



The Beginners Guide to ID Badge Printers

www.easybadges.com
sales@easybadges.com
(855) 436-0527

Selecting An ID Badge Printer Can Be Difficult, We Can Help!

Whether you're a small, mid-size or large business owner, selecting the right ID badge printer for your organization can be daunting. With so many ID Badge printing products out on the market, how do you know what model is right for business now and as it grows?

Generally, most ID card printer manufacturers make printer models that can be categorized into entry-level, mid-level or high-volume (professional) card printers.

But before you decide what type of printer is best for your business, it's critical to have a clear understanding of the different features offered by these three categories of ID card printers.

Entry level ID badge printers

An entry-level ID badge printer is great for businesses that need to print up to 200 identity cards per year. These types of printers are used to print access control passes, employee badges, temporary IDs, visitor passes, and even replacement ID cards. Basic ID badge printers are a cost-effective solution for a small businesses in a wide variety of industries. However, while entry-level printers can create ID cards

that help secure your offices, create a sense of belonging among employees and boost brand recognition, they don't come with some of the advanced features offered by mid-level and high-volume printers. To determine what type of features are essential for your organization, ask yourself: ***What will I be using the ID printer for?***

For instance, do you need a printer that can personalize ID cards quickly and reliably? Do you need a printer that can print in monochrome blue or black for temporary badges and visitor passes? Do you want a printer with magnetic coding capabilities?

Once you've made a list of wants and must-have features, it's much easier to choose the right ID badge printer for your business. For example, if hyper-speedy printing isn't that important to you, then entry-level badge printers that print about 8 to 10 seconds slower than mid-level and high-volume ID card printers, are a great option because you'll still be able to print color and monochrome cards, get some basic security features, and have your own reliable ID badge printing solution at a cost-saving price.

Interested in an entry-level printer?
Check out the [Magicard Pronto](#) and [Evolis Zenius Systems](#).



[Magicard Pronto](#)



[Evolis Zenius Systems](#)

Mid-range ID badge printers

Mid-level ID badge printers are a great solution for schools, universities and mid-size businesses that need to print up to 2,000 identity cards per year. Mid-range printers offer more features than entry-level models and generally print ID cards at a slightly faster rate. Mid-level ID card printers are reliable, have more security features, and some even offer upgradable options such as dual-sided printing.

Versatile and easily adaptable mid-range ID printers that can accommodate your changing business needs include the [Magicard 600](#) and [Evolis Primacy](#) ID printer systems.



[Magicard 600](#)



[Evolis Primacy](#)

High volume professional ID printers

For large businesses that need to print over 2,000 cards a year or require a high level of security and superior print quality, high-volume professional ID printers are an ideal option. These types of printers come fully equipped with features like double-sided printing, easy-to-use touchscreen interfaces, larger capacity ribbons and hoppers, re-transfer printing, lamination and more.



Generally, the higher volume of ID badges a printer can print, the longer and more comprehensive the manufacturer's warranty will be. However, what really sets apart high-volume professional ID printers is that these types of printers are typically the only class which offer laminating capabilities and have advanced options that allow businesses to conquer even the most complex and sophisticated ID printing jobs.

Interested in a high-volume professional ID printer? Check out the [Fargo HDP5600 ID card printer](#).

ID badge printer prices

You're probably wondering what the average price for an ID badge printer is. The price range can vary based on the class of ID badge printer you need for your business. For instance, you can find entry-level ID badge printers as low as \$790 and professional ID badge printers (including ID badge software) that can run as high as \$9,000.

If you're not sure about what type of printer you need for your organization or only need an ID badge printer for a short period of time, you may want to consider [renting an ID card printer](#).

Do I need a single sided or dual sided ID card printer?

Depending on how much information you want to include on the ID cards you print, you may need an ID card printer with dual-sided printing capability. Dual-sided ID card printers have a built-in flipper that automatically turn an ID cards over from front to backside printing. Generally, a dual-sided card printer will cost \$400 to \$1,000 more than a comparable single-sided printer.

Most entry-level printers only offer single-sided printing. Now, you're probably thinking: "Can't I just flip

the ID card over manually to print on the other side?" While you can technically do that, if you have hundreds or even thousands of ID badges to print, manual double-sided printing will be a time-consuming, labor intensive and expensive process.

If you decide to go the manual double-sided printing route, your fingers must be completely free from any oils and dust to avoid accidentally blemishing the ID cards. It's also critical that you store printed ID cards in a clean, dry place to avoid damages.

Which ID card printer has the best print quality?

Most ID badge printers use two types of printing technologies: DTC and Retransfer. If you would like to learn more about how these two technologies work, read our blog post, [How Do ID Card Printers Work](#). Or, keep reading to get a quick summary of both technologies' features.

DTC (Direct To Card) card printer

Most card printers use dye-sub printing, this technology allows for high quality image and text printing most commonly in the 300 dpi range. Although this printing method is a cost-effective and popular choice, it is not true "edge-to-edge" ("borderless") printing.

While most DTC printers offer near edge-to-edge printing, many still leave white or blank areas. Generally, printers that use direct-to-card printing technology are \$1,200 to \$1,600 less than comparable retransfer ID card models.

