjet printers, as the toner dust used with laser printers is not as susceptible to streaking. We have assembled some useful tips and guidelines to help you troubleshoot the problem of printer streaks. As a note, each printer model is different, so we have tried to keep these points as universal as possible. But, if you find your printer skipping lines too frequently, it may be another problem altogether. Just like when your printer is printing faded text, the first thing you should do if you see some streaky text or images from the printer is to check on the ink or laser cartridge. If a cartridge is nearly depleted, it may begin creating streaky text or images. This may also be why you keep wondering why your printer is printing blurry text. Modern printers typically have dedicated tools to check on ink or toner consumption and the overall status of the cartridges. Run this software and take a look at the data available. If you are close to being depleted, it may be time to replace the cartridge. If the cartridge levels look fine, you will have to keep on troubleshooting and check out the next section. Low-quality ink or toner can also leave streaks or other poor print quality issues. The streaks could be due to a dirty or clogged print head. Luckily, most modern printers include print head cleaning functionality, which can be initiated via the printer's settings menu. Run this print head cleaning tool and see if the issue has resolved itself. The cleaning tool will typically print out a few test pages, so just take a look at those. This cleaning tool will deplete some of your ink reserves, but if it fixes the problem of streaks, then that would have been well worth it. If you don't have this option, you'll have to do it manually, and you can do so by reading your printer's manual on how to clean the printer heads. And, for those interested in the device itself, read our guide on what is a printhead on a printer. Other issues that can lead to streak-filled documents are dirty print nozzles and misaligned print heads. Both of these issues can typically be checked on and resolved via a printer's integrated maintenance toolset. You may need to, however, manually clean the printer's internal components. We recommend that you wear gloves and use a microfiber cloth. You may need to download and install some new printer driver software to access this cartridge utility tool. You should do everything you can to make sure your ink or toner is in good shape and check into the difference between high yield ink vs standard. Always use the correct size and weight of paper that your printer can handle. Also, make sure to never use paper with any debris or foreign objects on it. Additionally, always store paper in a dry environment as paper that has absorbed some moisture can cause the ink to streak or smear as it is being printed as well. There can also be other issues that cause streaking: Print settings - Make sure the printer settings are appropriate for the type of document that you are printing. Some printers can adjust the print density or darkness, so you may need to adjust these settings. Damaged printer parts - Over time, printer components, like the fuser unit in a laser printer or the print rollers, can become damaged or just plain worn out and cause streaking issues. Check your manual on how to replace these parts, or seek a professional's assistance. Software issues - Driver or software issues can also cause printing issues. Always keep your printer up to date, and reinstall drivers if necessary. Not usually, but it would depend on the ink cartridges and their manufacturer. Do a thorough Google search on a refillable ink cartridge manufacturer before making a purchase. As with blurry text, missing lines can indicate a depleted cartridge or a dirty printer head. This could also be due to a depleted or nearly depleted ink or toner cartridge. Changing out the cartridge should resolve this issue, though you may need to perform some troubleshooting steps. When the print spooler doesn't work correctly, the printing process becomes slow, and the printer may print with lines. If the connection between your printer and computer is loose, it can cause the printer to print with lines. Cleaning the print head on an HP printer is a simple process that can be done in a few easy steps. If your HP printer is leaving lines on your prints, it can be a frustrating experience. After all, you expect your printer to produce high-quality prints, not streaks and lines. There are several reasons why this might be happening, and fortunately, there are also several easy steps you can take to fix the problem. When printer users face the problem of horizontal or vertical lines while printing, they often get annoyed and frustrated. A printing machine, like HP, works efficiently without lines if appropriately maintained and appropriately used. So, when you see lines on your printer's paper, you should first check the print quality, whether it's low or high. Here are some reasons that might give you an understanding of why your printer's lines are appearing: 1. Low ink or Toner Cartridge When a cartridge becomes empty, your printer won't print correctly. Sometimes, the printer may print lines instead of a complete image. But, when the ink levels drop below 20%, the printer may start giving horizontal lines. 