

The Magazine of the Consumers' Association of Ireland

Consumer Choice



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SEPTEMBER 2015

HOUSING COSTS BECOMING A BARRIER TO THIRD-LEVEL EDUCATION

Consumer Choice examines the student accommodation market

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- GIFT AND INHERITANCE TAX

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- PRINTERS

September 2015

The Consumers' Association of Ireland

The Council is the policy-making body of CAI. Members are elected from within the CAI's membership at the Annual General Meeting.

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Despite appearances, it has been a busy summer and especially so for the Consumers' Association of Ireland (CAI). By way of highlights I can tell you that, on July 8th, we attended the launch of the report of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Transport and Communication on the Regulation and Inspection of Gas Installers operating in Ireland. It was our independent report, outlining how there were in excess of 10,000 illegally installed gas boilers in Ireland in 2011, that facilitated the considerations and which underpins the recommendations of the Committee.

We now need to see very focussed and immediate action from the Commission for Energy Regulation (CER) to bring an end to further life-threatening illegal installations, which they have been worryingly loath to effectively deal with to date.

On August 19th, we visited Kilkenny city for our Annual General Meeting where our Chairman presented Frank Dawe with the May McLoughlin Memorial Award in recognition of his extraordinary representations and contributions on behalf of Members to the CAI Council since 1987.

We closed the month with the CAI submission to the Consultation on the Scheme of a proposed Consumer Rights Bill. This is a Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation initiative to bring much needed reform to the law on Consumer Contract Rights.

We will follow up on and keep you apprised of progress on these interventions together with others including: to Minister Richard Bruton on rising Motor Insurance costs; Minister Leo Varadkar regarding our agreement for an EU-wide ban on Trans-fatty Acids in food; and Minister Simon Coveney outlining our support for the Extension of Origin Labelling to cover loose/non-prepackaged unprocessed meat.



Dermott Jewell



Our Reports

Reports in Consumer Choice are based on market research, laboratory tests or user surveys, all of which are independently and scientifically conducted. Free goods are never accepted for testing – all samples are purchased. Occasionally items may be borrowed for review purposes only.

The reports are produced in the main by our own Editorial staff. Some material is occasionally drawn from other foreign independent consumer magazines.

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Reports on any article relate only to the articles or goods mentioned, and not to any other article of the same or similar description. We do not necessarily price or report on all brands or models within the class, and the exclusion of any brand or model should not be taken as a reflection on it.

Consumer Choice

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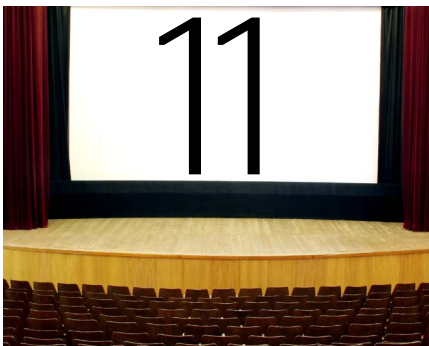
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The decision about which printer to buy is not always black and white. *Consumer Choice* scans the current market and brings you 14 Choice Buys hot off the press.



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News Briefs

The latest information
on the world of the
consumer

Groundswell Body of Support

A decidedly pragmatic and interesting action was taken and introduced in Limerick by Kildimo Community Council in an effort to raise funds for expansion of the local graveyard. This could be an initiative to be replicated across the country if some serious consideration was input. As reported in the *Irish Examiner*, the bill for the development and extension to the graveyard was determined to be in the region of €75,000. The Council therefore introduced a scheme through which residents could purchase a plot, at a cost of €750, and pay for it through direct debit at a rate of €8 per month. At this point in time, in excess of 70% is allocated to residents who have availed of the cost-effective and affordable initiative. The offer will now be made available to people living outside the parish.



Same Outlaws – Different Currency

Our colleagues at *Choice* magazine in Australia are reporting how there is a swell of consumer activity there to introduce a compensation scheme for consumers who are at a loss through poor financial advice. The problem there is that some 25% of all consumers who have been adjudged as entitled to compensation as a result of bad advice on investments, life insurance and superannuation have not been compensated because the provider organisation is insolvent or impossible to contact. The Financial Ombudsman Service (FOS) there has issued 126 determinations in the first quarter of 2015 that remain unpaid. The total losses that are unpaid, including interest and inflation costs, now amount to 21.3 million Australian Dollars (€13.5 million). The proposal is that the scheme be industry funded through a government-imposed levy, which would compensate consumers in cases where the company does not have the funds or has more likely ceased trading.

TRYING TO BE CLEAR AS MUD



The European Commission has published its long-awaited report on GM free labelling and it makes for an interesting read. The report outlines how the majority of respondents reported consumer confusion over multiple labels and claims. It goes further and states how labels claiming a product to be GM-Free only further mislead consumers and give them unrealistic expectation of standards of purity.

This, the report states, is why consumers are sceptical of negative food claims such as no GM-feed and implies that consumers' attitudes towards GM food are changing and that they have become much more accepting. The red flag for many will come through the reflection of how an industry-funded study carried out in the UK found that rising food prices are more important than concerns over GMOs. The report also stresses that expressed negative consumer perceptions of GM products do not automatically translate directly into purchasing behaviours. This is no shock as budgets determine purchasing choice. It does not, however, mean that the genetically modified products are the ones of primary choice!

Icetein – Like Frankenstein Only Nicer

Staying with the thread of modified food.....a group of scientists from the Universities of Dundee and Edinburgh have discovered a protein that helps bind together oil and water (unheard of until now) and which, they think, will ensure that ice cream remains frozen for longer in warm weather. They

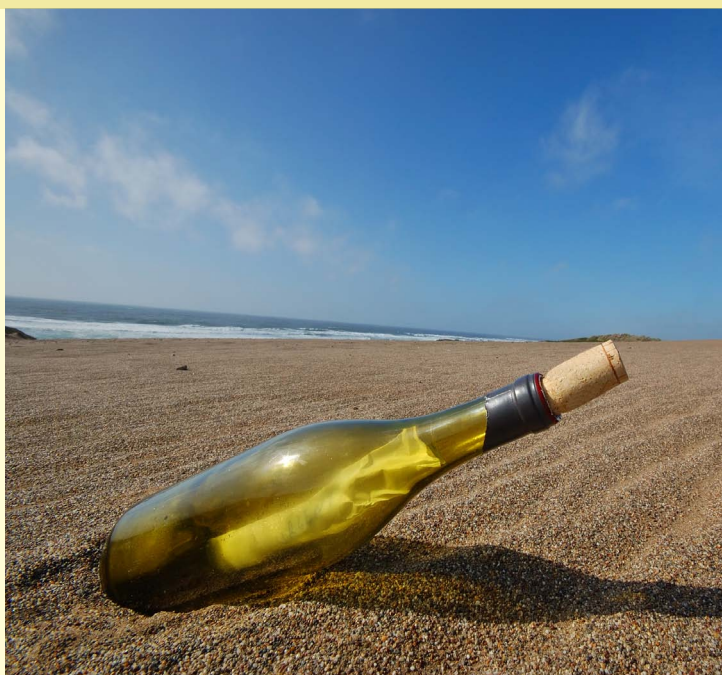
consider that this new ingredient could even lead to healthier ice creams with lower levels of saturated fat and less calories. The logic is that if ice cream can be eaten at a higher temperature, then manufacturers will be able to add less sugar. And, use of the protein replaces some of the fat

molecules used to stabilise the oil and water mixtures that producers currently use. The various pieces of good news are that: it can reduce the fat content, it should taste the same and it could start appearing in products within the next five years. Now, isn't that a challenge for you!

CHEAPER THAN TRAINED FISH

I read, from Silicon Republic, how a bottle, thrown into the sea at the start of the last century, washed up on a beach in the North Sea island of Amrum and was found by a retired German couple.

An enclosed message, written in English, German and Dutch, on a postcard, asked the finder to return it to the Marine Biological Institute in the UK where they would receive a reward of one shilling (which they did!). The bottle was one of more than a thousand released into the North Sea between 1904 and 1906 by a marine biologist in an attempt to find out more about deep sea currents. With the data from bottles that were recovered it has been possible to prove e.g. that the deep sea current flows from east to west in the North Sea. It was also discovered that plaice generally swim against the current. You can continue to follow this story because confirmation is now sought from the Guinness Book of Records to formally advise if this message in a bottle, almost 108 years old, can be declared the oldest ever found. Research of a similar kind is still carried out today but electronic tags are used instead of bottles.



WHO's Not in Charge

A study, carried out by the NGO Foodwatch, is suggesting that food companies continue to market almost exclusively unhealthy foods. The organisation outlines how it found that 90% of the foods marketed to children did not meet World Health Organisation (WHO) criteria set by the Nutrient Profiles model issued last March. An impressive 281 big-brand products from major names that included Burger King, Danone, Kellogg's, Nestlé, Mars and Ferrero were tested and only 29 of those would be authorised to be marketed to children under the WHO rules. Foodwatch contends that its data prove how the EU pledge is entirely inadequate and that new laws must be put forward to tackle childhood obesity and related diseases.

EUr Only Young Ones

Courtesy of *Changing Ireland* magazine's 50th edition I note how statistics indicate how Ireland is the most youthful country within the European Union with 22% of our population aged below 15 years. A full 40% - or four in every ten people in Ireland - are aged below 30 years. France takes second place ranking for the under 15 group with 19% there. Interestingly, it is Bulgaria, Germany and Italy where we find the lowest proportion of youths. They are probably visiting Ireland!

