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HP Photosmart C5180 All-in-one printer

HP offers up another all-in-one printer

by Doug Harman published on 6 November 2006

Just like the C4180, the C5180 is a neat and compact AIO that provides a comprehensive package of office tools for the busy home office user. It can print general documents quickly and allows you to print fair photo quality prints as well up to A4. Unlike the C4180, the 5180 uses six of HP's new Vivera inks in separate tanks that do not have to be replaced to switch print modes (graphics to photos for example). And the colours: the "usual" cyan, magenta, yellow and black inks are joined by light cyan and magenta.



The familiar HP u-bend style paper feed path remains from the C4180, paper is loaded print side down and fed into the printer and turned back out and over delivering the paper on top of the waiting stack of plain sheets.

A quick and automatic print head alignment and head clean was required but then I was up and running. HP's claimed print times look great: photos in 12-seconds and up to 32ppm for text/general documents but in basic mode. Switch to the borderless A4 setting - for a top quality photos - and the maximum (optimised 4800 x 1200dpi) print setting and it takes just over 15 -minutes to print one A4 borderless photo.

Print quality is improved over the C4180 (as you'd expect for a printer with the new generation Vivera inks) but there are obvious linear print patterns in shadows and some blockiness in solid areas of colour, which was quite disappointing.

Like its forbear, the colour rendition is excellent with only slightly flat prints with vibrant colour, as if lacking contrast. The C5180 can be used as a standalone printer when printing directly from memory cards via the built in card readers; CF, SD/MMC, xD, Memory stick (and Duo) cards are slotted into ports on the front. This is ably helped

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by the use of the nice flip up 6cm colour screen with the ability to apply basic image edits as well.

Memory card support, USB2.0 and built-in Ethernet networking capability are great, so it's odd that the C5180 lacks a PictBridge port to directly connect digital cameras as well, almost a defacto standard now on most other similarly priced AIOs.

Scanning and copying can be carried out as a stand-alone device or through HP's software or perhaps an image-editing program such as Photoshop via a connected PC. The A4 flatbed scanner provides an optical resolution up to 1200 x 2400ppi (an optimised 19200ppi resolution is available) while copying (which uses the scanner system) resolution is 4800 x 1200ppi. Scanning quality is remarkably good overall, with basic dust removal and colour correction processing that can be applied add further panache to the scanning package.

Copy quality is adequate; colour wise it's good but the slight linear patterns seen in the printing of photos get uglier in copies, even in the best copy setting. The scanner lid suffers the same problem as the lid on the C4180, it cannot raise to allow the copying of pages from thick books for example. Another problem (again just like the C4180, on which this AIO is obviously based) is a the paper handling which is best described as modest with a 100-sheet input tray and a measly 20-sheet output tray; you'll be handholding longer print runs.

VERDICT

The HP Photosmart C5180 benefits from the six of the new long lasting Vivera inks and good scanning capability. However, the photo print quality, while better than the C4180, still leaves something to be desired but on balance is a slightly better balance of features and price than the C4180.

At a glance

What is it?

Compact printer, scanner and copier, all-in-one printer

Good

Small size, great price, easy to use, text output, Ethernet built-in

Bad

Photo output, scanner hood not vertically articulated, paper handling, copy quality

Verdict

It's compact, simple to use, has six separate inks, good scan quality and text output but average photo quality leaves a little to be desired

Price £199

Our score

7/10

Your score

?/10