2. Clogged Printhead Over time, the printer's printhead may become clogged, resulting in ink splatters or lines. Clean the printhead regularly to avoid clogging. 3. Faulty Cartridge The cartridge may also contain dust particles, which can also cause lines on the print. Check the cartridge for any dust particles or blockage. 4. Print Spooler When the print spooler doesn't work correctly, the printing process becomes slow, and the printer may print with lines. 5. Damaged Printhead A damaged printhead can also cause lines to appear. If your printer's printhead is damaged, then you should consider replacing the printhead. 6. Loose Connections If the connection between your printer and computer is loose, it can cause the printer to print with lines. 7. Incorrect Paper Size Sometimes, the lines may appear if the paper size setting is not correct. So, ensure the correct paper size setting. 8. Incompatible Driver If you're using an outdated or incompatible printer driver, it may cause your printer to print with lines. 9. Overheating Your printer may also print with lines if it's overheating. So, try to cool it down. 10. 1. Low ink or toner cartridges 2. Paper jams or dirty rollers 3. Clogged print heads 4. Software issues or bugs One of the most common problems faced by HP printer users is the appearance of lines or streaks on their printed documents. This can occur due to various reasons, such as low ink levels, clogged print heads, or dirty printer components. To troubleshoot this issue, you can try the following steps: 1. Check ink levels: Make sure that the ink levels in your printer are adequate. If the ink levels are low, replace the ink cartridges with new ones. 2. Clean print heads: Over time, print heads can become clogged with dried ink. To clean the print head, you can use the built-in cleaning utility of your printer. 3. Clean printer components: Use a lint-free cloth to wipe down the print cartridge, print head, and printer carriage. This will help remove any dust or debris that may be causing the issue. 4. Check the paper: Make sure that the paper you are using is compatible with your printer. Also, ensure that the paper is free from wrinkles or folds. 5. Update printer driver: Check if there are any updates available for your printer driver. Installing the latest driver version may fix any bugs or issues that may be present. 6. Perform a printer diagnostic: If your printer has a self-diagnostic feature, you can use it to identify any hardware-related issues. If the problem persists after trying these steps, you should contact HP customer support for further assistance. Cleaning the print head on an HP printer is a simple process that can be done in a few easy steps. First, turn off the printer and unplug it from the power source. Next, remove the ink cartridges from the printer. Once the ink cartridges are removed, you can clean the print head by running a clean cycle. To do this, press and hold the "Cleaning" button on your printer for three seconds. The printer will then begin the cleaning process. After the clean cycle is complete, replace the ink cartridges and turn on the printer. You should now be able to print normally. It's important to regularly clean the print head on your HP printer to ensure that it continues to produce high-quality prints. Note: The above process may vary by printer model, so it's recommended to refer to your printer's user manual for specific instructions. It is generally safe to clean the print head on an HP printer yourself, but there are a few things you should keep in mind. First, make sure that the printer is turned off and unplugged before you begin. You should also use caution when handling any parts of the printer, as they can be delicate. To clean the print head on an HP printer, you can use a soft, dry cloth to wipe off any dust or debris that may be on the print head. You can also use a cotton swab dipped in distilled water to gently clean any ink that may be clogged in the print head. It's always a good idea to consult the owner's manual for your specific HP printer for any specific cleaning instructions or recommendations. If you feel uncomfortable or unsure about cleaning the print head yourself, you can always contact HP customer service for assistance. Replacing the print head on an HP printer is a relatively straightforward process. Here are the steps you can follow: 1. Power off your printer and unplug it from the power source. 2. Open the printer's top cover and wait for the carriage to move to the center of the printer. 3. Press the tab on the rear of the ink cartridge to release it, and then pull the ink cartridge towards you to remove it from its slot. 4. Take the new ink cartridge out of its packaging and remove the plastic tape from it overwise. 