MPSA
Managed Print Supplies
eBook

**Standards and Best Practices
February 2026**

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SERVICES ASSOCIATION

The MPSA definition of Managed Print Services (MPS):
"Managed print services is the active management and optimization of business processes related to documents and information including input and output devices."

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The MPSA is the only international, independent and nonprofit MPS organization that embraces all industry participants in a collaborative environment. The MPSA is NOT owned or directed by any one organization; it is in fact owned by its members. The influence of any single company, large or small, is prevented by the MPSA charter.

Our Mission

The mission of the MPSA and its members is to address and optimize businesses' office document management while enhancing the growth, efficiency, and profitability of the MPS segment through advocacy, marketing, education, research, standards, and a general community of interest.

In order to reach these objectives, the MPSA provides community-driven best practices—like those contained in this eBook —
to empower its members to make more informed decisions regarding their MPS strategies.

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Presented by the
Standards and Best Practices Committee

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- Chris Cooper, Clover Imaging
- Deborah Hawkins, Peter Mayhew and Kris Alvarez, Keypoint Intelligence

Additional input from Major OEM and independent industry experts

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Introduction

Managed Print Services (MPS) providers work across a wide range of customer environments, each with unique needs when it comes to print supplies. Whether supporting enterprise accounts, education, healthcare, or government, clear and consistent terminology is essential for successful engagements.

To support this, the MPSA Standards and Best Practices Committee developed a vendor-neutral reference of commonly used supplies terms. This eBook aims to help MPS providers and end users communicate more effectively and consistently throughout the MPS lifecycle.

And a special thank you to all the volunteers of the MPSA that made this reference a reality. Without our volunteers, there isn't an MPSA. We ask any reader of this eBook to consider becoming a volunteer with one or more committees with the MPSA.

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Reference

The following sections are included in the eBook for MPS providers to consider as a Managed Print RFP Template to incorporate in their MPS engagement strategy:
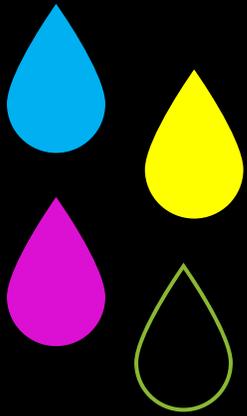
1. **Toner and Ink Terms**
2. **Printer Consumable Terms**
3. **Consumables and Usage Terms**

This list of terminology is the top list to be aware of, and it is not an exhaustive list. MPS providers should reflect on these terms as minimum recommendations in their MPS offering to prospective buyers.

This eBook is a collaboration led by the Standards and Best Practices Committee and has been reviewed and approved by MPSA members and industry experts in North America and Europe.
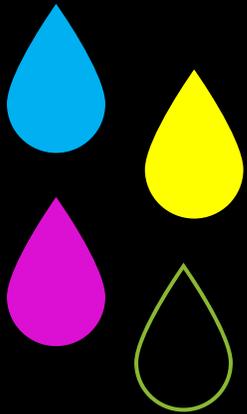
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Toner and Ink Terms

1. Toner
2. Ink
3. Dye-Based Inks
4. Pigment-Based Inks
5. Cartridge
6. High-Yield Cartridge
7. OEM Cartridge (Original Equipment Manufacturer)
8. Compatible Cartridge
9. Clone Cartridge
10. Remanufactured Cartridge
11. Refilled Cartridge

Toner and Ink Terms

1. **Toner:**

   A fine powder used in laser printers and copiers made from a combination of plastic particles, pigments, and additives to form text and images on paper. Toner is fused to the paper using heat.
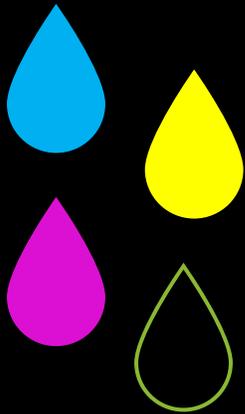
2. **Ink:**

   A liquid substance used in inkjet printers to create text and images. Available in various formulations such as dye-based or pigment-based ink. Some inks can be solid and gel in composition, which are then melted in the device before "firing" onto the media.

3. **Dye-based Inks:**

   Inks where colorants are completely dissolved in liquid, known for their vibrant and saturated colors. They are generally less expensive than pigment inks, but more prone to fading and water damage, making them ideal for general use where longevity is not critical.

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Toner and Ink Terms

4. **Pigment-Based Inks:**

   Inks that contain colorant particles suspended in liquid, not dissolved. Highly resistant to fading and water, pigment inks provide durable, archival-quality prints, but are typically more expensive, making them suitable for professional and/or outdoor applications requiring long-term stability.

5. **Cartridge:**

   A container that holds toner (for laser printers) or ink (for inkjet printers). It may include additional components like a print head or drum.
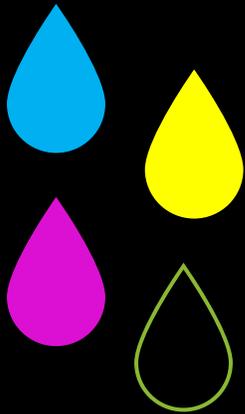
6. **High-Yield Cartridge:**

   A toner or ink cartridge designed to print more pages compared to standard cartridges, often at a lower cost per page.