Food & Health

 by Clodagh O'Donoghue



Safety warning highlighting Ikea furniture tip-over risks

The Ikea website is featuring an important safety notice providing information on furniture tip-over prevention following warnings by safety watchdogs on the dangers of Ikea chests and wardrobes that are not secured to walls. In 2014, two small children in the US were killed in separate incidents when chests of drawers from the furniture company's Malm range tipped over and fell on top of them. These tragedies and other incidents involving Malm chests have highlighted the serious risks that such furniture items can pose if they are not fastened to a wall.

The US Consumer Product Safety Commission and Ikea have warned that consumers should not use the company's children's chests of drawers

and wardrobes taller than 60cm and adult versions taller than 75cm unless they have been securely anchored to a wall. Ikea has said that it is not recalling the Malm chests and that its products are safe when assembled according to the instructions provided and attached to a wall using the restraints supplied in the packaging. On its website, Ikea is urging consumers to inspect their Ikea chests of drawers and dressers to make sure they have been securely anchored to the wall using the original restraints provided and if a replacement restraint kit is needed to secure Ikea furniture in the home, one can be ordered free of charge by ringing 01 5413302. Alternatively, you can place an online order for a free kit at <http://gbinincontact.ikea.com/contactus/email.aspx?MissingParts=MALM>, making sure to quote the part number 106990 on the form.

As part of Ikea's Secure It! campaign, the company website offers a wall anchoring guide to help consumers safely attach their furniture items with the tip-over restraint provided and the right hardware according to the wall material in their home. Other safety precautions that are recommended include placing heavy objects in the lowest drawers, never putting a TV or other heavy object on top of a chest of drawers or other furniture not designed for use with a TV and not allowing children to climb or hang on drawers, doors or shelves.

Common medications can increase fall risk in older men

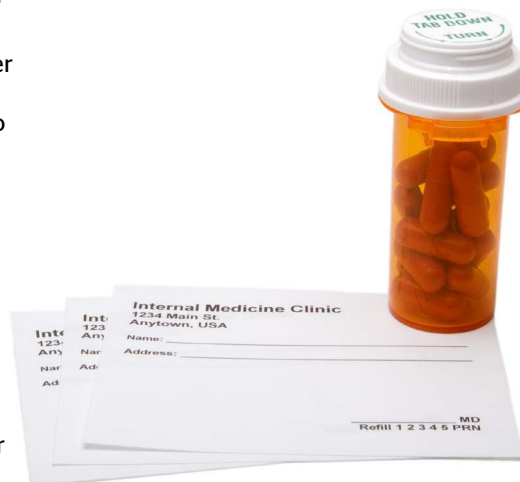
A major new Irish study has uncovered a significant link between serious falls causing injury in older men and the use of certain common medications. Scientists from Trinity College Dublin, St. James' Hospital in Dublin and three UK universities analysed data from The Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing (TILDA) - an ongoing study of people in Ireland aged over 50 years - to assess how many medications individuals were taking and the number and types of falls experienced.

Their research focused on a particular group of medicines that are commonly prescribed to older people to address such issues as depression, insomnia, and bladder and respiratory problems and that all have anticholinergic effects. Anticholinergics are a class of drugs that block the action in the brain of a key chemical called acetylcholine, which plays a role in passing messages between nerve cells. However, this can result in a number of side effects, including blurred vision,

increased heart rate, confusion and sedation. The study examined whether taking these anticholinergic medications increased the risk of falls resulting in injury in people aged over 65 years and found that older men who were taking these medicines were more than twice as likely to experience a serious fall, whereas no link was found in older women. The more anticholinergic medications that were used, the greater the risk and the results stood even when other risk factors were taken into account.

The study's lead author, Dr Kathryn Richardson, noted that it is important that people do not stop taking any medications before consulting with their GP but that the findings do highlight the need for doctors, pharmacists and health care professionals to regularly review the appropriateness of medications taken by older people. Dr Richardson further points to the "devastating impact" that falls can have in older people's lives,

as they are a major contributor to care home admission and hospitalisation, making research into reducing the severity and frequency of falls so critical. Further research is needed into why the same link was not found in women and the reasons behind the findings among men, according to Dr Richardson.



Money News

 Money News by *Róisín Moloney*

Gifts Given and Enjoyed by Revenue

That is how a gift from a parent may appear to an adult child over 25 years of age. Thanks to the Finance Act 2014, gifts taken after the 23rd December 2014 may be subject to gift tax.

Previously 'reasonable' sums of money given by parents to their children for their support or maintenance or education was exempt from tax but this has now come to an end as a result of what Revenue describes as widespread abuse.

Each and every child is entitled to a tax-free threshold of €225,000 for the purposes of gifts and inheritances from their parents. Any gifts or inheritances received by a child in excess of €225,000 create a tax charge of 33% of the value of the excess. For example, if an adult child is given a gift of cash on purchasing a home for an amount of €50,000,* this results in her threshold being reduced to €175,000. The same child inherits cash in the amount of €20,000 on her father's death reducing her threshold to €155,000. On the death of her mother, this child inherits a property valued at €300,000. The final €155,000 will be subtracted resulting in a tax bill generated by the excess of €145,000 charged at 33%, giving a Capital Acquisitions Tax bill amounting to €47,850. (*A small gift exemption of €3,000 would also be applicable here but is left out for simplicity - for further details on the small gift exemption, see below).

Some gifts do, however,

qualify for exemption and these include gifts made while the parent is alive and for the purpose of support, maintenance or education of the child. The child, however, must be under 18 years of age or be between 18 and 25 years of age and in full-time education, or be permanently incapacitated. The payment of college fees and payment to cover normal college costs, including rent, food, clothing, and transport, are all covered within this exemption - however, the child must not be over 25 years of age.

Common gifts that do give rise to Capital Acquisitions Tax include house purchase or a deposit for a house but remember that tax is only payable after the €225,000 threshold has been exceeded. The use of a second house owned by a parent and given to the child for their free use amounts to a deduction in the child's threshold each year to the amount of the annual rental value or, if that threshold has been previously been used up, it will result in the child being charged at 33% of the annual rental value.

An important and often overlooked deduction that can be made is the small gift exemption. This exemption applies to gifts made in the lifetime of the parent and amounts to €3,000. Taking the

example above, this exemption is applied as follows: the daughter receives a gift of €50,000 from her parents when she purchases her home and a small gift exemption can be applied, so €47,000 will be deducted from the threshold of €225,000, leaving the daughter with a threshold of €178,000. The daughter inherits €20,000 from her father but the small gift exemption cannot be applied here as it only applies to gifts made during one's lifetime. Keep in mind also that the exemption applies only once per year between individuals and it does not depend on the relationship between the individuals, so a stranger can gift you up to €3,000 per year tax free once both parties are alive.

Another tax exempt gift a parent can give to a child is the gift of a wedding. A parent can pay the expenses of a child's wedding without the value being deducted from the child's threshold and without a Capital Acquisitions Tax bill for the child. There are limitations, however, to this exemption and if, for example, the lucky adult child was having their wedding paid for by their parents, they could not also receive a wedding present in the form of a valuable asset, such as a car or property.

Student Grant Scam

A website purporting to be that of the Student Universal Support Ireland, better known as SUSI, has recently been uncovered. Designed to target students and reaching them through spam emails, students are invited to click on a link directing them to enter their username and password with the next step being to enter bank details. As a consequence of this scam, the SUSI banking section was forced to close down for a period. It was reported that these scam emails had the SUSI logo but the grammatical and spelling errors offered a clue to the fraud, coupled with the fact that the link brought users to an unsecure website. With payments being made to students at this time of the year, recipients must be wide awake to signs of suspicious activity.

The European Consumer Centre highlights some common threads that make fraudulent approaches easier to identify and these can be found at <http://www.eccireland.ie/popular-consumer-topics/scams/>. Remember to never reply to spam, which are unsolicited emails, and be careful when clicking links in emails to avoid potential phishing threats. If you have already given your bank details, contact your bank and close your account. If you think you have been a victim of fraudulent activity, you should report it to your local Garda station without delay.

Eircom, Three Ireland and Vodafone Ireland Prosecuted

Consumer Choice welcomes the decision by the Commission for Communications Regulation (ComReg), the communications watchdog, to pursue telecoms companies for overcharging customers. On 27th July 2015, the Dublin District Court heard a number of cases against Eircom, Three Ireland and Vodafone Ireland in relation to incorrect charging of customers.

Eircom pleaded guilty to seven offences and was fined a total of €21,000. The Court heard how, in one case, a man in a nursing home had received letters from a debt collector, despite his son contacting Eircom to cancel his father's contract. In three other cases relating to Eircom, customers complained to ComReg after not receiving services they had signed up for. One customer had ordered a landline and broadband but the line was never activated. Another customer who had signed up for an Eircom loyalty bundle never received the offer. The Court heard how the customer tried on numerous occasions to resolve the situation but no action was taken on the part of Eircom. Eircom pleaded guilty to the seven charges brought by ComReg. Judge John O'Neil imposed a criminal conviction in respect of the seven charges and fined Eircom €3,000 per offence. Eircom said that it takes regulation and customer service seriously and has two million accounts in Ireland. It said that efforts will be made to link up teams in Eircom as part of a plan to improve the way in which complaints are dealt with. In handing down his judgement, Judge John O'Neill singled out Eircom, saying that the attitude of the company in

sending out letters from debt collectors was "despicable". He described its code of practice as a "joke" and said that the company's attitude towards its customers "leaves a lot to be desired".

