

Lexmark C522n

EDITOR RATING



VERY GOOD



COMPANY

Lexmark International, Inc.
<http://www.lexmark.com>

SPEC DATA

Type: 1-pass color
Technology: Laser
Rated Speed (Color): 20 ppm
Rated Speed (Mono): 20 ppm
Maximum Paper Size: Legal
Duty Cycle: 45,000 pages per month
Input Capacity: 500 sheets
Network-Ready: Yes
Duplexing: No
Cost Per Page (Color): 15.1 cents
Cost Per Page (Mono): 2.8 cents

BOTTOM LINE

The Lexmark C522n's performance for business applications and text quality are excellent, graphics and photo quality are good, and an Ethernet connection makes sharing on a network easy.

PROS

Very good to excellent performance for the price. Excellent text quality. Includes Ethernet connector.

CONS

Graphics output is relatively low for a color laser printer.

PRICE

\$449.00 - \$594.00

BUY IT HERE

PC Connection\$499.00
Super Warehouse\$479.99
Business Computing Network ...\$515.43

TOP-RATED PRODUCTS

- Lexmark C522n
- Ricoh Aficio CL7200D
- Ricoh Aficio G700

Lexmark C522n

REVIEW

By M. David Stone

Our contacts at Lexmark say they're excited about the Lexmark C522n (\$499 direct)—and with good reason. This inexpensive color laser printer offers great performance, excellent text output, and good graphics and photo quality. It even includes an Ethernet connection for easy sharing over a network, and it's priced right for a personal color laser. The optional 500-sheet paper tray (\$299) boosts capacity to an ample 750 sheets, letting this printer function as the workhorse in a small office.

Although the C522n is small enough to fit in a home or small office (or individual office in a large company), at 19 by 17.3 by 15.9 inches (HWD) and 57 pounds it's a bit larger and heavier than the Editors' Choice HP Color LaserJet 2600n. Setup also requires a bit more work than with most printers in this price range, partly because you'll find more packing material to remove than with the 2600n and far more than with the Konica Minolta magicolor 2400W, which offers perhaps the simplest setup of any inexpensive color laser.

In addition, the installation foldout, which uses pictures without words, is difficult to understand. Nonetheless, we managed to get the printer set up without any real problems. Network and software installation, performed by a fully automated software routine, are much easier than physical setup.

Performance is one of the best arguments for choosing this printer, which handed in a total time of 11 minutes 19 seconds on our business applications suite (timed with QualityLogic's hardware and software). The HP 2600n, by comparison, took a slow 21:09. To get faster output, you have to move up to pricier printers, such as the OKI C5200n, which scored 10:35 on the business app suite.

The only similarly priced printer that comes close to the C522n on our tests is the Editors'

Choice Ricoh Aficio G700, at 13:48. (The G700 is not a laser printer, but its performance and output quality are comparable to lasers.) The G700 was tied with or faster than the C522n on most tests, although the C522n was significantly faster on the two 50-page text files.

Output quality is impressive for text and more than acceptable for graphics and photos. On our tests, text was excellent—easily good enough for anything you might want to throw at the printer. Most fonts were easily readable at 4 points, and even two highly stylized fonts required just 8 points.

The good rating for graphics is relatively low, however. Most color lasers earn a rating at the high end of good or better. We saw some posterization, with shading changing suddenly where it should change gradually, and there were some registration problems—blocks of colors didn't line up properly. But the output had eye-catching color and crisp, sharp edges. Overall, the graphics are good enough for internal business use, but marginal if you're trying to impress someone with your professionalism.

Photos also earned a good rating, which is at the low end of the midrange for color lasers. The most important problems we saw were obvious dithering and a flattening effect from the loss of subtle shading that would give objects a sense of dimensionality. But the photos were still good enough for things like newsletters, which is the most you can expect from a color laser printer.

The HP Color Laserjet 2600n matched the C522n for text and photo quality, and at the high end of good, was just a bit better for graphics. Still, with nearly as good quality as the 2600n overall, far better speed, and a higher maximum paper capacity, the C522n earns a spot as our new Editors' Choice for a personal color laser printer.

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