7. **OEM Cartridge (Original Equipment Manufacturer):**

   Cartridges made by the printer's manufacturer, typically ensuring compatibility and quality.

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Toner and Ink Terms

8. **Compatible Cartridge:**

   A newly manufactured, third-party cartridge designed to work with specific printers. It is not made by the original manufacturer but built to be compatible in function and fit. Quality and performance can vary depending on the supplier.

9. **Clone Cartridge:**

   A type of compatible cartridge that closely copies or imitates the original manufacturer's design. While typically low in cost, clone cartridges may raise patent or quality concerns and can vary significantly in reliability.
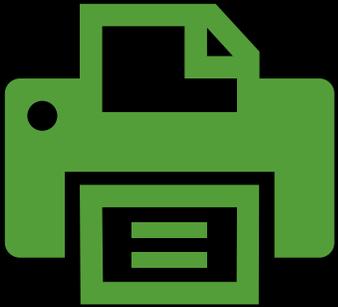
10. **Remanufactured Cartridge:**

    A used OEM cartridge that has been professionally torn down, cleaned, and refilled, with worn or non-functioning parts replaced to the original specifications for reuse, either by the OEM or a 3rd-party remanufacturer. They are tested to ensure they meet specific quality standards before resale.
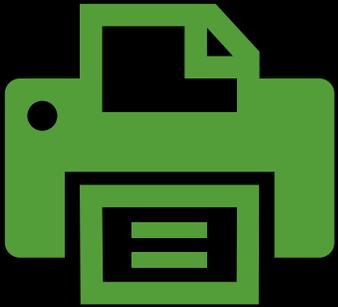
11. **Refilled Cartridge:**

    Used cartridges (whether OEM or compatible) that have been refilled with new ink or toner. This process can be done professionally or by the user with a refill kit. Refilled cartridges have typically not undergone part replacement or extensive testing like remanufactured cartridges.

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Printer Consumable Terms

1. Drum Unit

2. Fuser

3. Waste Toner Bottle

4. Transfer Belt

5. Maintenance Kit

6. Rollers

7. Photo Conductor

8. Imaging Unit

Printer Consumable Terms

1. **Drum Unit:**

   A component in laser printers that transfers toner to the paper. It often requires replacement after a specific number of prints. Also named Photoconductor.

2. **Fuser:**

   A part of a laser printer that applies heat to fuse toner particles onto the paper, ensuring the print stays permanent.
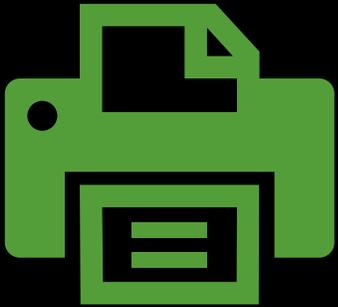
3. **Waste Toner Bottle:**

   A container that collects unused or excess toner during the printing process, which needs periodic replacement.

4. **Transfer Belt:**

   Used in color laser printers to transfer toner from the cartridges to the paper. It requires replacement after extensive use.

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Printer Consumable Terms

5. **Maintenance Kit:**

   A bundle of printer components, such as fusers, rollers, and transfer belts, provided by the manufacturer to maintain printer efficiency.

6. **Rollers:**

   Components that feed paper through the printer. Over time, they may wear out and cause paper jams or feed issues.

7. **Photo Conductor:**

   A light-sensitive part in some printers that helps transfer the image from the drum to the paper.

8. **Imaging Unit:**

   A light-sensitive part in some printers that helps transfer the image from the drum to the paper.

Consumables and Usage Terms

1. Yield

2. Page Coverage

3. Colorant

4. Developer

5. Consumable Lifecycle

6. Recycling Program

7. Recovery Program

8. Retail Packaging

9. Brown Box / White Box Packaging

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Consumables and Usage Terms

1. **Yield:**

    The estimated number of pages a consumable (toner, ink, or drum) can produce before needing replacement based on Page Coverage assumptions.

2. **Page Coverage:**

    Refers to the percentage of a printed page covered by toner or ink. Standard yield estimates are typically based on 5% page coverage. See ISO specs.

3. **Colorant:**

    The pigment or dye in ink or toner that provides color.

4. **Developer:**

    A component in a laser printer that works with the drum to transfer toner particles onto paper.

Consumables and Usage Terms

5. **Consumable Lifecycle:**

   The expected operational life of a consumable (e.g., toner cartridge, drum) based on usage and manufacturer guidelines.

6. **Recycle Program:**

   Many manufacturers and MPS providers offer programs to recycle used toner and ink cartridges, reducing environmental impact.

7. **Recovery Program:**

   More and more manufacturers encourage users to opt in circular best practices by returning used toner and ink cartridges to them in order to remanufacture them. It provides more environmental benefits than recycling only.

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Consumables and Usage Terms

8. **Retail Packaging:**

   Retail packaging is branded, consumer-facing packaging for toner sold in stores or online. It features product images, compatibility info, and marketing content, designed to attract end-users. It often includes extra documentation and protective materials.

9. **Brown Box / White Box Packaging:**

   Brown or white box packaging is plain, no-frills toner packaging used in MPS programs. It includes only essential product details and is designed for cost-effective, bulk, or direct-to-user delivery with minimal waste.

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Something missing?

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