Three Ireland pleaded guilty to three charges brought by ComReg. The Probation Act will be applied to Three Ireland on condition that it donates €15,000 to charity by 28th September 2015. Three Ireland also committed to putting remediation plans in place to prevent such issues arising in the future and also to pay reasonable costs to ComReg. The Court heard how one customer received a bill of almost €300 after a package to include free minutes to the UK was not added to his account. The customer attempted on several occasions to resolve the situation, including visiting the franchise shop in Nenagh, County Tipperary, where he signed up to the deal. The Court heard how during one visit the agent hid from the customer to avoid addressing the issue. The Court heard how all three companies accepted that they had fallen short of their standards and all operators fully co-operated with the investigations. Vodafone pleaded guilty to seven charges brought by ComReg. The judge imposed criminal convictions in respect of four of these charges and fined Vodafone €2,500 per offence. One case described to the Court included a father trying several times to cancel his son's account with Vodafone after he had suffered a serious injury in a fall and the company continued to charge the bill payer for two months. Vodafone said it accepted that it had fallen short of its own standards and that this was

partly due to human error and to system failures.

Askcomreg.ie offers a forum for customers of broadband, phone and postal services who have complaints. The Consumers' Association of Ireland encourages dissatisfied customers to make ComReg aware of their complaints. Through the work of active consumers, service providers will be pursued and, as in these cases, companies will be forced to review their practices and face the consequences of bad customer care. You can text the word COMREG to 51500 to receive a call back. You can also text the word ASKCOMREG to 51500 outlining the issue you need assistance with and you will receive a response by text. You can email consumerline@comreg.ie or call 01 804 9668 or post queries and complaints to Consumerline, Commission for Communications Regulation, FREEPOST, Block DEF, Abbey Court, Irish Life Centre, Lower Abbey Street, Dublin 1, DO1W2H4.





Product/Tech News

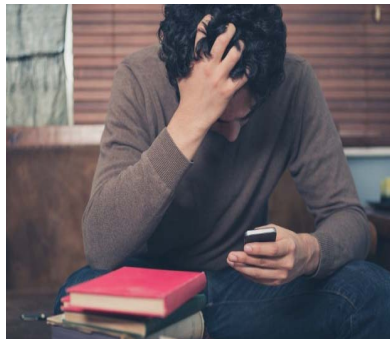
Smartphone usage can help diagnose depression

Your smartphone may be able to tell if you are depressed before you realise it yourself. Researchers from a university in Chicago are looking at how smartphones, which have become such an integral part of many of our lives, can reveal an individual's psychological state and warn if the user is showing signs of depression.

One key problem with depression is that it develops gradually, so many people do not realise that they are suffering with it. To see if smartphone usage can serve as a warning signal, a study was conducted at Northwestern University that analysed the phone usage of 28 men and women with an average age of 29 years over a two-week period. The test subjects also completed a questionnaire that is commonly used to assess depression by asking questions about symptoms like sadness, hopelessness and sleeplessness.

By cross-referencing the smartphone data and the questionnaire answers, the researchers found that the 14 subjects who scored highest for depression in the questionnaire also shared some common phone-related traits. These subjects used their phones much more during the day - 68 minutes versus 17 minutes for the other test subjects - and the phones' GPS tracking features detected that they spent more time at home or in fewer locations and had less regular day-to-day travel schedules. The researchers considered that the increased phone usage did not indicate greater social interaction but instead suggested non-social activity like web surfing and game-playing, which may point to 'avoidance behaviour' as the individuals try to avoid dealing with mental distress. In addition, more time spent at home can indicate a lack of motivation to engage with the outside world and both this and not maintaining a consistent daily schedule have been linked to depression.

Overall, smartphone usage matched the subjects' level of depression with 87% accuracy and the researchers believe that analysing phone activity has benefits over questionnaires as data is acquired unobtrusively, requiring no effort on the part of individuals. In addition, patients can be inaccurate in their answers when performing self-assessments. Ethical issues relating to privacy would need to be ironed out with such an approach and, of course, sophisticated data collection can never replace the importance of human interaction but at-risk individuals could benefit from an early warning signal that they are developing depression.



"Your smartphone may be able to tell if you are depressed before you realise it yourself."



Garmin's Varia bike lights

Smart cycling gadgets

Sat-nav provider Garmin has developed a range of gadgets aimed at making cycling safer. As part of its Varia line, Garmin is offering a new rearview bike radar that lets you know if vehicles are coming up from behind. The radar comes in two parts, with a radar taillight that attaches to the back of the bike and a front display that is connected to the handlebars. If a vehicle gets within 140 metres behind you, the front display will let you know. Meanwhile, the taillight will brighten and flash, providing extra visibility and notifying the driver behind that there is a cyclist ahead. The radar can show up to eight approaching vehicles and indicate an increasing threat level with a change of colour or overlays of the current data screen on the front display or on a Garmin Edge bike computer. The radar taillight and display unit bundled together cost around €345 online, or €230 for the taillight on its own.

And with darker evenings ahead, Garmin's Varia smart bike lights are clever enough to automatically adjust lighting, focusing it on wherever the cyclist needs it. The faster you are cycling, the farther ahead you should be looking - and so the Varia headlight will automatically focus its beam further up the road when it detects that you are at speed and, when you slow down, the beam will become wider and less intense. There is also an accompanying taillight that brightens and serves as a brake light when the bike dramatically decelerates. The lights are designed to communicate with the GPS function of the user's existing Garmin bike computer or the optional handlebar-mounted Varia remote unit, which determine a cyclist's speed by analysing changes in the GPS coordinates. The cyclist can also use the system to control the blink pattern and brightness of the lights, switch them on and off, or control two of the taillights to operate as indicators for turning corners. The headlight and taillight bundle can be bought online for around €345.

The products featured on these pages have not been tested by the Consumers' Association of Ireland and their inclusion here is not, in any way, an endorsement of them.



Product News by Clodagh O'Donoghue

Broadband speed survey

The results of a survey of broadband speeds across the country were published at the end of July 2015 by the Commission for Communications Regulation (ComReg) and revealed significant variation in the speeds enjoyed by city dwellers and those experienced by rural residents. Data were gathered on the broadband speeds experienced by 470 panellists across 25 counties in the fourth quarter of 2014. The survey, which measured the actual speed received on a PC or laptop inside the home rather than the speed being delivered to the dwelling, found that the average fixed speed for urban panellists was 28.9Mb/s, whereas the speed received by rural panellists was 7.2Mb/s.

The analysis also confirmed differences in fixed broadband speeds received over wired connections compared to wi-fi connections, with wired connections providing an average download speed of 32.6Mb/s, while wi-fi connections delivered 17.9Mb/s. Not surprisingly, findings show that customer satisfaction is correlated to the transfer speeds experienced by users, with fixed urban panellists who declared themselves very satisfied with their broadband service enjoying an average speed of 45.2Mb/s. In contrast, the average speed experienced by rural panellists who stated that they were not satisfied with their service was 4.3Mb/s.

ComReg engaged consultants Epiro Ltd. to create and pilot a tool for recording broadband speeds with the aim of measuring user experience and generating a national overview of the speeds actually received across a range of platforms. ComReg notes that broadband service providers typically sell their products on the basis of a headline speed, which is generally the maximum speed the service can deliver under optimal conditions, but customers are not guaranteed a minimum speed. Thus, the headline speed claims can create an expectation that may not be matched by the actual user experience. ComReg is responsible for ensuring that broadband consumers are adequately protected and informed and takes the view that consumers are entitled to appropriate information on the speed of each product on the market to enable them to make informed choices. Further, ComReg believes that transparent information relating to the speed most likely to be achieved on a case-by-case basis should be provided to consumers before they enter into a contract. ComReg is currently considering the next steps and options open to it with regard to broadband speed.

Pill popper

A team of mechanical engineering students in the US is developing a device that will only dispense tablets to the right patient at the right time. The overdose-proof medication dispenser is made from a 'super-tough metal alloy' and cannot be opened even using a drill or hammer. However, it does deliver the correct dosage at the proper time when the patient who has been prescribed the medication uses the inbuilt fingerprint scanner.

The prototype device holds around 60 tablets and can be unlocked and filled by a pharmacist who has a key. Patients are not given a key but their fingerprint is scanned and matched to the device so that when they need to take a pill, provided sufficient time has elapsed since the last dosage, they simply hold their finger up to the scanner and the rotating mechanism inside the device will release the appropriate medication.

Developed at John Hopkins University in Baltimore, the device is aimed mainly at painkillers, as patients might often be tempted to exceed the recommended dosage, putting their health in danger and risking long-term addiction. In addition, some narcotic painkillers might be acquired by prescription but then sold on for recreational use. This new dispenser provides a solution in both situations, preventing unauthorised individuals from accessing the medication and only delivering safe and appropriate dosages for those to whom it has been prescribed. Further development is needed to bring the product to market but it could be just what the doctor ordered!

A good grilling

This summer may not have presented as many opportunities for barbecuing in the back garden as we would have liked but Tefal has a new grill that lets you bring the barbecue indoors. We can hope for an Indian summer that will allow us to do some alfresco dining, but even if we lack any September sunshine the Tefal OptiGrill will still let us enjoy some barbecue-style cooking in the warmth and comfort of our kitchens, with the added bonus of simplifying the always-tricky job of cooking steak to order.

Tefal claims that even novices will be able to cook meat to their guests' personal preferences – whether rare, medium or well done – with its intelligent grill that is touted as being the world's first appliance to automatically measure the thickness of the meat and adjust cooking

time to suit. Apparently, it can even sense how many items are cooking on the grill and adapt the temperature and grilling cycle accordingly. Thanks to the LED display, you will reportedly be able to tell at a glance how your steak is doing with no need to keep lifting the barbecue cover or resorting to cutting the steak to see how pink it is inside. The light will glow yellow if the steak is still rare, moving to orange for medium steak and to red when the steak is well done.

If steak is not on the menu, the OptiGrill offers six automatic programmes for burgers, chicken, bacon, sausage, meat, and fish as well as a manual option for more confident chefs who want to go it alone. And whoever draws the short straw and is on the washing up will appreciate the fact that the cooking plates can be popped into the dishwasher. If you want to extend

the barbecue season into the autumn, the OptiGrill is available in shops for around €170.