5. Insert the new ink cartridge into its slot, and then gently push it until it snaps into place. 6. Close the printer's top cover, and then reconnect the printer to the power source. 7. Power on the printer, and then wait for the print head alignment process to complete. 8. Once the alignment process is complete, your HP printer's print head should be replaced. It's important to note that these instructions are general and may not apply to all HP printers. It's best to consult the printer's user manual for specific instructions for your model. If your HP printer is leaving lines on your prints, there could be a few reasons why. It could be something as simple as a dirty print cartridge or a paper jam. Or, it could be a more complex issue like a malfunctioning printhead or a problem with the printer's software. To troubleshoot the problem, you can clean the print cartridge and the paper rollers, check for any paper jams, and run a test print to see if the issue persists. If it does, you may need to contact HP customer support or visit an authorized service center for assistance. If you've recently noticed that your HP printer is producing documents with unsightly streaks, you're not alone. Many users encounter this frustrating issue at some point, leading to wasted ink, paper, and time. Understanding the causes of printing streaks can help you troubleshoot effectively and restore your printer to its optimal performance. In this article, we will explore various reasons behind this common problem, potential solutions, and tips for maintenance to ensure your printer runs smoothly. Understanding the Causes of Streaky Prints Streaking in printed documents can be caused by several factors, and identifying the root cause is essential for effective troubleshooting. Below are some of the most common causes of streaky prints in HP printers: 1. Low or Empty Ink Cartridges One of the primary reasons for streaky prints is low or empty ink cartridges. When your cartridges are running low on ink, they may not dispense ink evenly, leading to gaps and streaks in your documents. How to Check Ink Levels To determine if your ink cartridges are the issue, follow these steps: Open the printer software on your computer. Navigate to the "Estimated Ink Levels" section. Check the status of each cartridge. If you find that the cartridges are low or empty, consider replacing them. Make sure to use genuine HP cartridges to ensure compatibility and quality. 2. Clogged Print Head Nozzles Clogged print head nozzles are another common culprit for streaks and poor print quality. Over time, dried ink can accumulate in the nozzles, preventing proper ink flow during printing. How to Clean the Print Head Cleaning the print head can often resolve this issue. Most HP printers have a built-in cleaning option: Access the printer software on your computer. Look for the "Maintenance" or "Tools" section. Select "Clean Printhead" or "Printhead Cleaning." It might require multiple cleaning cycles to remove stubborn clogs, so be patient. 3. Incorrect Paper Type or Quality Using the wrong type of paper can also lead to streaky prints. If your printer is set to a specific paper type and you're using a different kind, it may not print correctly. Choosing the Right Paper Ensure you're using the recommended paper type for your printer. If you're using photo paper, for instance, your printer settings should reflect that to achieve the best results. 4. Misalignment of Print Heads Another reason for streaky prints can be due to misalignment of the print heads. When print heads are misaligned, it can result in inaccurate ink deposition, leading to undesirable streaks. Aligning Print Heads To align your print heads, follow these steps: Open the printer software on your computer. Navigate to the "Maintenance" or "Tools" section. Select "Align Printhead." This process can take a few minutes, but it can significantly improve print quality. 5. Environmental Factors Environment plays a substantial role in printer performance. Factors such as humidity, temperature, and dust can contribute to printing issues. A warm, dry environment can cause ink to dry prematurely in the nozzles, while excessive humidity can cause paper to warp, affecting print quality. Creating an Optimal Printing Environment To maintain your printer's efficiency, consider the following tips: Keep the printer in a cool, dry place, away from direct sunlight. Ensure the room has adequate ventilation. Regularly clean the printer to minimize dust buildup. 