

The following is a step and step guide to help you decide on the best ink set up for your Epson printer when used for screen positive printing.

Question 1 – Are you going to dedicate your printer to printing only screen separations?

Using your machine for printing both screen separations and full color images is certainly possible and we offer the necessary ink combinations to do this. However, we recommend that you consider dedicating your machine to screen separation printing only so that you can fully utilize the machines capabilities for this application. For instance, if you dedicate the machine to screen positive printing only, you can set the machine up with the Absolute Black inks in every cartridge to get the blackest image possible and, if you are using specialist RIP software, you can increase the printing speed.

If you do need to use the machine for full color printing as well as screen separation printing, then you will need to buy the absolute black ink for the black channel and the correct color inks for all the other channels. We offer color matched versions of all the Epson color ink types. If you are using a wide format printer model then we offer our inks in normal single use cartridge and in bulk for use with our refillable cartridge kits. See question 3 below for which option is best for your particular situation.

Question 2 – Which software are you going to use to drive your printer?

If you are going to drive your printer using the standard Epson driver software and are dedicating the machine to printing screen separations only, then we recommend installing the Absolute Black ink in every channel on the machine. The Epson driver software can be set to print with black ink only but the media types it allows you to print on and the resolutions you can print at are limited under the black only ink setting. In our experience printing screen separations using the Epson driver software is much easier using Absolute black ink in every channel – you simply set the software to color printing and select the recommended media setting for the film you are using. The printer will then print black using all the inks on the machine to achieve the deepest black.

If you have a printer model that has both Photo black and Matte black inks installed on the machine (such as the Epson Photo R1900, R3000, or the Pro 4900/7890/7900/9890/9900) and you intend to print screen separations and full color images using the standard Epson driver software, then you will need to install the Absolute Black ink in the Matte black channel and Photo Black and color inks in the other channels. On these printer models, the driver software offers the option of black ink only printing on some matte papers only, which sets the printer to print from the Matte black cartridge. You can check on this by opening the driver software and seeing which media settings allow you to print with the black ink only option under the 'color' setting – if the grayscale option is grayed out then it means you can't print with black ink only using this media setting.

If you are going to use RIP software to drive your printer, then you should consult with the RIP vendor as to the capabilities of the software when printing black only. Some RIPs can be set to print black from multiple channels to increase print speed and achieve the deepest blacks, or you can set which channel to print black from – this option allows you to install Absolute black in every channel and then switch from one channel to another as you run the inks down.

Question 3 – Should you use single use cartridges, or refillable cartridges and bulk inks?

For Epson desk top printer users, we only offer the option of bulk ink for use with refillable cartridges.

For Epson Pro wide format printer users, the choice of whether to use single use cartridges or refillable cartridges and bulk ink is down to how much printing you do and whether you are happy to work with liquid ink. If you only make a few screen separation prints a week then single use cartridges are probably the way to go as bulk inks could go out of date before you use them (2 year shelf life). Alternatively, if you are going through a cartridge or more of ink every month or so, then refillable cartridges and bulk ink will be the most economical option. To calculate ink usage, a figure of 1.5 ml of ink per square foot of black print is typical when printing screen positives. Another point to consider is if you or the printer operator is happy to work with liquid inks. Although our refillable cartridges are very easy to use, refilling does involve pouring liquid ink from bottles into the cartridges and accidents can happen such as spillages or even filling the wrong ink into the wrong cartridge. If your print set up does not include dedicated printer operators then single use cartridges are probably the most reliable option.

Question 4 – Does the printer need to be flushed before installing Absolute Black inks?

For Epson desk top Photo printer models (excluding the Photo R3000), Absolute Black inks can be installed directly on top of the original inks, and performing three or four cleaning cycles will flush out the original inks and bring the Absolute Black inks to the print head. If you are going to install the inks onto a brand new desk top printer that has never had inks installed before, then we recommend installing the original cartridges that came with the printer to check that the machine is functioning correctly before installing the Absolute Black inks.

For brand new Epson Pro wide format printer models and the Epson Photo R3000, we recommend installing the Absolute Black inks from the start as this will eliminate any unnecessary purging out of inks or flushing. Just install our cartridges into the machine out of the box and the printer will prime itself with ink.

For Epson Pro wide format printer models and the Epson Photo R3000 that are already installed with the original inks, we recommend ideally flushing the printer out before installing Absolute Black inks, and we provide cleaning cartridges or cleaning fluid in bulk bottles for this purpose. However, if you are changing the Epson pigment photo black ink only to Absolute Black ink then flushing is not required. In this case, we recommend running an initial fill routine with the Absolute black ink installed to ensure that the original black ink is removed from the machine. Failure to do this can result in some inconsistent print results when a mixture of the two inks is being used. Details on running initial fill routines are included in our installation guides section of this website. If you intend to install the Absolute Black inks in every channel of a Pro model or Photo R3000 that has the original inks already installed, then flushing with cleaning cartridges or cleaning fluid is recommended before installing Absolute Black. Failure to do so can result in inconsistent printing and jet clogging. Flushing procedures are included in the installation guides on this website.

Question 5 – Does the printer need flushing before installing Absolute Clear inks?

Absolute Clear inks are freely mixable with the original Epson inks and printers do not need flushing before installation. Simply order the cartridges you need for the non-active channels on your printer and install them one at a time when the existing cartridges run empty.

If you are in doubt as to the best ink set up for your application, or need advice about whether you need to flush your printer before installing Absolute Black inks, then please contact us at 847-827-0747 or by e-mail at inquiries@ink2image.com.