Folic Acid – what you need to know



REPORT by Clodagh O'Donoghue

A new *safe food* campaign is highlighting the need for women to take folic acid every day, whether or not they are planning to get pregnant.

Titled *Babies Know the Facts About Folic*, the campaign seeks to help address the high incidence of neural tube defects (NTDs), such as Spina Bifida, among newborn babies in Ireland and is urging all women who are sexually active and who could become pregnant to take a folic acid supplement daily.

Folic acid is a vital nutrient for the development of healthy babies in the womb. In the first weeks of pregnancy, the brain and spinal cord develop rapidly – and extra folic acid is required to support this. Women should take folic acid for three months before getting pregnant and for three months into the pregnancy to help protect against NTDs that can bring about nerve damage or incomplete brain development in severe cases, causing disabilities. A baby's spinal cord develops fully in the first 28 days and many women may be unaware that they are pregnant during this critical time. In addition, contraception methods are not 100% effective and around half of pregnancies are unplanned. As Dr Cliodhna Foley-Nolan, Director of Human Health and Nutrition at *safe food*, has noted, taking folic acid “doesn't mean you are planning a baby but just means when you do have a baby, however far in the future that may be, you are already helping to protect their health.”

Between the years 2009 and 2011, 236 babies with an NTD were born in the Republic of Ireland, and on average about 80 babies with an NTD are born here each year. Potentially, 70% of those cases could be prevented through taking folic acid as a supplement – that is, around 50 fewer babies affected by NTDs each year.

Recently published research has suggested that fewer than one in four women take folic acid prior to getting pregnant and a survey conducted by *safe food* in June/ July 2015 found that less than 10% of the 738 women polled routinely take a folic acid

Retailer	Product	Number of tablets	Price
Hickeys Pharmacy	“Trying for a baby” Seven Seas with folic acid	28	€4.99
	Clonfolic	28	€3.75
	Clonfolic	98	€6.20
Dunnes Stores	Healthpoint Folic Acid	120	€1.99
	Seven Seas Pregnancy with folic acid	28	€3.34
Boots	Sona Range of folic acid	90	€5.99
	Boots (own brand)	60	€2.99
	Boots (own brand)	180	€6.99
	Kelkin	60	€4.99
	Beeline	90	€6.99
	Clonfolic	28	€3.79
Tesco	Tesco Folic Acid	90	€0.50
	Beeline Folic Acid	90	€6.65
Aldi	Activ - Max Women's Health	180	€0.99
Lloyds Pharmacy	Lloyds Pharmacy Folic Acid	90	€3.99

All products purchased contain the recommended daily intake of 400mcg of folic acid.

All purchases made between 17th and 20th July 2015 in Dublin and Kildare and may include retailer discount or promotional pricing in-store.

supplement. In addition, one in ten survey respondents mistakenly believed that they got sufficient folic acid from their regular food intake.

Adults need 200 micrograms of folic acid a day and they can get this from eating a healthy, balanced diet. Folic acid may be obtained in fortified cereals, and folate - the natural form of folic acid - is found in such foods as green vegetables, beans and liver. This vitamin has many useful functions, from helping our tissues to grow and forming red blood cells to producing DNA. However, women in early pregnancy need an extra 400 micrograms a day and they cannot get this from a normal healthy, balanced diet. Also, folic acid is not stored in the body so it must be taken every day. It is recommended that women take an individual daily supplement to ensure that they are getting the right dose of 400 micrograms a day. Multivitamins may contain the right level of folic acid but they may also contain vitamin A, which is not recommended during pregnancy – so it is

important to read the label carefully. A price survey conducted by *safe food* in July 2015 shows that you can buy folic acid supplements quite cheaply, with some products working out at less than a cent a day. See the table above.

The simple message of the campaign is that, even if you are not thinking about having a baby, if you are sexually active and there is a chance that you could get pregnant, remember to take a folic acid supplement every day.

Useful websites

safe food

www.safe food.eu

Spina Bifida Hydrocephalus Ireland

www.sbhi.ie

SBHI provides information, support and advice to people with spina bifida and/or hydrocephalus, their parents and carers.



THE REEL DEAL

Consumer Choice looks at cinema costs, highlighting what you can expect to pay for admissions, extras, food and drink, and suggesting ways you can save.



REPORT by *Juliet Cote*

At a glance

- Admission prices
- Extra charges
- Cutting costs

Films have always been a common, enjoyable form of entertainment but they can put a dent in your wallet once everything adds up. In 2010, *Consumer Choice* took a look at cinema costs in Ireland, the extra charges, and the sizeable food and beverage prices. This year we have revisited this subject, as box-office earnings and cinema admissions have been declining over the past few years. As a result, cinemas, which are dependent on the popularity of every film they show, need to find ways to earn in order to stay in business.

Overall admission costs appear to have gone up marginally, not surprisingly so, since 2010, while food and drinks are still as frighteningly expensive as they always have been. The growing popularity of 3D and IMAX films attaches additional costs to a cinema outing. However, there are also several promotions, deals, and time-of-day

based prices that can grant significant savings.

Admission prices

Our previous article included the admissions cost across 13 cinemas in Ireland. For the sake of consistency, we checked out the prices at the same cinemas this year. Since 2010, it appears that one cinema, the Swan, has closed down, and in its place is another Omniplex cinema franchise, which was not included in our review. As in 2010, admission prices will vary depending on a range of factors. Each cinema has established peak and off-peak prices, depending on the time of day and day of the week. Generally, peak hours tend to be in the mid-to-late-afternoon, typically after 5pm every day, and for a larger portion of the day on Saturdays, Sundays, and bank holidays, if not the entire day. Off-peak prices are customarily

available in the early-to-mid-morning and afternoon until peak hours begin on weekdays.

Additionally, every cinema has separate pricing based on the age of the consumer - adults, children, teens, students, OAPs - which are all also subject to peak or off-peak pricing. The age parameters can vary depending on the cinema but are generally within in the same range. Adults are almost exclusively anyone 18 years old and over. Exceptions to this are found at Movies @ Dundrum in Dublin, where anyone 15 years old and over pays the adult ticket price, and adults are 20 years and older at the Omniplex in Cork. A child ticket is generally only available to those who are 12-15 years old and younger, while teens are between 13 years at the youngest and 19 years at the oldest across all cinemas surveyed. Students simply need a valid student card and older

people either need to prove their OAP status or be older than 60-65 years old.

Adults are consistently paying the most for a ticket at each cinema. The most expensive adult ticket in our survey can be found at Cineworld in Dublin. During peak hours, adults at Cineworld must fork over €12.40 for a ticket, and this is before any extra charges or food purchases are added. The off-peak price is better at €9.90, but off-peak hours are likely difficult for any working adult to make. The cheapest tickets among these cinemas are at the IMC in Athlone where adults pay €8.00 at peak hours and €7.00 during off-peak hours. The price difference between off-peak and peak hours can be rather substantial at some cinemas or be quite insignificant at times, and this will also vary depending on the age of the person looking to buy a ticket. For example, at the UCI Cinema in Coolock and the Savoy in Dublin, the price difference for adults is €2.00 between peak and off-peak hours. However, at the Savoy, the price difference for children, students, and OAPs is only €1.00, and at UCI the price difference for teens, students, and OAPs is only €0.75 and just €0.45 for children. This suggests that cinemas are trying to make sure they offer a cheaper alternative, without ever falling below a certain minimum price. To give you a taste of the various prices available we have provided a table below detailing the pricing options among the cinemas surveyed.

Extra charges

After paying for admission, the price of your trip to the cinema can increase with the addition of extra add-ons. With the always enhancing special effects used in most films, many, if not most, films out these days either are available in 3D or in the IMAX version or you have the option to watch the film in 2D, sacrificing the extra enhancements of your movie-watching experience.

to the admission price, and these prices can also vary. For example, 3D films add an extra €1.00 to the ticket price at several cinemas such as Movies @ Dundrum, the Savoy, the Ormonde in Stillorgan, and the IMC in Athlone. Others offer 3D films at a greater expense. At Cineworld, an adult can watch a 3D film for an extra €2.20 and everyone else for an extra €1.70 per ticket. Similarly, at the Eye cinema in Galway, adults must pay an extra €2.20, while everyone else pays an extra €2.15. It is also important to note that these prices do not include the cost of 3D glasses, necessary for anyone to watch the film they just paid extra for. Several cinemas offer 3D glasses for an extra €1.00, unless you happen to have brought your own pair. If you want to upgrade your cinema experience, you can opt for 'Premium Seating' or 'VIP' tickets, offered at several cinemas for up to €2.00 extra.

Savings

While there are many ways in which the cost of a cinema outing can amount to a rather lofty sum, there are various savings options and deals offered at several cinemas. Multiple cinemas have bargain days in which tickets are available to all ages throughout the entire day at a much cheaper price. Considering cinema outings are more common on the weekends, these bargain days generally tend to be earlier in the week as a way of attracting more people to the cinema throughout the week. On Tuesdays, anyone can see a film at Cineworld for €7.90, at Liffey Valley for €4.99, or at the Omniplex in Cork for €5.00. On Wednesdays, the cheapest options are found at the UCI Cinema in Coolock, Storm in Castletroy, and Ormonde in Stillorgan for the low price of €5.00, €5.00 and €6.00, respectively.

Many cinemas also offer Family Packs. These ordinarily require a family of four with at least two children, although some packages also extend to groups of eight. If you meet those requirements you pay one discounted lump sum for your whole brood. For example, the Eye in Galway has a Family Pack for €23.00 for a 2D film and €31.90 for a 3D film. The UCI in Coolock has Family Packs for €24.00 during off-peak hours, €25.00 during peak hours and €20.00 on Wednesdays, its bargain day. Similarly, the Omniplex in Cork allows families to purchase tickets for €5.90 each during off-peak hours, €6.50 each during peak hours, and €5.00 on Tuesdays, its bargain day, so long as they meet the Family Pack parameters.