Reverse Transfer ID Card Printer

Reverse transfer is a high-quality, edge-to-edge printing method that uses a two-step process to transfer image and text data onto ID cards. While this printing method costs more than DTC, images are clearer, colors are more vivid and tend to last longer.

On average, retransfer printers cost \$1,200 to \$1,600 more than dye-sub ID card printer models. All reverse transfer card printers fall into the high-volume, professional ID printer category and start at the \$4,000 price range.

Do I need a card printer with lamination?

Not all ID card printers laminate the cards they print. And only some printers that fit into the high-volume, professional printer category offer lamination options. ID printers with built-in laminators cost around \$1,300

to \$2,000 more compared to non-laminating ID badge printers.

Below, you'll see the main reasons why ID badges should be laminated:

- A laminated ID badge is going to last much longer than one that hasn't been laminated, potentially extending the average life of a card by 4 to 10 years.
- The option to add additional security features like holographic images when laminating an ID badge is also available, which makes the ID badge even more secure and harder to copy.
- Laminating a card will further protect it against harmful UV lights that can make it fade over time.
- Simply handling the card will cause normal wear and tear.

Although laminating ID badges is going to cost more money upfront and per card, reissuing costs will be reduced, resulting in long-term savings.

Magnetic stripe card printing

If you're want to use PVC cards with a magnetic stripe, you may want to add an optional magnetic stripe encoder to your printer. Adding an encoder will give you the ability to both read and encode ID cards at the time of printing. While most ID card printers have magnetic stripe encoder options, some entry-level ID printer don't.

Investing in a printer with magnetic stripe capability is a smart way to save money in the future because the vast majority of ID printers cannot be upgraded. Adding an encoder now is a major cost-saving solution, especially if your company decides to use PVC cards with magnetic stripes at some point in time.

If you're considering upgrading to magnetic stripe printing, the [Evolis Zenius Expert](#) and [Evolis Primacy](#) card printers are the only two models we offer that will allow you to add a magnetic stripe to your ID cards later on.

How does the ID badge printer connect to the computer?

ID badge printers can connect to a computer via USB or Ethernet port. However, there are also ID card printers available with Wi-Fi connectivity.

However, if you're adding an ID card printer to a network that allows multiple computers to connect to the printer, make sure the ID card printer you choose has an Ethernet port. Wi-Fi connectivity may work in a networked solution, but we recommend that you check with your sales and technology reps before making a purchase.

Most high-volume professional ID card printers come standard with an Ethernet port while other models come with the optional Ethernet upgrade at about \$150 to \$400 or more depending on the model.

Which ID card printer supplies do I need?

Many ID badge printers don't come with everything you need to start printing employee badges. Below, you'll see a quick rundown of everything you need to get your ID card printing program fully operational.

ID printer ribbon

Unlike traditional paper printers that use ink cartridges, ID card printers use ribbons. To learn more about the different types of ID printer ribbons, read our [ID Card Printer Ribbons 101](#) blog post.

ID PVC cards

The most commonly used blank ID card is the [CR8030 PVC](#). However, if you're using a retransfer printer or are laminating your ID cards, you will want to opt for a composite ID card to prevent card warping. Unlike most blank ID cards, composite ID cards are made up of up to 60% polyester and 40% PVC, and can stand up to the extra heat added by the laminating or retransfer printing process. [Learn more here](#) about PVC and composite cards.

ID printer cleaning kit

It's important to clean your ID card printer at least once every 1,000 prints to ensure clear and good printing quality. Cleaning your ID printer regularly can also help prevent printhead damage and voiding the manufacturer's warranty.

ID card laminates

There are many varieties of laminates available for your ID cards. Some of the options include clear, generic or custom design laminates.

ID card software

An ID badge printer can accept a print command from just about any application including Microsoft Word, Excel, PDF, etc. as long as the printing dimensions are correct. Special ID card software is not needed, but can be extremely helpful when it comes to designing and printing badges. ID card software can help you save money by keeping ID card design in-house.



What is ID card design software?

ID card software allows non-designers to professionally create professional-looking ID badges. The software also gives authorized users full control of employee ID card management. ID card printing software is a comprehensive solution that comes with all the tools you need to create the perfect identity badges for your business.

Using ID design software, you can also connect to databases, manage card holders, and more. Like card printers, software is generally broken up into basic entry-level to advanced professional-level editions. As the level of the software goes up, so do its features and flexibility .

- Use Included ID badge templates
- Enroll Card Holders
- Capture Images
- Capture and Save Signatures
- Utilize Design Tools
- Design & Print Barcodes
- Encode Magnetic Strips
- Encode Smart Chips
- Manage Records
- Print ID Badges

Free ID badge software

Many ID card printers come with free entry-level software that allows you to easily design and print employee badges. To find out if the printer you've purchased includes free ID badge software, check out the model's product page. If your printer doesn't come with free ID badge software, visit Easy Badges for a [free download](#).

ID badge software for Mac ®

If your business predominately uses Mac computers, please be aware that not all ID badge printers and software are compatible with Mac OS X. For Apple computer users, we recommend [CardPresso ID card software](#).

Please call one of our ID experts if you have any questions at (855) 436-0527 or email at sales@easybadges.com. We are here to help. We appreciate your business.