

A Fine Program

FinePrint 5.05

FinePrint Software

(415) 989-2722

www.fineprint.com

Price: \$49.95; contact company for bulk pricing.

Windows 95/98/NT/Me/2000/XP

Reviewed by Peter Bates, founder and president of Bates Communications, a desktop publishing and Web design company in Boston.

Do you really need another print driver? Isn't the one that came with your printer packed with enough bells and whistles? Maybe not. Like all good third-party utilities, FinePrint supplies features the big boys at Hewlett-Packard and Canon leave out. I tested the software with two HP printers — the Laserjet 1300 and the Photosmart 7350 photo-quality inkjet — and found it versatile and even powerful at times.

When you install it, the program gives you the option to make FinePrint your default print driver. Actually, it acts more as an interface between your application and your printer, similar to Adobe Acrobat.

When you press your "Print" key, FinePrint displays its "Preview" panel, one of five tabbed screens. From here you can display your print job as one, two, four or eight pages across. I am not sure why you would want to display eight pages at a time, since one page is barely readable with 12-point Times New Roman font. Fortunately, the program allows you to double-click the page and zoom in for reading purposes.

If you right-click a page, you can zoom up to 400 percent. Now here is where FinePrint earns its \$49.95 price tag. You can delete and add pages to the print queue. Have you ever printed out a Web page and wished you could have avoided that useless last page, the one with a single line on it? FinePrint allows

you to accomplish this by displaying the page and giving you the option to delete that page. While the "Preview" panel is displayed, you can add print jobs from a second application. For example, your print queue could contain your legal brief in a Microsoft Word document and a stack of invoices composed in Microsoft Excel.

Enhancing Documents

The ability to print two or more documents from different applications is particularly valuable if you want to assign them all the same watermark. FinePrint's "Stationery" panel allows you to select canned or custom-created watermarks. You could specify that "For Your Eyes Only" appears across each sheet of your multi-application print job in the font you select. You even can specify the angle it appears across the page or a two-page spread.

Have you ever noticed how printed Web pages, e-mail messages or Portable Document Format files have no provision for assigning page numbers? Use FinePrint's panel to specify variable page numbering for headers and footers.

All these features work with elegant simplicity. When you have finished, you can save the print file if you think you will need it again.

Plus, the third panel in FinePrint, "Form Factory," provides a forms creation tool. Of

course, you can create your own letterhead in Word and save it as a template for every letter you write. But can you do it in your financial reporting software or with your database list? "Form Factory" only requires you to create the first letterhead in your word processing software, then save it. You then can select your letterhead from the dropdown box on the "Preview" panel.

However, be careful of this feature. Before you print to FinePrint, make sure your document has enough blank space

at the top to accommodate the height of your letterhead. FinePrint has no way of detecting where its form ends and your text begins. This problem makes this feature fairly useless for uneditable documents, such as PDFs and Web pages.

Double Up

I always have found double-sided printing an unpredictable task with low-end laser and inkjet printers. Do you flip the paper over, turn it 180 degrees, or do both? It varies from application to application. FinePrint's "Double Sided" option is simplicity in itself. You send the first set of pages through, turn them 180 degrees and click "OK" on the FinePrint dialog box to print the other side. It worked perfectly for me every time.

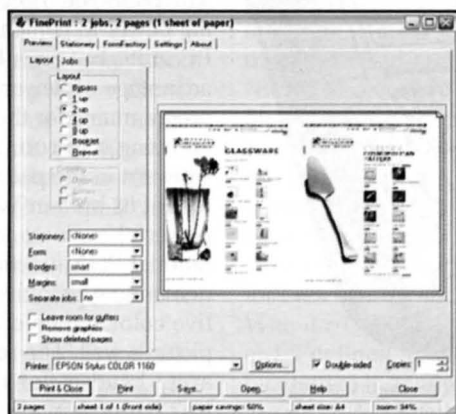
Quality Not Quantity

What about the print quality? Strangely enough, that varies with the printer you are using. My HP Laserjet produced pages with thinner print density via FinePrint than when I printed via the HP printer driver. It also omitted a border I created in my Word letterhead. However, neither problem surfaced when I used FinePrint with the Photosmart printer. Make sure your printer produces the results you want or take advantage of FinePrint's 30-day guaranteed refund.

More and More

Other nice features that worked as advertised include:

- Prints Booklets; a booklet page has two pages per sheet, one in each column
- Prints borders around your pages
- Allows a left-sided gutter for three-hole punching
- Removes graphics, which is great for saving ink when printing those pesky Web pages. **100**



FinePrint's "Preview" panel can display your print jobs as one, two, four or eight pages.

Closing Argument

Pros: The program includes useful features to manage and enhance documents after sending them to the printer, such as forms creation, watermarks and automatic page numbering.

Cons: Technical support is only via e-mail. The FormFactory feature can't be used when printing uneditable documents such as Web pages. The product might not work as expected with some printers.

Verdict: If your printer's driver is fully compatible with FinePrint, you will find this a useful and versatile product.