Students can also find further savings at those cinemas that offer additional student deals. For example, on Tuesdays at Movies @ Dundrum, a student with a valid student card can purchase a ticket, large popcorn, and a large soft drink all for €10.00. Furthermore, every Tuesday at the Savoy, students can buy tickets for the low price of €5.00, all day, or they can opt for the €8.00 deal, which includes a ticket, medium popcorn, and a medium soft drink. Several cinemas also have loyalty cards, promotions for kids, morning-show deals, and various other ways in which you can save. All of these will have varying terms and conditions, which can be found on their individual websites or at the cinema.

Food and drink

Our 2010 article also discussed the considerable food and beverage prices at cinemas. Snacks and drinks available at cinemas have always been famously expensive. Moreover, it appears that food prices are skewed to make the larger portions seem like the best deal overall. Small portions tend to be slightly cheaper than the medium or large portions. Thus, for a small increase in the price you can buy a significantly larger portion of food or drink. However, as our previous article discussed, is this really best for your stomach or your wallet? The colossal increase in calories alone can be damaging to anyone's waistline, not to mention the incredible amounts of salt, sugar, and saturated fats found in cinema treats. A small serving of popcorn at Odeon cinemas comes to 458 calories. Upgrade to a large popcorn serving and you are consuming a shocking 1,005 calories, over half the recommended calorie intake for one day. While the small increase in price and the massive increase in volume can deceive us into believing we are getting the best deal available, the larger sizes tend to be too big to be finished. Many will likely end up wasting their money on the larger portion they never needed in the first place, rendering the smaller portion at the cheaper price the most cost-effective route in the end.

Just as cinemas offer a variety of discounts and promotions on admissions there are also several means to save on your favourite treats. There is often an assortment of 'combo' deals at the snack counter, in which you can buy some combination of food and/or drinks at a particular size and the total cost will be at least somewhat cheaper than the items purchased separately.

Many cinemas have separate pricing for 3D films either listed plainly or as an addition



However, the magnitude of savings can also be deceiving. For example, at the Savoy, a medium serving of popcorn costs €4.50 and a medium drink costs €3.20. Purchased separately, the total price of the two comes out to €7.70 but the combo deal brings the price down €0.20, offering a medium drink and popcorn sold together for €7.50. You can also purchase a large serving of popcorn for €5.00 and a large drink for €3.70 - separately the two combined cost €8.70 but the combo deal offers the two for €8.40, saving you €0.30. One bag of sweets costs €3.20 but you can buy two for €5.00, saving €1.40. Finally, the cinema offers a sharing combo for two people - for €9.90 you can buy two medium drinks and large popcorn, whereas these items sold separately would cost €11.40. And the sharing deal allows you to purchase a bag of sweets at the discounted price of €1.60. There is no combo deal for small sizes, once again making the larger, more expensive portions all the more tempting to consumers hoping to get the most for their money. Whether or not these savings are significant enough to entice you to purchase all items included or increase your previously desired portion is up to you.

Box-office and admission trends

Attending films in cinemas has always been quite a popular leisure activity in Ireland. According to wideeyedmedia.com

“Ireland has the highest admissions per capita in the EU and has done since records began in 1995.” While this may remain true, according to dailymedie.ie and Rentrak statistics, since 2009 box-office earnings in Ireland have fallen by nearly 20% as of 2014 (2015 statistics will not be available until next year). The Irish Film Board, now Screen Ireland, stated that in 2008 Irish ticket sales brought in €125 million but in 2014 Irish box-offices only garnered €99.95 million, making 2014 the first year annual cinema revenue fell below the €100-million mark since 2003. Clearly, people are generally attending films in cinemas less often than they once used to, which can cause problems for both production companies and cinemas across the country.

The drop in cinema attendance could be a result of a variety of factors. The *Irish Examiner* quoted Lucy Jones, director of Rentrak statistics, who posited that “widening home entertainment options, online services enabling downloading of films and TV box-sets for binge watching, or the increasing cost of cinema tickets” could all be causing Irish people to frequent cinemas less and less. People are less inclined to pay to see films in cinemas when they have several other options available to them that would be cheaper and likely more comfortable and easy. As a result, cinemas are selling fewer tickets and find themselves caught between a rock and a hard place. As our 2010 article noted, cinemas often

do not earn a significant amount of ticket revenue, which mainly goes to distributors and production companies. Thus, in order to turn a profit, they rely on the amount of people going out to see movies and purchasing extras, food, and beverages. With admissions declining, cinemas are forced to radically raise their prices in an effort to stay in business. However, the increasingly expensive admission prices make other options all the more appealing, further diminishing attendance rates - and the cycle continues.

Box-office earnings obviously depend on the number of people paying for the cost of admission and this is purely a consequence of how appealing a film is to the public. As Lucy Jones explained, this is a “product-based market...the audience will turn out for films that grab their attention, but they need a compelling reason to go - whether it’s a must-see sequel, big-budget effects, or five-star reviews.” The appeal of films made over a period of time can fluctuate, another element entirely out of cinemas’ control. Cinemas are at the mercy of the quality and popularity of the films made at a given time. Thus, if there are not enough appealing films playing, people will not make the effort to attend, admissions will drop, and cinemas must resort to raising their prices.

Cinema Admission Prices (€)						
	Adult Peak	Adult Off-Peak	Student Peak	Student Off-Peak	OAP Peak	OAP Off-Peak
DUBLIN						
Liffey Valley	9.99	8.49	8.49	7.49	7.49	6.49
Cineworld	12.40	9.90	9.40	8.40	9.40	8.40
Movies@Dundrum*	8.50/10.20	5.50/7.00	7.00/8.00	5.00/5.80	7.00/8.00	5.00/6.50
Coolock UCI	10.00	8.00	7.75	7.00	7.75	7.00
Savoy	9.50	7.50	7.00	8.00	7.00	8.00
Lighthouse	9.00	7.50	7.50	6.00	7.50	6.00
Ormonde, Stillorgan	10.25	7.25	8.00	6.50	8.00	7.00
CORK						
Omniplex	10.10	7.90	8.10	7.10	7.60	6.60
Gate Multiplex	8.75	6.00	7.00	6.00	7.00	6.00
ATHLONE						
IMC	8.00	7.00	6.00	6.00	6.00	6.00
LIMERICK						
Storm, Castletroy	9.45	7.80	6.75	6.25	6.75	6.25
GALWAY						
Eye	9.10	7.20	6.70	6.70	5.75	5.75
*Movies@Dundrum has separate prices for early evening (5-7pm)/evening (7pm on)/afternoon (before 1pm)/matinee (1pm-5pm)						

Survey conducted July 6th-10th July 2015.



Housing Costs Becoming a Barrier to Third-Level Education

The Consumers' Association of Ireland (CAI) investigates the rental market for third-level students and identifies how accommodation costs are acting as a barrier to education for many young people. The CAI calls for the government to address this crisis without delay.

 REPORT by *Róisín Moloney*

At a glance

- University choice
- Rising expenses
- Responses

If you or a member of your family has recently survived the stress associated with the Leaving Certificate examinations, the CAI would like to congratulate you. People of all ages report experiencing a common nightmare – the one that revisits the anxiety they endured doing their Leaving Certificate and for some this is many, many years after the event, so we salute those who made it through.

The points system in Ireland is designed to facilitate meritocracy - if you have the ability and determination to achieve the points then, in theory, you should gain entry to the course corresponding with your achievement in terms of points. As we are all aware, some of the highest entry point courses include medicine, veterinary, dentistry, actuary, and law - and a student's choice should, of course, reflect their ability and desire. Coupled with their choice of subject is, of course, an ambitious student's aspiration to gain entry to the best university that their Leaving Certificate achievements allow.

The many and varied rankings of world universities by reputation or by subject sees Trinity College Dublin more often than not come in as Ireland's best performing university. In many cases, this is followed by University College Dublin. The 2015 University Web Ranking lists Trinity College Dublin as first, University College Dublin as second and University College Cork as third. The ranking of universities, together with the fact that the number of students sitting the Leaving Certificate is increasing, results in higher points for entry into courses. However, students who successfully complete the Leaving Certificate hurdle and achieve the points required are now facing an uphill challenge in actually taking up their college place with the rising accommodation costs, particularly in our capital city.

Rising rental costs

The housing crisis being endured across Ireland, but particularly in Dublin, is well documented by the media and the increased demand is without doubt driving up prices

across the rental market at an alarming rate. This crisis has not made an exception for students and, in line with market trends, accommodation traditionally occupied by students is also costing significantly more each year. Take, for example, a student from outside of Dublin who successfully secures a place on the veterinary medicine course in UCD, the only university offering this course in Ireland. According to UCD itself, this student will require the following: an average of €668 a month in living expenses as explained in Table 1 plus approximately €600 per month for rent for ten months. On top of this, a deposit for rental accommodation of one month's rent at approximately €600 may be required and for those who do not qualify for grant assistance, then the student contribution will cost €3,000 along with a student levy of €247 resulting in an annual cost of approximately €16,527, which averaged over ten months amounts to approximately €1,652 per month.

TABLE 1: UCD ESTIMATED LIVING EXPENSES FOR STUDENTS

Expense	Approximate cost per month
Electricity/gas/bins (public utilities)	€33
Food (including lunches)	€250
Travel (monthly short hop ticket)	€119
Books and materials (including photo-copying and printing)	€71
Clothes/medical	€45
Mobile phone	€20
Social life/miscellaneous	€130

Approximate cost of living per month (without accommodation) - €668

Rental accommodation costs have been growing steadily in recent times and while you can live on campus, the demand for this accommodation is so great that waiting lists of up to one year prior to entry have to be negotiated by students and their families. UCD offers various types of campus accommodation and table 2 illustrates the cost of such accommodation and, worryingly, the significant increase in prices since last year. Most residences are up by 16%, so the university is taking full advantage of this housing crisis and increasing profit margins at the expense of its own students.

