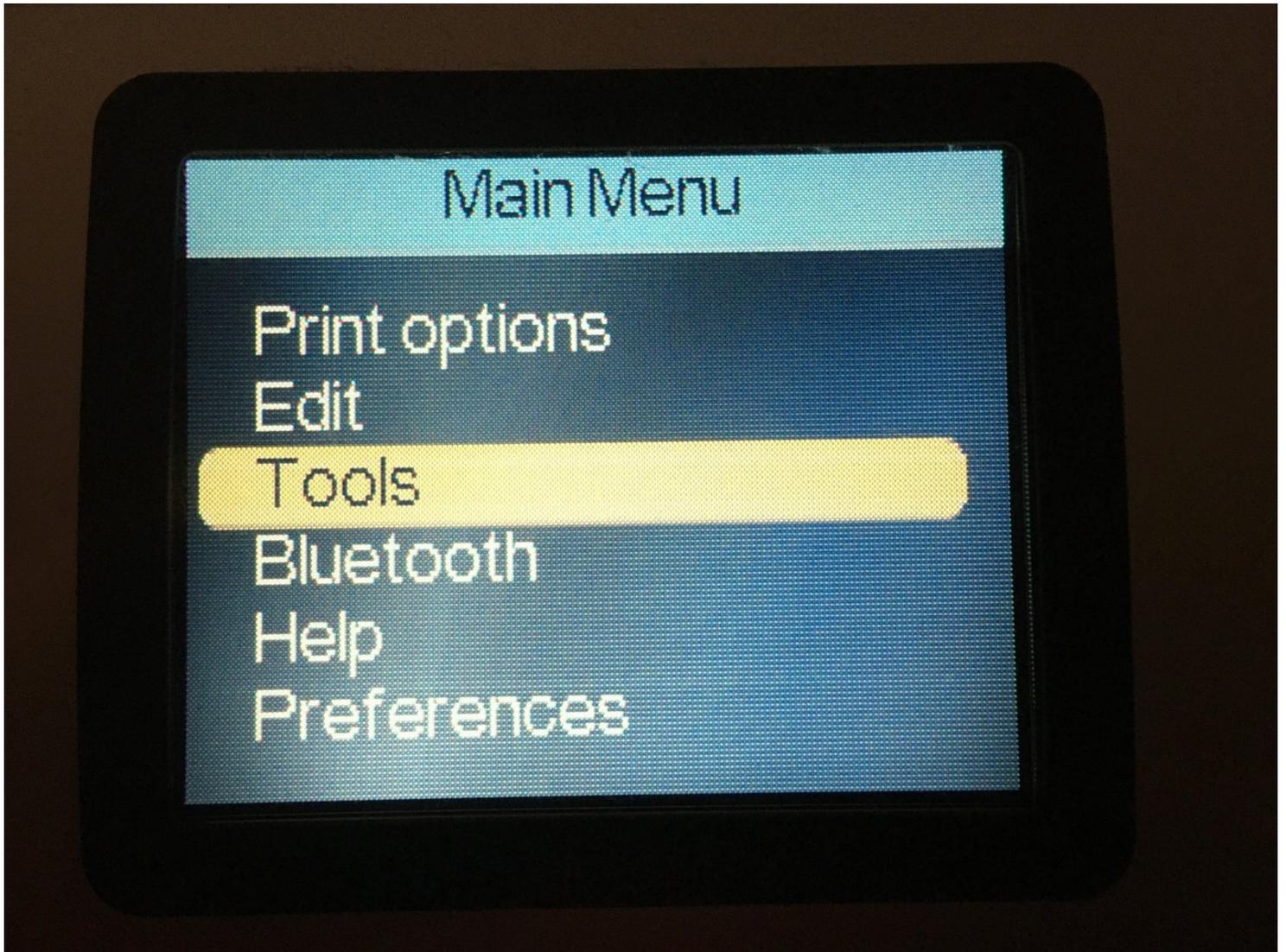




How to Unclog Inkjet Printer Cartridges

When they are performing well, inkjet printers...

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INTRODUCTION

When they are performing well, inkjet printers do a pretty good job. They tend to be less expensive than laser printers, especially when it comes to color output. The low printer costs have to be weighed against the higher per-page cost of inkjet ink compared to laser printer toner. Higher end color inkjets have the advantage of being able to produce fairly nice color prints from your digital photographs.

Unfortunately, in my experience inkjet printers rarely perform well for long. Use it or lose it. If you rarely use them, the ink cartridges have a distressing tendency to dry out. The result is poor print quality.

To remedy poor print quality, most printers have a built-in printhead cleaning command. The cleaning command consumes extra ink by forcing it through the print head, hopefully moistening up the dried ink and allowing it to once again flow freely.

When repeated printhead cleaning fails, the user manual advises replacing the ink cartridges. Not only is this wasteful of whatever ink remains, it is also expensive. This guide explains a simple procedure that might be able to revive clogged ink cartridges. It only applies to the type of ink cartridge that has a built in print head, such as my HP Photosmart 8450.

