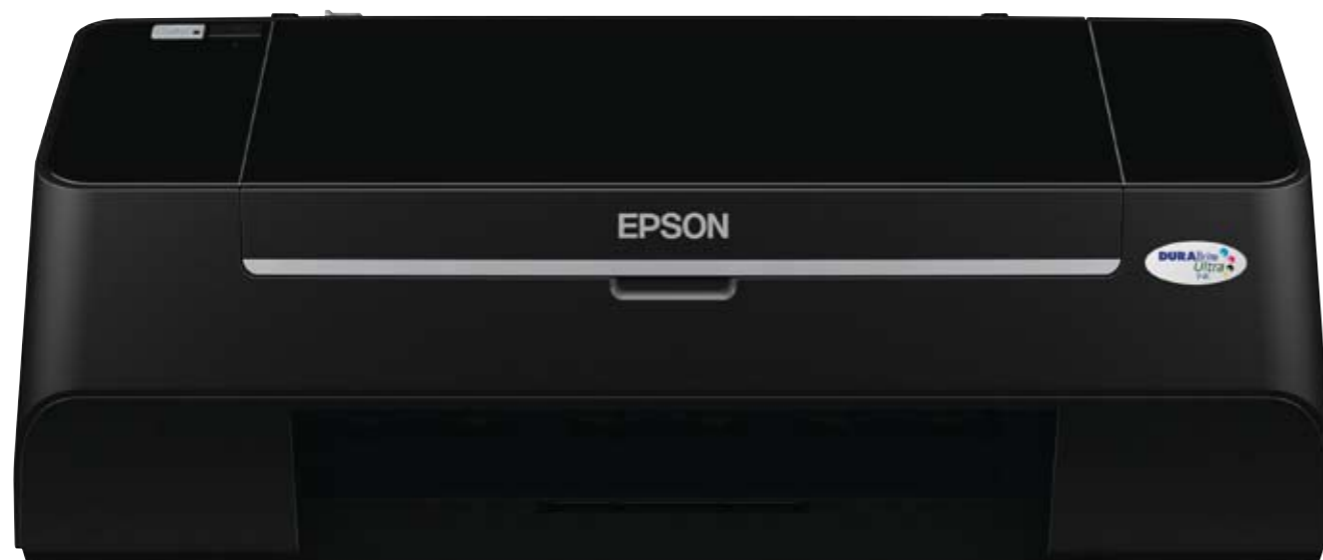


Epson Stylus S20

www.epson.co.uk

Guide price: £39 Street price: £35

- System requirements: Windows 2000, XP, Vista, Mac 10.3.9, 10.4, 10.5
- Maximum media size: A4
- Print engine: 4-colour inkjet DURAbright (4pl)
- Print resolution: 5760x1440dpi



THIS BUDGET PRINTER is small in size and in price, making it a very tempting offer for someone's first photo printer. The plastic body is lightweight, but feels sturdy enough when placed on the desktop. The instruction sheet makes installation straightforward and the disk includes a selection of extra software, should you wish to install it. The four individual ink cartridges are from Epson's Durabright range and at just £6.65 per cartridge, give a total refill cost from just £24.23 if bought in a multipack. Operation is fairly noisy, especially when first turning it on and priming the inks, but is tolerable when printing. For such an affordable printer, the print quality is very impressive, with some generally nice looking results. However, some of the colours seem slightly muted, particularly in the greens and, on close inspection, solid colours appear to have a slightly grainy finish. Looking at the fine detail, though the printer doesn't resolve down to the single pixel line, it has done a good job. Using the printer's own colour management appears to give the best results and both skin tones and grey tones are handled well, giving neutral tonality. If you're looking for speedy results though, this is probably not for you; a regular A4 print takes just over ten minutes, while a borderless print takes nearly 14 minutes to print.



Verdict

This is a great little device for printing drafts and preview work but not quite up to final print standard.

Handling & ease of use	★★★★☆
Features	★★★★☆
Print Quality & Speed	★★★★☆
Value for money	★★★★☆

Overall rating ★★★★★

Canon PIXMA iP1900

www.canon.co.uk

Guide price: £39 Street price: £39

- System requirements: Windows 2000 Professional (SP4), XP (SP2), Vista, Mac
- Maximum media size: A4
- Print engine: 4-colour inkjet FINE cartridges (min 2pl)
- Print resolution: 4800x1440dpi



MUCH LIKE THE EPSON, this is a very light and compact device. The design follows in the general theme of the PIXMA range with its sleek, curved build and despite being light, the printer feels sturdy on the desktop. A detailed 'getting started' booklet guides you through the installation and, combined with the CD (with its own guidance), makes for a hassle-free set-up process. Though the printer uses four inks, these are housed in just two separate cartridges (one black cartridge and one three-colour cartridge containing Cyan, Magenta and Yellow inks), these cost from £12 for the black and £16 for the colour, with larger capacity versions costing up to £20 – this means a total cost of between £28 and £36 for a full refill. A cost almost equal to that of the printer itself. Noise levels are fairly high during operation, especially as the printing kicks off with a flurry of operation. This does result, however, in some impressive print times from the little PIXMA; a regular A4 print takes just under four minutes, while a borderless print takes just four and a half minutes. Despite the speed, the results are brightly coloured and fine detail is clearly resolved, displaying right down to a single pixel line. On the actual images however, the colouring appears to have an excess of green, especially in the greyscale tones.



Verdict

This model suits those looking for a quick print but not those critical of colour.

Handling & ease of use	★★★★☆
Features	★★★★☆
Print Quality & Speed	★★★★☆
Value for money	★★★★☆

Overall rating ★★★★★