TABLE 2: ON-CAMPUS PRICES FOR THE VARIOUS UCD-TYPE ACCOMMODATIONS AVAILABLE

Residence name	Total payment 2014-2015 (€)	Total payment 2015-2016 (€)	% increase
Belgrove	5,481	6,358	16
Blackrock	4,901	5,677	16
Glenomena	6,691	7,778	16
Merville	5,481	6,358	16
Muckross Halls	7,277	8,053	10
Proby	6,691	7,778	16
Roebuck Castle	9,067	10,154	12

Using our example of the veterinary student above and presuming that her family cannot afford the costs, this student, despite achieving the 585 points required to gain a place on the programme, would not be able to attend and would not be able to take up the study of veterinary science in another university in Ireland.

For many students, the points they will achieve is not the only factor determining what they will study - it may be more a question of where they can afford to study. Universities outside of Dublin can be significantly cheaper as is demonstrated in Table 3. For example the University of Limerick offers accommodation for a staggering 49% cheaper than UCD at the upper end of what is on offer and a 34% difference at the cheaper end of the scale. In real terms, this could amount to as much as €5,000 in the student year for rental costs alone.

TABLE 3: UCD CAMPUS ACCOMMODATION RATES COMPARED WITH UNIVERSITY OF LIMERICK ACCOMMODATION RATES

University	Most Expensive	Least Expensive
University College Dublin	€10,154	€5,677
University of Limerick	€5,200	€3,770

The private rental market offers no solution, with the Daft.ie Rental Report 2015 estimating increases of 10% in Dublin and increases of almost 7% in Limerick City. Unfortunately, cities such as Galway and Cork are showing similar trends with the cost of rental accommodation increasing by 10.7% in Galway City and increasing by 6.7% in Cork City. These rising costs are forcing some Leaving Certificate students to be excluded from third level and more students are being forced to attend institutions that might be more affordable for them.

OTHER OPTIONS?

Daft.ie's 2015 Rental Report shows increases in Rent-A-Room prices in Dublin of approximately 10% since last year. While renting a room appears to be one of the more affordable options at approximately €450 per month for a single bed in south Dublin City or County, the difficulty appears to be supply. Any prospective renters would have to keep a strict eye on the market and be ready to view, accept and pay a booking deposit at the drop of a hat.

Another option to be considered is to become a lodger in a family home close to the institution you wish to attend. The Union of Students in Ireland recommends the price for such accommodation to be 60% of the going rate for a room in the area as well as an agreed contribution to the cost of utility bills and meals, should meals be part of the agreement. As with other types of accommodation, scarcity appears to be a real issue. The accommodation officer at your particular institution can offer advice on all types of accommodation in the surrounding areas. Alternatively, websites such as www.daft.ie, www.collegecribs.ie and www.getdigs.ie are some of the available resources for finding suitable accommodation.



Minister's response

The CAI contacted the Department of Education and Skills with our concerns and we received the following response from Minister for Education and Skills Jan O'Sullivan:

I very much appreciate that there are concerns regarding the availability of accommodation for students in certain areas, and that's why I have asked the HEA to report on this issue. This report, which will be available shortly, will assist the Department in considering actions to support an increase in supply of student accommodation in the coming years.

In that context, I will continue to work with Government colleagues and stakeholders to explore ways to increase the availability of student accommodation where needed.

In addition, I know that many of our third-level institutions are working to develop additional accommodation for their students, which will help to address the issue in the medium term.

In the longer term, the Government is committed to addressing the housing shortage through the Construction 2020 strategy. This will not resolve all of our problems immediately, but I am confident that the implementation of Construction 2020 will provide us with a sustainable housing stock in the medium to longer term.

In the short term, one of the best options to increase supply is for people to rent a spare room in their home to students. It's a win-win situation, as students get accommodation and homeowners can earn up to €12,000 a year tax-free doing this. I know that students unions ran very good information campaigns about this last year, such as the USI's "Homes for Study", and it's an initiative I fully support again this year.

While the CAI welcomes the fact that the Minister has sought a report from the Higher Education Authority on this issue, there is no reference made to immediate efforts to help address this problem for current students. For future students perhaps some action will be taken, but this remains to be seen. For those students who have just gained a college place or for students who are partly through their course, there appears to be no relief. The only short-term solution to increase supply is referred to as the "Homes for Study", a campaign run by students unions and which the Minister says she supports "again this year" indicating that this problem was obviously envisaged by the Minister last year, yet no action to address this problem is evident.

Parents must come up with up to €16,527 per year to fund a student's education in Dublin. This is without doubt out of the grasp of the average Irish family, and while we claim that our points system and our CAO system support an education equality based on meritocracy, we can say that our Department of Education and Skills does not. It would appear that in fact Irish education favours the rich.

RENT-A-ROOM SCHEME

Given the current demand for student accommodation and the opportunity for earning tax-exempt rental income, homeowners who have a spare room might like to look into the Rent-a-Room Scheme. The advantages of this scheme include the fact that the homeowner does not have to register as a landlord with the Private Residential Tenancies Board and the agreement entered into with rentees will be less formal than it would be under landlord and tenant legislation. However, it is strongly advised to put all details of the arrangement in writing – such as the rent payable, the date on which rent is due, what is included in the rental price, etc. – and to ensure that this agreement is signed by both parties to avoid confusion or potential disputes. Once the amount paid to the homeowner does not exceed €12,000 for the year, rent-a-room relief applies and the homeowner will not be liable for income tax on the sum earned. Interested homeowners can find out further details on the Citizens Information Board's website or by reading Irish Revenue's *A Revenue Guide to Rental Income – IT 70*.

USI STUDENT FINANCE AND ACCOMMODATION GUIDE

The Union of Students in Ireland (USI) offers information for students who have successfully secured accommodation on their entitlements and responsibilities as a tenant, lodger or housemate in its comprehensive USI Student Finance and Accommodation Guide, available for download at <http://usi.ie/accommodation/>.

This guide offers advice on what students should look out for when viewing accommodation, before moving in and when vacating the property. It outlines students' rights – and obligations – as a tenant, how to deal with a dispute with a landlord, and how to be a better room-mate and neighbour. The financial supports that may be available to students and strategies to make their money go further and deal with debt are also discussed. Students who opt for digs or are renting a room in their landlord's home can check out the rights that apply to them on the Citizens Information Board's website at http://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/housing/renting_a_home/sharing_accommodation_with_your_landlord.html.





Printers

When it comes to home printing, the decision on which printer to buy is not always black and white. *Consumer Choice* scans the printer market and puts 33 models on test to bring you 14 Choice Buys.



REPORT by Clodagh O'Donoghue

At a glance

- **Choosing a printer**
- **Ink consumption**
- **14 Choice Buys**

Although the thrifty and environmentally conscious consumer will always think before they print, often there is no substitute for having a hard copy. Many of our lives are increasingly conducted online – booking flights and holidays, buying groceries and clothes, paying bills and charges – but despite this migration to the digital world, we frequently find ourselves looking to print out receipts, tickets, flight details and so on. And at least some of those great photos we take on our mobile devices deserve to be printed out to pin on a notice board or pop into a wallet. As a result, a home printer remains a necessity in many households and all the better if it produces great quality prints consistently and speedily with the minimum of fuss and the maximum amount of versatility and options. So what do you need to consider when you go shopping for a printer?

Choosing a printer

The first choice to make is whether you are looking for an inkjet or a laser printer and this decision largely depends on how you are going to use your device: What will you want to print? How much printing will you want to do? Is it important to be able to print in

colour? How many people will be using the printer? And do you want to be able to print from multiple devices?

If you are looking for a home printer that will produce a mixture of good-quality text, colour graphics and photos, then an inkjet printer may be the best choice. There is a wide range of inkjet printers on the market to choose from but potential purchasers should be aware that these are not particularly speedy machines compared to laser printers and the cost-per-copy will generally be higher (see our section on ink costs below). In contrast, monochrome (black-and-white) laser printers are the best and most cost-effective choice if you want to print lots of high-quality black text documents at a fast rate. Colour laser printers tend to be more expensive to buy than monochrome models, as well as taking up more space, and the photo quality produced by laser printers is likely to be inferior to that of inkjet printers. Before choosing a printer on the basis of its photo-printing capabilities however, it should be remembered that although it can be handy to print the occasional photo at home, given the high cost of ink you may find that using an online or local photo-printing service is the more

cost-efficient option if you are printing large batches of photos.

The next decision that must be made is whether a standard printer will suffice or if you are looking for an all-in-one printer that can scan and copy documents, photos and so on as well as print them. Some all-in-ones also feature a fax capability. Although these multi-functional devices can save space and prove less expensive than purchasing a separate dedicated scanner and copier, the quality of scans and copies may not equal that of standalone devices. On our table, all of our inkjet printers are all-in-ones, whereas the laser printers in our current batch feature both standard and multi-functional models. Inevitably, the added features and capabilities push up the price.

Networking

Almost all the printers on test offer wi-fi connectivity to allow you to connect wirelessly to the range of computers, laptops, and mobile devices that tend to be present in households today. You will need a wireless router and once you have connected your wi-fi printer to your home network, you will be able to easily print from any computers in the

house and also from a smartphone or a tablet – though you generally will have to have downloaded an app to your mobile device in order to print. Printer manufacturers usually offer their own smartphone app, some of which also feature a scanning function. Other options include Apple's AirPrint, an inbuilt mobile printing function on iOS devices that works with a wide variety of printer models and lets you print all kinds of documents, photos, and pdfs.

