

The best article I've found so far on POF is here:

<http://softexpressions.com/help/faq/FAQbjs.htm#c82>

The article advises *against* HP printers that use Ink Cartridges #10 and #11. Add #97 Tri-Color to that list.

Rule #1 - Bubble Jet Set 2000 (BJS) to pretreat the fabric.

Rule #2 - DYE BASED INKS (avoid Pigments like the Plague, Please)

Rule #3 - Doesn't matter how nice a printer is - if the ink stinks your output will stink.

Rule #4 - 200ct muslin gets waaaaaaaay better results than the best stuff you can get at the you-know-whereMart. Absolutely worth the extra dollar or so per-yard. I will never be able to "go back". (Durnit. I did so love paying less than \$2.)

Rule #5 - Don't iron the pretreated sheets until they're completely dry. Don't use steam or spray them first with water. Don't crank your iron up to the highest setting to prepare it/apply it to either the freezer paper or the full sheet labels. Use the least heat possible to get the job done. (Unless you like brown mottles and streaks in the background. Who knows? If you're shooting for a distressed antique look or something "artsy" with tans and other "naturals" it might actually enhance the look.) Don't iron them any more than absolutely necessary until they've been printed and the BJS has been washed out.

Steps:

- Soak the fabric in BJS. Follow the eeeeezee directions on the bottle.
- I take mine out of the BJS one sheet at a time and clip it to a spring pole over the bath tub. Once that sheet has stopped dripping back into the pan of BJS, I move it over and take out the next sheet. As soon as the last sheet has stopped dripping I pour the BJS back into the bottle to use again. I get at least 6 yards per 32 oz bottle. Others may get more. I usually get sidetracked and let it soak for more than 5 minutes. Also, I'm too impatient to add it one capful at a time, one sheet at a time. I dump the whole bottle into the pan, soak about two yards at a time, then pour it back to use later.
- I let it hang to dry, then iron it to freezer paper or stick it on Avery 3383 Sticker Project Paper. (Easier to get the fabric off than with label sheets. Not a necessary expense when using my new Canon printer, but provides less horrible results when using the HP model I have. I never had problems running it through on freezer paper using the other HPs I've owned, but this one has been a nightmare.)

I compared the following this weekend:

HP PSC 1600 - using a #97 tri-color cartridge.

Printed on 200ct muslin

Printed on bargain muslin

Canon PixmaPro 9000 - using ChromaLife 100 inks

(Regardless of model look for cartridge numbers that start CL or CLI. CLI is best)

Printed on both fabric qualities
Tested the following for the first wash/rinse: Cheer Color Safe, Woolite, Plain Water, Tide, and a bar of soap.

Older HP inkjet printers that use #78 or #23 The tri-color cartridges work better than any other HP ink I've tried over the years.

The Lexmark I tried a few years ago printed beautifully on paper but the results on fabric were not very good. I don't know anything about their newest models.

I got the Canon last week because of the articles, because I haven't gotten a decent print on fabric since I bought the HP with the 97 Cartridge, because I've always wanted something that could print on big sheets (up to 14" x 23" on this one), and because I hadn't yet blown my whole tax return on a different luxury.

No matter which method or detergent used to rinse it, the HP sheets lost about twice as much color and clarity as with the Canon. The color just floats away before your eyes.

Using the Canon, I was able to skip tediously rinsing one sheet at a time, etc. In fact, I took a sample from the Canon and tossed it straight into a load of wash using Tide in hot water. The reds faded a little more than the other samples, and the black bled a teeny tiny bit but that's about the worst it got. The only thing I tried that took out too much ink was scrubbing a sample with a bar of soap. Except for the soap scrubbed sample, none lost more than about half a shade of color and a little bit of the "crisp & clear" in outlines.

I also tried something else on some of the samples. I happen to have some Dharma [Liquid] Dye Fixative (DDF). Dye-based ink ... dye fixative hmmm ... I wondered. I printed the samples, let them sit for 30 minutes, dropped them straight into a solution of about 1/4 cup DDF in 2 cups of water without any interim rinse in detergent or plain water. Just laid them one at a time face up on top of the solution then pushed it flat to the bottom before putting the next sheet in on top of it. NOTHING visible to the naked eye floated up from the Canon sheets. I have a feeling I could have wadded them up at just stuffed them in but wasn't feel quite that adventurous. The DDF doesn't seem to have made any difference in color or clarity. Over time, though, I'll know whether or not it makes to colors hold up better through repeated washing. I have a feeling I didn't need to use that much DDF but the instructions on the bottle are in ounces per-pound of fabric. Even if I did have an accurate way to weight the fabric, I still wouldn't know the right amount of water to use. I've written asking/hoping they translate that into ounces per gallon of water for me.

I'm not suggesting everybody runs out to buy new printers. And I'll bet that before the day is out many others will step forward with a lot of good advice about how to get the most out of the printer you already have. I'll bet there are quilters out there who get great results from the #97 cartridge. I hope they chime in and share because if I can get more from mine, I'd sure like to. Two printers have got to be better than one. ;-)

P.S. The HP website has a list of Adobe files you can download to print several different fabric patterns. Check it out. They're all free and you might find something you like.

<http://h10025.www1.hp.com/ewfrf/wc/acProject?lc=en&cc=us&extsubcat=patternstools&dlc=en&project=readymadefabricdesigns&extcat=quilting>

I got my 200ct muslin from Joann's on a 25-yard bolt. I had one of the lovely 40% off coupons. At the full price of \$89.99, it's about \$3.60 p/yard (plus shipping). Given 15 letter-sized sheets per yard, that's about a quarter per sheet. The main reason I bought it there was that it was the only site I could find that sold muslin clearly labeled as 200ct. And the only one labeled like that was by-the-bolt. My guess is they also sell it by the yard, but I didn't feel like driving 50 miles to the nearest Joann's store to find out. Hopefully, others will share links to 200ct muslin at the same price or lower. Luckily, I was able to treat myself because of the tax return. I wouldn't normally have that kind of money to plunk down for fabric at once. And since I'm headed toward a Q-sized quilted bedspread using mostly home printed patches, it'll save me the hassles of several trips as the project grows toward completion. ☺

BJS, at the Dharma price, costs between 25 and 20 cents per letter-sized sheet. (I always buy 5 bottles at a time.)

I don't buy the Bubble Jet Rinse. Too expensive considering you can use Woolite, Synthrapol, or any one of several other mild detergents and get the same results.

So the average cost is about 50 cents per letter-sized sheet.

Significantly less than the pretreated/premounted sheets at the store (start at \$1.60 per sheet. I've seen some for well over \$2 per sheet), or the newly available pretreated fabric sold by the yard at C Jenkins (about 70 cents per sheet + shipping + not pre-mounted).