6. Outdated Printer Drivers Running an outdated printer driver can lead to various printing issues, including streaks. Driver updates often contain fixes for bugs and improvements for print quality. Updating Your Printer Drivers To update your HP printer drivers, follow these instructions: Visit the HP Support website. Enter your printer model in the search bar. Navigate to the "Drivers & Software" section. Download and install the latest driver for your operating system. Steps to Troubleshoot Streaky Prints If you are experiencing streaking issues, you can follow these troubleshooting steps to identify and resolve the problem quickly. Step 1: Check Ink Levels As previously mentioned, begin by checking the ink levels through the printer software. This will give you a clear indication if your cartridges need to be replaced. Step 2: Clean the Print Heads If your ink levels are adequate, perform a print head cleaning cycle. This might involve running it multiple times for the best result. Step 3: Align the Print Heads After cleaning the print heads, utilize the alignment feature in your printer software to ensure optimal print head placement. Step 4: Test with Different Paper Types Try printing on a different type of paper. If the streaks disappear on one type but not another, it may indicate a paper compatibility issue. Step 5: Update or Reinstall Printer Drivers Check for any updates for your printer's driver software. If problems persist, consider uninstalling and reinstalling the drivers. Step 6: Review Environmental Conditions Lastly, assess your printer's environment. Ensure it is in a suitable location with the right temperature and humidity levels. Preventive Measures for HP Printer Maintenance Maintaining your HP printer can prevent streaks and improve overall print quality. Here are some key preventative measures to consider: 1. Regular Cleaning Perform regular maintenance cleaning of the print heads and interior components to avoid dust buildup and ink clogs. 2. Use HP-Compatible Paper Always opt for paper types recommended by HP to ensure proper ink distribution and reduce the chances of streaking. 3. Monitor Ink Levels Keep a watchful eye on ink levels and replace cartridges promptly to avoid the problems associated with low ink. 4. Keep Drivers Updated Regularly check and update your printer drivers to ensure compatibility with your operating system and software. 5. Printer Environment Management Ensure the printer's environment remains conducive to its functioning by maintaining appropriate humidity and temperature levels. When to Seek Professional Help If you have tried all the above troubleshooting techniques and your HP printer is still producing streaks, it may be time to consult a professional. Sometimes, hardware malfunctions or more complex issues may require assistance from an authorized service technician. Signs that indicate the need for professional help include: Consistent streaking after following all troubleshooting steps Error codes displayed on the printer Inability to print at all Conclusion Dealing with streaky prints from your HP printer can be a frustrating experience, but understanding the underlying causes and implementing preventive measures can significantly improve print quality. If you follow the troubleshooting tips outlined in this article, you're well on your way to eliminating streaks and ensuring your printer functions optimally. Remember, regular maintenance and environmental considerations are essential to prolong your printer's lifespan and enhance your printing experience. If all else fails, seeking professional assistance can help resolve more complex issues. Happy printing! What causes my HP printer to print streaks? The streaks in your prints can often be attributed to clogged printhead nozzles, which is a common issue for inkjet printers. Over time, ink can dry up in the nozzles, leading to uneven ink distribution during printing. This phenomenon is especially prominent when the printer has not been used for an extended period of time, or if low-quality ink cartridges are installed that do not flow well. Another possible cause for streaked prints could be due to dirty printhead contacts or the wrong paper type being used. If the printhead has accumulated dust or grime, it can interfere with the ink flow. Using paper that is not compatible with your specific printer model can also result in incomplete ink absorption, leading to streaks on the printed page. How can I clean the printhead to resolve the streaking issue? To clean the printhead, you can run the cleaning utility that is built into the printer's software. Most HP printers come equipped with a maintenance menu that includes print head cleaning options. Access the printer settings on your computer or printer display, navigate to the maintenance section, and select the cleaning option. This process may take a few minutes and should be repeated if necessary. Additionally, you can manually clean the printhead by removing the cartridges and using a lint-free cloth lightly moistened with distilled water to wipe the printhead area. Be cautious not to touch the copper contacts or the nozzles directly with your fingers. Allow the printhead to dry completely before reinserting the cartridges and running a test print to check if the issue has been resolved. Are there specific types of paper that could cause streaks when printing? Yes, the type of paper used can significantly impact print quality. If you're using outdated or unsuitable paper, the ink may not adhere properly, resulting in streaks. For optimal results, it's recommended to use paper that