Similar to mobile printing is cloud printing, either through Google's CloudPrint service or using a web-enabled printer that allows you to connect directly to the internet or receive items to print via email. Examples of web-enabled printers include HP's e-all-in-one printers with ePrint technology that assigns an email address to each device so you can email items including text documents, pdfs, and images in certain configurations to the printer. There are also a number of specific printer apps that can be downloaded onto these devices to deliver printable material like games, puzzles, maps, information and entertainment items, and so on. Some web-enabled printers even allow you to browse the internet via the printer's screen. This type of functionality pushes up the cost and so is only worth investing in if it is something you are sure you will use.

A few of the printers on test have near field communication (NFC), which adds a "touch-to-print" functionality. NFC technology uses radio communication

to allow devices to talk to each other by touching the devices together or bringing them into close proximity. Thus, you can send a print job from a compatible NFC-enabled smartphone or tablet to an NFC-enabled printer simply by tapping the two devices together or holding them close to one another.

Think ink

It is not just the initial purchase price that needs to be taken into account when buying a printer – running costs in the form of replacing ink cartridges are a major consideration. Adding to this expense for inkjet printers is the fact that these devices use ink even when they are not printing. If a printer is not used for a while, air can accumulate in the ink cartridges and dried ink and dust can gather on the printheads, necessitating a cleaning cycle before printing. This cleaning cycle uses ink, so you are paying for ink that never makes it to the page – and "maintenance" ink usage has been found to be significant in some cases, at times even exceeding the ink usage in continuous printing. Some printers will run this cycle every time the device is turned on, so leaving these printers in sleep mode will reduce the number of maintenance cycles carried out.

Given the tendency of inkjet printers to use extra ink outside of actual printing activity, in our labs we test ink consumption both for continuous printing and for intermittent use. The intermittent-

use test simulates a light user's printing of text and graphics pages over a period of three weeks, turning off the printer between uses. The ink cartridges are weighed both before the test begins and at the end to determine the amount of ink used.

In contrast to inkjet printers, laser printers do not run this cleaning cycle and previous tests have shown no significant increase in the amount of toner consumed when the printer is used infrequently. As a result, the intermittent-use test is not run for laser printers. In general, laser printers can work out cheaper per copy for normal printing than inkjet printers. Those who are in the market for an inkjet printer should check out the ink cost ratings for the models on test.



1. Epson Expression Premium XP-620 €140 (inkjet printer)

The **Choice Buy** Epson Expression Premium XP-620 is an all-in-one inkjet printer that produces top-notch quality when printing photos and images and it does a good job of text documents and spreadsheets too. Everything is delivered fairly speedily and this device is intuitive to use, whether you are printing, scanning or copying. Our testers were impressed with the versatility of this printer, which allows you to print on both sides of the page as well as on suitable CDs and DVDs and provides dual paper trays – one for A4 pages and another smaller one for photo paper. The Epson Expression Premium XP-620 has built-in wi-fi and lets you print items sent via email as well as through AirPrint and Google CloudPrint. This device offers a lot for a mid-range price, particularly for those for who like to print out photos and other images, though tests found moderately-high maintenance-ink usage, making running costs a little higher than average.

2. Epson Expression Premium XP-820 €240 (inkjet printer)

The **Choice Buy** Epson Expression Premium XP-820 offers the same great performance as the previous Choice Buy along with some added features for an extremely versatile printer. This device is particularly excellent when it comes to printing out photos and colour images, though it also delivers good black-and-white text prints – and for all printing, speeds are fairly fast. This printer also offers scanning and copying functions – the scanning capability works well and the quality of colour copies is excellent, while black-and-white copying is also decent. Overall, this printer is easy to operate and it offers a range of features, including an automatic document feeder, auto duplexing for two-sided printing, and a second paper tray for photo paper as well as a fax capability and wireless printing from a range of mobile devices via the built-in wi-fi. Due to moderately-high maintenance-ink usage, running costs are slightly higher than average.



3. Epson Expression Premium XP-520 €100 (inkjet printer)

The least expensive of our current Choice Buys, the **Choice Buy** Epson Expression Premium XP-520 is an all-in-one inkjet printer that can be relied upon to produce great printing results. This relatively compact device excels when printing photos and colour graphics but the black-and-white text it produces is also of good quality and everything is delivered at a decent speed. The scanning and copying functions perform well, particularly when it comes to colour copying, and this printer is fairly easy to use with a small preview screen and an auto duplexing function, together with built-in wi-fi and a range of mobile printing options, including AirPrint and Google CloudPrint. However, our testers found that this Epson printer used more maintenance ink than many other models in the XP series so running costs will be a little higher, potentially offsetting the relatively affordable purchase price.



4. HP Officejet Pro 8620 €290 (inkjet printer)

Another all-in-one inkjet printer, the **Choice Buy** HP Officejet Pro 8620 is equally great at printing photos, colour graphics and black-and-white text and everything will be delivered very speedily for an inkjet printer. The scanning function is excellent both in terms of quality and speed, and colour copying is especially impressive. Despite high maintenance-ink usage, per-copy costs are quite low keeping overall running costs down. This pricey device offers plenty of useful features for your money, including a fax capability, an automatic document feeder, a paper tray that can hold 250 sheets of paper, built-in wi-fi, and NFC for swift and easy printing from a mobile device held close to the printer. However, if you like the sound of this printer and are willing to forgo the NFC feature and automatic double-sided scanning and copying, the HP Officejet Pro 8610 costs less than half the price at €140 and performed similarly in our tests.



5. HP Officejet 7612 €300 (inkjet printer)

At the top end of the price range, the **Choice Buy** HP Officejet 7612 is a multifunctional inkjet printer that can be used for scanning, copying and faxing as well as printing. This HP printer delivers a very satisfactory performance whether printing photos or text and its scanning and copying functions are also of good quality, with colour copies generally sharper than black-and-white copies, as is often the case with inkjet printers. Text is printed very quickly indeed and photos do not take too long either. An unusual feature is that the printing, scanning and copying functions can all handle paper of up to A3 in size, though this does mean that the device will take up a fair amount of desk space to accommodate larger page sizes. Other benefits of this printer are its automatic document feeder and high-capacity paper tray that fits up to 250 pages for long printing jobs.



6. HP Officejet 5740 €154 (inkjet printer)

The **Choice Buy** Officejet 5740 can scan, copy and fax as well as print, producing excellent black text print that is superior to that of many other inkjet printers. It is less impressive when it comes to printing photos and colour images but the quality here is still very decent. The scanning function works very well and the quality of both colour and black-and-white copies is excellent. This printer scored top marks for ease of use and it offers plenty of handy features, including an automatic document feeder, auto duplexing, a memory card slot, and a second input tray for photo paper as well as built-in wi-fi and NFC for ease of printing from mobile devices. Our testers did notice that the touchscreen on this device is a little less responsive than on most printers, but maintenance-ink usage on this printer is low, keeping ink costs a little below average.



7. Canon Maxify MB2350 €263 (inkjet printer)

The **Choice Buy** Canon Maxify MB2350 is a multitasking device with built-in wi-fi that can copy, scan and fax as well as print. It is speedy when printing, with black-and-white text delivered particularly swiftly and to quite a high quality. Colour graphics and photo printing are also fairly fast and the results look good. The scanning and copying functions perform well, with colour copies especially impressive. Useful features include an automatic document feeder and two full-size paper trays that each hold 250 pages. Another printer in the Maxify series, the Canon Maxify MB2050, performed very similarly in our tests and costs around €40 less, though it lacks the second paper tray. With both Canon printers, low per-copy costs offset high maintenance-ink usage for ink costs that work out cheaper than average. Canon's Maxify printers are unusual in that you can only remove an ink cartridge that is empty, which can potentially cause problems if a damaged or incorrect cartridge is inserted as you will have to take the printer to a service centre to remove it.



8. HP Envy 7640 €230 (inkjet printer)

The **Choice Buy** HP Envy 7640 is an all-in-one inkjet printer that adds a fax capability to its printing, scanning and copying functions. This device excels at printing black-and-white text documents and it does so very quickly. Photos are also fairly swift to emerge from this machine and quality here is satisfactory. This printer does a super job of copying both colour and black-and-white material and its scanning function also scored well across all of our tests. Among the numerous useful features are an automatic document feeder, auto duplexing and a second paper tray for photo paper as well as built-in wi-fi, ethernet connectivity and NFC for a range of networking and mobile printing options. Printers are not known for their quiet operation but this HP model is noisier than any of our other Choice Buys. If you can do without the fax function, ethernet connectivity, NFC and the automatic document feeder, the HP Envy 5640 costs around €100 less and scored very similarly in our tests.



9. Canon Pixma MX535 €109 (inkjet printer)

The **Choice Buy** Canon Pixma MX535 is a solid performer across its range of functions that includes faxing as well as printing, scanning and copying. This all-in-one inkjet printer produces good-quality text documents, photos, and spreadsheets though tests found it fared a little less well with colour graphics prints like web pages. Scanning quality and speed is excellent on this Canon machine, particularly for documents with colour graphics. In addition, it delivers first-class colour copies and its black-and-white copies, though less impressive, are still very satisfactory. Useful features include an automatic document feeder and automatic double-sided printing as well as the ability to print from a range of mobile devices and services via the built-in wi-fi. The amount of ink used for maintaining this printer is fairly low, so ink costs overall are not too high, which, added to the relatively affordable purchase price means that this printer offers reasonable value for money.



