# Printing from Your iPad, iPhone, Android Phone, and Tablet

By Ted Brooks

Some of the major printer manufacturers, including Hewlett-Packard (HP), Epson, Canon, and Brother, have produced apps that allow you to print directly from your wireless device to one of their wireless printers. You can easily find the apps by entering "print" in the iTunes or Google Play app search. These proprietary apps are available at no cost, and there are other "universal" apps available—some free and some for a price. There are limitations with these apps, however. For instance, while the HP ePrint app for Android does a nice job of printing documents and photos, printing an e-mail is not an option. If you already have a wireless printer, you may want to consider these apps since the printer-specific ones are free and certainly worth a try—especially if you only need to print to a single printer.

HP, Epson, and Lexmark also offer a series of AirPrint-ready printers, which will connect directly and print wirelessly from your iOS (iPad, iPhone, Mac) devices. If you're in the market for a new printer, you might as well take a look.

Several apps can connect to your wireless network and print through your networked printer. Printopia, Printer Pro, and Print & Share are a few popular choices in iTunes. Keep in mind that some are Mac-only apps

(e.g., Printopia), which won't work in a Windows environment. The downside of this scenario is you are actually printing through a computer that is, in turn, connected to your printer. So you'll need to have your computer online any time you want to print. While it works well, it adds a level of dependency on a computer.

One of the coolest printing solutions I've seen recently is a hardware device that eliminates the need to feed your signal through another computer—the xPrintServer by Lantronix. After trying it out, I'd have to say this is one very slick, well-designed device. I opened the box, didn't bother reading any of the literature (one should refer to instructions only when or if absolutely necessary, sort of like asking for directions when traveling), plugged in the device, connected to my network via the included cable, and then printed an e-mail from my iPad—all in approximately five minutes. It works.

Some of the major benefits of the xPrint-Server are computer independence (you don't need a networked computer running in order to print), platform independence (works on both iOS and Windows networks), thousands of printer choices (more than 4,000 printers currently supported with others available on request), and it allows you to keep and use the printers you already have. Additionally, the home edition features a USB input that allows you to connect your printer via a USB cable, meaning you can "network" your standalone

printer. Although xPrintServer doesn't support Android devices at this time, Lantronix is a networking solutions company, so I would expect to see Android support at some point.

You can print wirelessly from your Mac or Windows laptop to a networked or USB printer connected to the xPrintServer by using the Apple Bonjour printing service—again without having to run your print job through another computer and without the need for a wireless printer. The Mac OS allows you to simply add a new printer. If you have a Windows system, you can get additional information and download the Bonjour app at http://support.apple.com/kb/DL999. Printing from my Windows laptop through the xPrintServer was as quick as printing directly through my network, making it simple to set up portable wireless printing for a trial team. Since the xPrintServer connects to your network through a standard cable, security exists via your network. In other words, if your iPad is on the same wireless network as your printer (wired or wireless), you can print without logging in to anything else. If you're not logged in to your network, you will not have access to the printer or data sent to it.

The xPrintServer is available in a home edition, which I tested, and a network edition. For small and home offices, the home edition should fit the bill. For larger installations with several users, the network edition will work. One main difference is the

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USB interface—currently it's included only in the home edition, but the network edition should include this in the future.

**Home Edition—**designed for consumers/home use

- Supports USB printers (turns any USB printer into a networked printer that can be shared by all users)
- Supports networked printers—wired or wireless
- MSRP $99.95

**Network Edition—**designed for small- to medium-size businesses

- Supports a virtually unlimited number of network-connected printers (wired or wireless)
- MSRP $149.95

Admittedly, the xPrintServer is a bit pricier than your average app, but you're getting a piece of hardware that, in effect, eliminates the need for a computer to enable printing. Rather than comparing its cost with an app with only part of the functionality, the fairer comparison might be the cost of a computer or new printer. This device can be used at home or in the office and easily set up in remote locations. Rather than a single specific function, the xPrintServer can be adapted to a variety of current and future situations. ■

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