is specifically designed for inkjet printers. This paper is typically more absorbent and allows for better ink distribution, reducing the chances of streaking. Additionally, using glossy or photo paper with a matte finish can sometimes lead to issues if the printer is not calibrated for those specific media types. Always consult your printer's manual for recommended paper types, as mismatched media can result in a range of printing defects, including streaks. How often should I perform maintenance on my HP printer? Regular maintenance is essential for keeping your HP printer in optimal working condition. For routine use, it is advisable to run print head cleaning and alignment utilities at least once a month, especially if you print frequently. However, if your printer is used less often or if you notice issues like streaking, you may need to perform maintenance more frequently to prevent the buildup of dried ink. In addition to cleaning, you should also inspect and possibly clean the printer's interior components, particularly the rollers and paper path. Keeping these parts clean can help ensure smooth paper feeding and enhance overall print quality. Regular maintenance not only prolongs the lifespan of your printer but also helps maintain the clarity and quality of your printed materials. What should I do if cleaning the printhead doesn't fix the streaking issue? If cleaning the printhead does not resolve the streaking, the issue may stem from low or expired ink cartridges. Check the ink levels and replace any cartridges that are low or empty. It's also important to ensure that you are using genuine HP cartridges, as third-party products may not meet the same quality standards and can lead to various printing problems. If you have confirmed that the ink is sufficient and the cartridges are legitimate, consider resetting the printer and reinstalling the printer drivers. Sometimes, driver issues can interfere with printing quality. After reinstalling the drivers, run a test print to see if this rectifies the streaking problem. Could the printer's settings affect print quality and cause streaks? Absolutely, printer settings play a crucial role in the quality of your output. If your printer is set to a low-quality or draft mode, it may not apply enough ink to the paper, resulting in streaky prints. Always make sure that the settings are adjusted to the highest quality when printing important documents or images. You can find these settings in the print dialog box on your computer when you initiate a print job. Moreover, adjusting the paper type setting is equally important. If the printer is set to a different type of media than what you are actually using, it may not apply the correct amount of ink. Make sure to select the appropriate paper type that corresponds with your actual paper to improve print quality and reduce streaks. What role do ink cartridge age and type play in printer streaks? Ink cartridges also have a shelf life, and expired cartridges can cause poor print performance, including streaking. Over time, even unused cartridges can dry out, leading to clogged printheads. Before starting a print job, always check the expiration date on your cartridges and replace any that are past their prime. Using the correct type of ink cartridges—whether OEM (Original Equipment Manufacturer) or high-quality third-party brands—also impacts output. Inks that are not designed for or could potentially damage your printer. Always opt for cartridges that are compatible with your printer model to ensure better performance and print quality. When should I contact HP support regarding my printer's streaking issues? If you have tried various troubleshooting steps such as cleaning the printhead, replacing cartridges, and checking your printer settings but are still experiencing streaking, it may be time to contact HP support. This could indicate a more significant issue, such as a mechanical failure that requires professional assistance. HP's customer support can provide guidance based on your specific printer model and current problems. Additionally, if your printer is still under warranty, reaching out to HP support may be beneficial for repairs or replacements. They can offer instructions on warranty claims and may provide solutions that are not widely known. Document any troubleshooting steps you've taken to facilitate a quicker diagnosis, as this information can help the support team assist you more effectively. Having difficulty with light streaks or lines of white appearing on your printed photos or documents? Often, a quick step will fix it right up! Ink streaks and faded bands, white streaks, missing colors, and blank lines are some of the most common issues seen with inkjet printers. Usually, these are easy-to-fix problems and you can get back to printing in no time. This topic discusses blank streaks specifically. If you are seeing black or colored lines of ink or smudges on the printed page, keep an eye out for our future article about fixing ink smudges or lines on printed pages or call us for