

HP OfficeJet 4215

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The Hewlett-Packard OfficeJet 4215 All-in-One is an attractive, affordable, and reliable color inkjet multifunction printer for homes and small businesses. Vendor-rated to print 17 pages per minute in black ink and 12 pages per minute in color ink, it's fast, although not the speediest multifunction in its class. We're OK with that, though, because this machine favors quality over quantity, producing equally impressive print, copy, and scan output. HP's high-quality software and support, wide variety of copy options, and handy features—for example, the ability to create your own fax cover sheet—offset a few downsides, such as a small, awkward output tray and the lack of a built-in memory card reader. If you need an affordable, high-quality multifunction printer for your home or office, this is the best choice on the market.

Design

Unlike other multifunction printers, the HP OfficeJet 4215 All-in-One is a sweet piece of eye candy. The compact OfficeJet 4215 measures 16.4 by 8 by 7.1 inches (W, D, H) and weighs just 8.5 pounds, making it among the smallest and lightest multifunctions available. Located on the back are the power cord, two phone ports, and a USB port (USB cable not included). The OfficeJet 4215's 8MB of memory are not upgradable, however. This will be a problem for small businesses that need to queue multiple fax pages or print large and complicated jobs.

While the folded paper trays in front hide a riot of extra buttons, the LCD and a few important buttons remain visible and accessible through a small opening. Flip down just the paper tray to print and receive faxes in a minimum of space. To access all the control buttons on the front panel, you'll have to open the automatic document-feeder tray on the top and the document catcher, located above the output tray, roughly doubling the machine's height and depth. The fully revealed control panel includes a keypad, speed-dial buttons, and buttons for selecting the fax, scan, or copy functions and starting a job. A small LCD in the center (with On, Cancel, and navigation buttons below it) navigates a simple program menu and describes any errors, should the small, red error-indicator light nearby be flashing. Varying the buttons' size and giving the LCD a backlight would make this panel a little easier to use.

Although the OfficeJet 4215 prints, scans, and copies very quietly, the lightweight machine will rock a bit while operating. When the machine is faxing, its dial and fax tones can be earsplitting, but you can adjust the volume using the front panel. Unfortunately, the large document catcher in front can get in the way when you need to use buttons on the control panel.

Features

Unlike many multifunction printers we've seen lately, the HP OfficeJet 4215 does all its tasks well, producing high-quality prints, copies, scans, and faxes. The printer delivers clear text and borderless prints (for 4x6-inch prints) with ease. The copy settings let you adjust quality, ink usage, size, and other features, and you can make up to 100 copies at a time. The sheet-fed scanner effectively scans a variety of text documents (via Readiris OCR software) and images. The fax-related features include 10 one-touch speed-dial buttons on the front panel and the ability to create your own cover page if you're dissatisfied with the templates provided. Without turning on your computer, you can also use the OfficeJet 4215 as a standalone device to copy or fax.

The paper tray, located on the front of the machine, holds 100 sheets and doubles as an output tray when the other trays are folded up. The document catcher (which catches originals), located above the output tray, and the automatic document feeder, located on top, hold just 20 sheets each, which is suitable for small to medium print jobs.



Editor's rating

Very Good

8.0

out of 10



Installation and setup are quick and painless with the installation CDs HP encloses for both Windows (98, ME, 2000, XP) and Macintosh (OS 9.1 and OS X 10.1.5 and higher). HP's Image Zone software lets you electronically store, edit, and share images and use a variety of templates to create projects such as photo albums and brochures. The easy-to-use HP Director software lets you set up scans, faxes, and copy jobs from your computer. You can also transfer images directly from a camera or a memory card with HP's Image Transfer software, although it's disappointing that you need to provide your own memory card reader to download images electronically.

The HP OfficeJet 4215 comes bundled with a black and a tricolor ink cartridge. As with all inkjets, the per-page cost of replacement ink can be high. The black inkjet cartridge costs \$19.99 (450-page yield), and tricolor cartridges cost \$21.99 (190-page yield) and \$34.99 (400-page yield). The optional photo inkjet cartridge, for best-quality six-ink photo printing, costs \$24.99 (125-page yield). These costs average about 4 cents per copy for black ink, 9 to 12 cents per copy for tricolor ink, and 20 cents per copy for the special photo cartridge—slightly above average for an inkjet printer. Your costs may vary depending on usage.

Performance

Printing performance

The HP OfficeJet 4215 ran through CNET Labs' tests quietly, and its performance scores matched or exceeded our expectations for an inkjet multifunction printer. On text, the HP OfficeJet 4215 averaged 4.8 pages per minute (ppm), which is a little faster than the Lexmark X4270's 4.6ppm. On photos, the 4215 averaged 0.24ppm, which is much faster than the X4270's 0.19 ppm. (In minutes per page, that's 4.2 minutes per page (mmp) for the 4215, compared with 5.2mmp for the X4270.)

The HP OfficeJet 4215 is the first multifunction printer we've tested that consistently produced high print quality, especially on photos. On plain paper, the text was similar to that of a laser printer: clear and sharp, with the exception of a small degree of paleness. The graphics, on the other hand, were perfect, showing a high degree of detail, excellent gradient, and good shading in the images and the graphical elements. On coated inkjet paper, the text was flawless, while the graphics were a little washed out but still very good overall. The printer impressed us most with its photo quality. At a glance, the samples offered great details and excellent color matching, and compared quite well with the originals. Under scrutiny, the images showed minor pixelation.

Scanning and copying performance

The printer's scan speed and quality, however, scored slightly below average. The HP OfficeJet 4215 scanned both grayscale and color documents at 1.6ppm. This is slower than the Lexmark X4270's sizzling 9.3ppm (grayscale) and 5.6ppm (color) performance. The HP also copied at a slower speed: 1.4ppm, as compared to the Lexmark's 3.5ppm.

The documents scanned in grayscale suffered a little from bad color matching and inconsistent gradient. On the other hand, the documents scanned in color had very good color matching and shading. We do not test printers' photocopy quality.

Following CNET Labs' testing procedures, we tested the HP OfficeJet 4215 with its default factory settings, which you can change to improve the output where improvement is needed.

Performance analysis written by CNET Labs project leader Dong Van Ngo.