TOOLS:

Q-Tips (6)

PARTS:

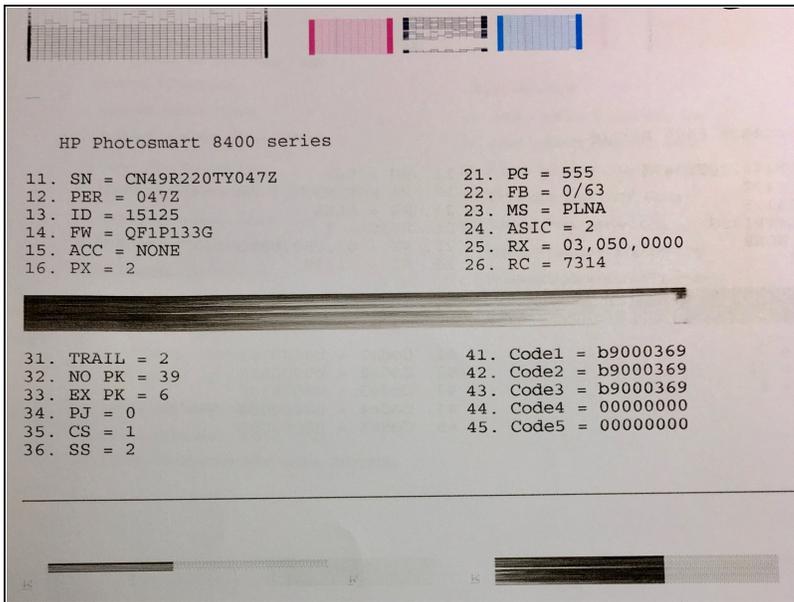
Distilled Water (1)

Step 1 — Automatically Clean Print Cartridges



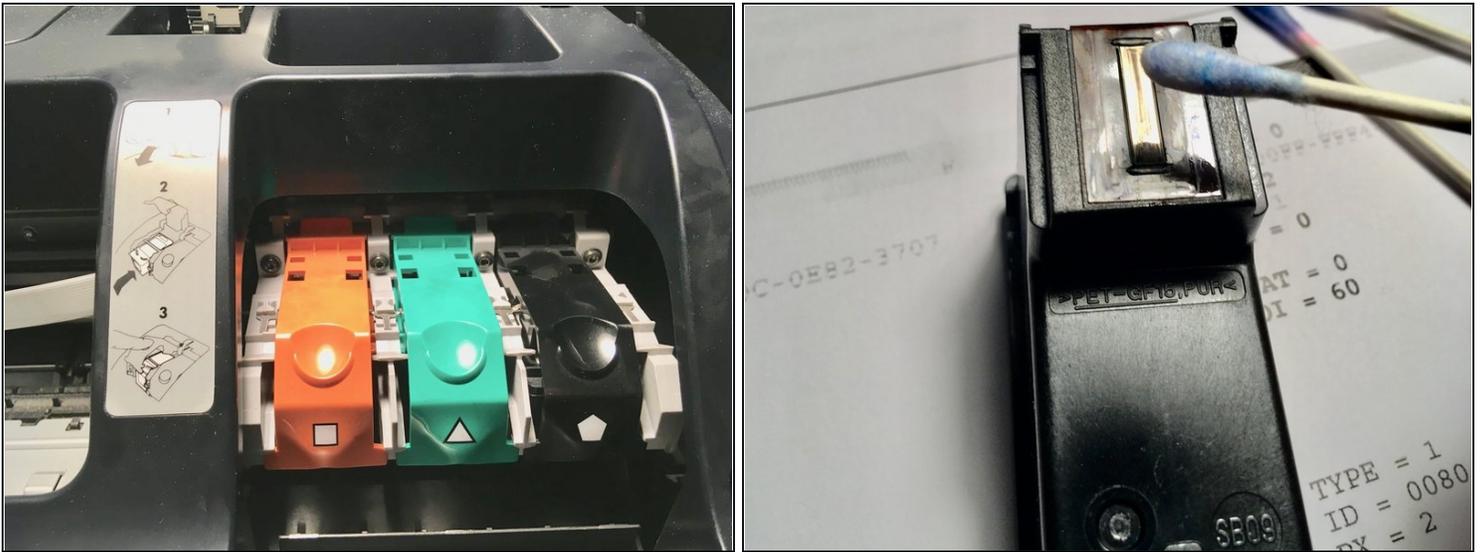
- The manufacturer first suggests using the built-in menu command to clean print cartridges. I access this from a menu on the printer, by selecting Menu/Tools/Clean Cartridges. Then I press the OK button on the printer.

Step 2 — Evaluate



- If the automatic print cartridge cleaning was successful, the printer will print a good looking test page. If the cleaning fails, you'll get a page that looks somewhat like the mine.

Step 3 — Manually Clean Print Cartridges



- This step is also recommended in the manufacturer's manual.
- When automatic cleaning fails, it's time to literally take matters into your own hands by manually cleaning your print cartridges. Remove the cartridges from the printer. With a Q-tip moistened with distilled water, gently wipe the copper-colored area on the bottom of the ink cartridge, where the ink comes out.
- Do not touch the copper colored area with your fingers. The oil on your hands can clog the ink cartridge or interfere with electrical contacts.
- Do not use tap water. Tap water may contain minerals that will contaminate your printer cartridge.
- Do not leave the ink cartridges out of the printer for more than 30 minutes, as this may dry out the cartridges.
- Insert the ink cartridges back into the printer. Print another test page to see if the output quality is suitable.

Step 4 — Soak the Ink Cartridges



- When the manufacturer's recommendations fail, try mine! I have had success in soaking my ink cartridges in a shallow plastic lid with just enough distilled water to cover the bottoms.
- Soak for 20 minutes. To make the ink cartridges stand up with their business end slightly tilted in the water, I propped them up with ballpoint pens. After the soaking, gently dry off the wet area with a Q-tip.
- Insert the ink cartridges back into the printer. Print a test page. If you're fortunate, the print quality will be much improved.

You're done. Print quality should be greatly improved.