tips. Otherwise, read on! The summary (TL;DR): Clogged printhead nozzles or low ink levels are the most common cause for blank or light bands on prints. Use the built-in cleaning cycle or manually clean the printhead. For vertical blank bands, check for paper or labels blocking the print in specific areas. The most common causes for light / blank areas or missing colors are: Low ink Dried ink in the printhead Dirty printhead Obstructions between the paper and the print head (when streaks are vertical) Fixing the Blank Areas: Inkjet printers work by using tiny nozzles to spray microscopic drops of ink onto the page. Sometimes, the ink nozzles get dirty or clogged with dried ink, and in those areas, no ink is displayed on the page. Generally, inkjet printers have different printheads and different nozzles for black and each color, or at least one for black and one for colors. There are a few ways to clean those nozzles and return your print back to its original beauty! Make sure the issue is in the printer (not the document or the printing software), and find out which printhead needs cleaning. Sometimes software can cause blank sections of print, for example, when the wrong printer driver is used or when printing a low-resolution picture. To rule this out, many printers support printing a self-test page. How to print this page depends on the model. A quick search for print test page (your printer model) will usually find it quickly. In case automatic cleaning doesn't work, we also need to figure out which printhead or printheads are leaving blank areas. If a black and white document prints ok, but a photo shows the light streaks, the problem will be in the color print head or heads. If photos look ok, but black text shows blank lines, it's probably in the black print head. Make sure ink cartridges are not low or dried up. If your ink cartridge is low, it may not be able to deliver enough ink to print evenly. Also, ink cartridges in inkjet printers that don't get used frequently can sometimes dry up. If the cartridges are not fairly new, replacing them may be a good first step. You can always try the later steps first, but keep this one in mind. Use built-in cleaning functions. The easiest option is usually the printer's self-cleaning function. Some printers let you start cleanings from the panel, but most use the computer's printer software or driver to kick it off. For example, HP and Brother include their Toolbox software when you install their printers. If you aren't sure where to find them, search for clean printhead (your model) or cleaning cycle (your model). Sometimes it helps to run the cleaning cycle more than once; but, please note that it can use quite a bit of ink to run the printhead self-cleaning function. If your printer doesn't have a built-in cleaning function, or if it didn't fix the problem, you can try cleaning your printhead by hand. Please note that there are two main types of inkjet printheads. Printhead units are cartridges with the "heads" built in, while two-part units have a printhead and a separate ink cartridge for each color. Materials needed: To clean the print head: Remove the print head from the inkjet printer (see documentation for your printer). Rotate the printhead so the nozzles face upward. Dampen the cotton swab with the water or alcohol (should be damp only - squeeze or blot out any excess). Gently clean the surface of the print head, removing any dried ink, dirt or fibers. If any wet ink is left, blot it off with a dry swab or lint-free towel. Repeat steps 1-4 for any other printheads. Reinstall all printheads into the printer. For best results, do not leave printheads out of the printer for extended periods to prevent ink from drying in the jets again. Print several pages to help the ink begin flowing and to test the print quality. If all else fails, replace the printhead or printheads on your printer. If cleaning doesn't fix the issue, the jets may be too blocked, or the print head itself may be failing. But no worries, your printer can still print high-quality pages for you with a new printhead. Buy one or more printheads to replace the blocked or bad units. Installation is generally easy and fixes the common problems listed above as well as a few less common issues. Long term tips: Print regularly - print head jets dry out when not used, so printing at least once every few days will help keep them from drying out. Run the cleaning tool occasionally (not too frequently, as it can use a lot of ink). More info: Inkjets are generally less expensive per printed page than laser printers and quality looks similar. However, when inkjets are used infrequently, it's possible for the ink to dry up and need replacement. If this happens, the cost per printed page can actually be a lot more expensive in the long run. Laser printers use a dry powder (toner) that lasts quite a long time, even when not used. If there are long breaks between print jobs, it may be more economical to invest a little more up front and purchase a laser printer. Considering the cost of basic