10. HP Officejet Pro 6830 €180 (inkjet printer)

The **Choice Buy** HP Officejet Pro 6830 is a multifunctional printer that can scan, copy, and fax as well as print. This HP machine delivers black text prints at a very fast speed for an inkjet printer and print quality is very decent. The quality of photo prints was less impressive but colour graphics pages look great. The scanning and copying functions turn in a strong performance, with colour scans and copies looking particularly sharp. In terms of connectivity, this printer has built-in wi-fi and also an ethernet connection, which can make it faster to print from devices on your home network; other options include printing items sent via email or through HP ePrint, AirPrint or Google CloudPrint. Features include auto duplexing and an automatic document feeder that can be used for faxing, scanning and copying multiple pages. Despite using a moderately-high amount of maintenance ink, overall ink costs are slightly below average on this machine.



27. Canon i-sensys LBP6230DW €166 (laser printer, standard)

The first of our laser printers, the **Choice Buy** Canon i-sensys LBP6230DW is a compact dedicated printer with no copying or scanning capabilities and it will only print in black-and-white. However, this laser printer has speed on its side and prints will be delivered very rapidly. In addition, the quality of printed black text documents is excellent – though printed charts and images will look a little less sharp. You can print from a range of mobile devices or from any devices on your home network thanks to the built-in wi-fi and ethernet connection. The i-sensys LBP6230 does not offer a lot of extra features such as a preview screen or automatic document feeder, though it can be set to print on both sides of a page automatically. As laser printers do not use toner to clean printheads, ink costs tend to be lower than those associated with inkjet printers and this Canon printer will be cheaper to run than average.



28. Samsung Xpress M2022W €112 (laser printer, standard)

Another device that focuses on the basics, the **Choice Buy** Samsung Xpress M2022W is a compact mono laser printer that will deliver sharp, great-looking black-and-white text pages swiftly and efficiently. As it is a mono printer, it only prints in black and any prints from colour images will be decent without being overly impressive. Along with built-in wi-fi, this device boasts NFC, so you will be able to print by simply tapping a compatible Android phone or tablet against the printer. With no auto duplexing, you will need to turn over pages manually if you want double-sided printing. Laser printers do not need to clean printheads that have not been used in a while, so there is no ink wastage and ink costs overall for this Samsung model are cheaper than average, which, combined with the relatively affordable purchase price, means that this printer might represent good value for someone who does not need a scanner or copier and who is not looking to print photos or colour images.



30. Samsung Xpress M2070W €183 (laser printer, all-in-one)

The **Choice Buy** Samsung Xpress M2070W is a multifunctional laser printer that will only print in black and white but that can scan in colour. This Samsung device produces excellent black text print quality that is extremely sharp and its printing speeds for text are quite fast. Monochrome prints and copies of images lack definition but are reasonable. Overall, this printer scored highly for ease of use and the copying and scanning functions generally work well. The paper tray has capacity of 150 pages but there is no auto duplexing feature so any double-sided printing will require that pages are turned over by hand. Unlike inkjet printers, laser printers do not have a cleaning cycle that wastes toner, so ink costs on this Samsung model are cheaper than average. The built-in wi-fi enables wireless printing from mobile devices or any computers in the household or items may be sent to the printer via NFC, which requires nothing more than a simple tap.



31. HP Laserjet Pro M127fw €281 (laser printer, all-in-one)

If speed is important to you, the **Choice Buy** HP Laserjet Pro M127fw could be a good option. A mono all-in-one laser printer, this device can scan, copy and fax as well as print – and everything will be done at a rapid rate. Printed text documents look very sharp and clean though charts and images are less impressive, and colour printing is not possible. This printer does a decent job of scanning, and black-and-white copies are of a reasonable standard. The HP Laserjet Pro M127fw offers a range of connectivity options – you can use the ethernet connection, the supplied USB cable, or the built-in wi-fi to link the printer to a range of devices, mobile and otherwise. You can also send items to this printer using the HP ePrinter app, AirPrint or Google CloudPrint. This HP model offers an automatic document feeder and tilting touchscreen, but if you are prepared to lose these features along with the fax capability, the HP Laserjet M125nw scored similarly in our tests and costs €197.

MODEL		SPECIFICATIONS						TEST PERFORMANCE								SCORE %
Inkjet Printers (all-in-one)		Price	Auto Duplexing	ADF	Max/min paper size	Wi-fi	NFC	Printing (63%)			Scanning (13.5%)	Copying (13.5%)	Total ink costs (0%)	Networking (5%)	Power consumption (5%)	
								Printing quality and speed	Printing convenience	Printing versatility						
1	Epson Expression Premium XP-620	140	✓		A4/A6	✓		★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	78
2	Epson Expression Premium XP-820	240	✓		A4/A6	✓		★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	78
3	Epson Expression Premium XP-520	100	✓	✓	A4/A6	✓		★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	77
4	HP Officejet Pro 8620	290	✓		A4/B7	✓	✓	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	74
5	HP Officejet 7612	300	✓	✓	A3+/A6	✓		★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	72
6	HP Officejet 5740	154	✓	✓	A4/A6	✓	✓	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	72
7	Canon Maxify MB2350	263	✓	✓	A4/A6	✓		★★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	71
8	HP Envy 7640	230	✓	✓	A4/A6	✓	✓	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	71
9	Canon Pixma MX535	109	✓	✓	A4/A6	✓		★★★★	★★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	71
10	HP Officejet Pro 6830	180	✓	✓	A4/B7	✓		★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	71
11	Epson Workforce WF-3620DWF	180	✓	✓	A4/A6	✓		★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	69
12	Epson Workforce WF-3640DTWF	211	✓	✓	A4/A6	✓		★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	69
13	Canon Pixma MG2950	54			A4/A6	✓		★★★★	★★★★	★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	69
14	HP Officejet 4630	60	✓	✓	A4/A6	✓		★★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★	★★★★	★★★★★	69
15	HP Envy 5530	85	✓		A4/A6	✓		★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★	★★★★	★★★★★	68
16	Brother DCP-J4120DW	168	✓		A3/A6	✓		★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	68
17	Epson Workforce WF-2660	150	✓	✓	A4/A6	✓	✓	★★★	★★★★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	68
18	Brother MFC-J5320DW	150	✓	✓	A3/A6	✓		★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	68
19	Epson Workforce WF-2650DWF	140	✓	✓	A4/A6	✓		★★★★	★★★★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★	★★★★★	65
20	Epson Expression Home XP-422	98			A4/A6	✓		★★★	★★★★★	★★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	65
21	Epson Expression Home XP-322	75			A4/A6	✓		★★★	★★★★★	★★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	65
22	Canon MX495	130		✓	A4/A6	✓		★★★	★★★★	★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★	★★★	★★★★★	64
23	Brother MFC-J4420DW	165	✓	✓	A3/B7	✓		★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	63
24	Epson Expression Home XP-225	63			A4/A6	✓		★★★	★★★★★	★★	★★★	★★★★	★★	★★★★★	★★★★	62
25	Epson ECOTANK L355	330			A4/B7	✓		★★★	★★★★	★	★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	60
26	Epson Workforce WF-2630WF	112		✓	A4/A6	✓		★★★	★★★★★	★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★	★★★	★★★★★	58

MODEL		SPECIFICATIONS						TEST PERFORMANCE								SCORE %
Laser Printers (standard)		Price	Auto Duplexing	ADF	Max/min paper size	Wi-fi	NFC	Printing (63%)			Scanning (13.5%)	Copying (13.5%)	Total ink costs (0%)	Networking (5%)	Power consumption (5%)	
								Printing quality and speed	Printing convenience	Printing versatility						
27	Canon i-sensys LBP6230DW	166	✓		A4/A5	✓		★★★★	★★★★★	★★	na	na	★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	76
28	Samsung Xpress M2022W	112			A4/B7	✓	✓	★★★★	★★★★	★	na	na	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	74
29	Brother HL-1112	84			A4/A4			★★★★	★★★★	★	na	na	★★★	★★	★★★★★	66
Laser printers (all-in-one)																
30	Samsung Xpress M2070W	183			A4/B7	✓	✓	★★★★	★★★★★	★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	75
31	HP Laserjet Pro M127fw	281		✓	A4/A6	✓		★★★★	★★★★	★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	74
32	Brother DCP-1610W	140			A4/A5	✓		★★★★	★★★★	★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	71
33	Brother DCP-1510	110			A4/A4			★★★★	★★★★	★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★	★★★★★	64

USING THE TABLE

Star ratings are out of five.

SPECIFICATIONS

Price: Typical retailer’s price if you shop around.
Auto Duplexing: The printer can be set to automatically print on both sides of a page.
ADF: The printer has an automatic document feeder for copying and scanning multi-page documents.
NFC: The printer has near field communication (NFC) functionality, which means you can wirelessly transfer data from a compatible mobile device by holding it up to the printer.

TEST PERFORMANCE

Printing quality and speed: Print quality and timing for one A4-page black-and-white letter, an 8x10-inch photo, a spreadsheet with graphs and charts, and a page with colour graphics and images. Ratings are given for clarity, sharpness, colour accuracy and the smudge and moisture resistance of the printed material.
Printing convenience: Includes ease of installation, printing different types of documents, and maintenance as well as

start-up time and noise.
Printing versatility: The range of features provided by the printer, including printing options, auto-duplexing, the presence of a preview screen, and the ability to print from memory cards and Pictbridge.
Scanning: Rating includes the quality, speed, convenience and versatility of the scanning function when scanning magazine pages, photos, text documents and 3D objects.
Copying: Rating includes the quality, speed, convenience and versatility of the copying function when copying both in colour and in black-and-white.
Total ink costs: Ink consumption is measured for continuous printing of photos, text and graphics and intermittent-use tests are conducted for text and graphics printing on inkjet printers to measure any extra ink used for cleaning.
Networking: Rating includes network sharing and the ability to print from mobile devices over wi-fi, through AirPrint and Google CloudPrint, from email over the internet and using NFC.
Power Consumption: Rating for the energy used when the printer is idle, in stand-by mode and switched off.

Useful contacts:

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