laser printers has come down quite a bit over the last few years, it makes them an even more attractive option. Related links Publisher: Precision Roller Last Updated on September 10, 2023 by Dave Farquhar Laser printers tend to be fairly low-maintenance items. When they start printing streaks across your pages, that's how you know it's time for service. It doesn't usually mean you need a new printer. In this blog post, I'll tell you how to fix laser printer streaks. Laser printer streaks usually mean the printer's toner cartridge or drum unit has a problem. On some printers the drum unit is part of the toner cartridge, but on cheaper printers, it may be a separate piece. Before I specialized in computer security for a living, I spent around 7 years handling printers, among other things. We had a maintenance contract to take care of major issues. But I was in charge of most of the day-to-day stuff when it came to printers. I see far too many people throwing out perfectly good laser printers just because they don't print properly. Here's how to fix that problem. Table of Contents Checking the toner cartridge to fix laser printer streaks Streaking on laser printers like the print above doesn't mean the printer is worn out. It's one of two replaceable parts. The simplest fix for laser printer streaks is checking the toner cartridge. If the cartridge is getting close to empty, the toner distribution inside could be uneven. Taking the cartridge out and shaking it back and forth can redistribute the toner so you can print well again, at least for a little while. If this fixes the problem, order a new cartridge, because you don't have a lot of pages left in that cartridge. At home you might get by a month, but in a busy office, that cartridge may only last another day or so. It can be hard to remember how old a cartridge is, so I like to write the date on a cartridge when I change it. Back to the table of contents Checking the drum/ If the print above doesn't work, check the drum. The drum gets hot, so turn the printer off and let it sit 15-30 minutes before you do this. On toner cartridges that contain a drum, there's a spring loaded part that covers a long, green rotating drum that distributes the toner. On a properly functioning cartridge, the drum is pretty clean. If you open the spring loaded door and see an excessive amount of toner on the drum, that's probably causing your streaks. You can clean the drum with a cotton swab with some isopropyl alcohol on it. There may be a gear on the outside of the cartridge you can turn to rotate the drum so you can change what area on the drum is exposed. Don't touch the drum with your fingers, because that will damage it. After cleaning the drum, print a few pages containing just a single character (ideally something like a period, that doesn't use much toner), to help get rid of the rest. Back to the table of contents The drum wiper/ There's a wiper on the drum that will eventually wear out. It can even degrade just while sitting around, but that takes decades. But on an older cartridge that's been in use a while, the wiper can wear out from use, the same way your car's windshield wipers do. If you're constantly having to clean the drum, the cartridge needs replacement. If your drum unit isn't part of the toner cartridge, and you've never replaced it before, it's time to replace it if you're getting streaks. On cheaper printers, the drum unit is generally good for 2-5 toner cartridges, depending on how long the toner cartridges themselves last, and the nature of what you print. Big-box stores like Best Buy generally don't have much selection of printer supplies, but the big office supply chains frequently will have them. If not, do a Google search on your make of printer and the words "drum unit" to find the part number and where to order it. Back to the table of contents What to do if your laser printer streaks with a new toner cartridge Occasionally, you can buy a new (or more likely, remanufactured) toner cartridge that streaks from the get-go. That's not a problem with your printer, it's a problem with the cartridge. Some remanufacturers don't replace the blade when they remanufacture. I've been using 4inkjets for the last 15 years and I recommend them. With random vendors on Ebay and Amazon, it was more like a 50/50 chance the cartridges were remanufactured properly. The remanufactured cartridges from the major office supply store chains are fine too, so if you're in a hurry, they're a viable option. But 4inkjets is cheaper if you can wait for shipping. Back to the table of contents David Farquhar is a computer security professional, entrepreneur, and author. He has written professionally about computers since 1991, so he was writing about retro computers when they were still new. He has been working in IT professionally since 1994 and has specialized in vulnerability management since 2013. He holds Security+ and CISSP certifications. Today he blogs five times a week, mostly about retro computers and retro gaming covering the time period from 1975 to 2000.