



Which photo processor?

Getting your photos printed online will save you money and you'll get better-quality snaps, according to Which? tests

Digital photography lets you save money by developing only the pictures you want to keep. But if you get them printed on the high street, as nearly one in four members do, you probably won't get the best deal or the best prints.

The results from our test of photo processing services were disappointing – 11 of the 14 we tested produced photographs that were average or poor. Both our Best Buys come from online processors – Snapfish and Bonusprint.

We compared images from different processors, and while some appeared fine in isolation, image quality issues became apparent when they were compared with the best.

Don't assume that poor photographs are the result of poor camera work. See

below for our guide to spotting badly printed images.

As well as giving you better prints, heading online can save you money. Getting photographs printed in large batches can reduce the cost per print and makes postage costs better value.

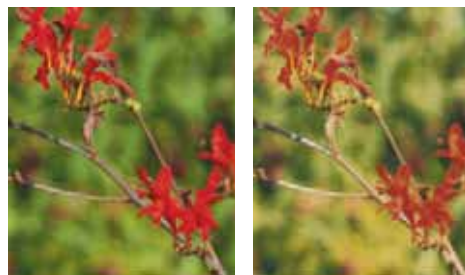
Best Buy Bonusprint will lower the cost to 5p per 6x4-inch image if you print more than 200 pictures, whereas printing fewer than 99 will cost twice that.

Another option is to invest in some pre-paid credits. This will lower the cost, but means you don't have to print all your photos in one go. Buying credits in advance can lower the cost of printing a 6x4-inch image to as little as 5p at Best Buy online processor Snapfish (www.snapfish.co.uk).



THE GOOD AND THE BAD

If you're not sure whether your poor photography or the processor is to blame, then there are several things you can look for



The photo on the left has very accurate colours, whereas the photograph on the right is tinted yellow. The differences are more pronounced in the background, which should be green. The photograph on the right has a very yellow background. Reject the photo if the colours of something you recognise are completely off.



Sometimes colours in processed photographs can lack depth. The image on the right is washed out. If you compare the skin tones on the tops, it's much brighter in the left-hand image than in the right-hand one. You can see this in the eye colours, pink ring and the lipstick which are better in the left-hand photo.



WHICH.CO.UK

Edit your photos with a Best Buy software package

www.which.co.uk/photoeditingsoftware

Your legal rights

Which? legal expert Peter McCarthy tells you what to do if you're not satisfied with your photos



What should I do if I'm not happy with the way my photos have been processed?

Under the Supply of Goods and Services Act 1982, the processor has to use reasonable care and skill, and must use materials of satisfactory quality. If it doesn't and the photos are not satisfactory, it will be in breach of contract.

Ask the processor to put this right by reprinting the pictures correctly. If it gets it wrong again, ask for your money back and get the photos produced elsewhere.

If the second processor charges more than the first, you'd be entitled to ask the first to pay the difference.

What can I do if I need to get legal help with a problem with photos?

If you need legal help, subscribe to Which? Legal Service to get unlimited phone advice from our expert consumer and employment lawyers. You can call them on 01992 822828 between 8.30am and 6pm Monday to Friday.



65% Bonusprint

£6.99 for 50 6x4-inch prints

Bonusprint delivers clean, well-balanced prints, and the upload program is simple and intuitive to use, though some testers felt it lacked prompts or explanations that would have been helpful. Upload times are OK, but not as fast as Snapfish. On the downside, photos taken indoors with a flash were a little yellowy, and enlargements weren't great.

WE FOUND Costs were slightly above average, but were better value the more prints you had made.

Average upload time for 20 photos 14 minutes 32 seconds **Matt** Yes **Prepay credits** No



62% Snapfish

£5.49 for 50 6x4-inch prints

We found the Snapfish website easy to use, and our panellists judged the quality of the photos to be good. It's the fastest of all the online companies we tested, with average upload times of just four and a half minutes. At the time of testing, prepaid credits reduce the price for a 6x4-inch print from 9p down to as little as 5p.

WE FOUND Buying 50 6x4-inch prints from Snapfish will cost you £1.50 less than buying them from our other Best Buy processor, Bonusprint.

Average upload time for 20 photos 4 minutes 32 seconds **Matt** Yes **Prepay credits** Yes

Don't Buy



31% Tesco

The overall print quality at Tesco is poor, and our experts found a variety of problems with the images. Some suffered from a yellow colour bias, several lacked sharpness and others had problems with very high contrast. Enlargements weren't available at all the stores we tested but, where they were, we found problems with yellow and orange colour bias. Some were also murky and had very flat contrast.



39% Photobox

Popular online retailer Photobox has a good prepaid credit scheme and easy-to-use image upload software. However, we had to make it a Don't Buy because of its poor-quality images. There were problems with colour bias, and others had flat contrast levels (not enough difference between the dark and light tones). Enlargements were poor – our experts noted they were washed out and, at times, pink.

MODEL	SPECIFICATION					WHICH? TEST PERFORMANCE			SCORE (%)
	DELIVERY TIME – INCLUDING POST	10 PRINTS (£)	50 PRINTS (£)	100 PRINTS (£)	MATT OPTION	SPEED	ENLARGEMENTS	IMAGE QUALITY	
ONLINE									
1 BONUSPRINT	3 days	2.99	6.99	11.99	✓	★★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	65
2 SNAPFISH	4 days	1.89	5.49	10.49	✓	★★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	62
3 PIXUM	2 days	2.49	4.99	7.49	✓	★★★	★	★★★★★	55
4 KODAK EASYSHARE GALLERY	2 days	2.39	6.49	11.99	✓	★★★	★★★★	★★	46
5 APPLE IPHOTO	3 days	3.44	4.59	8.04		★★★	★★★★	★★★★	46
6 ALDI	2 days	1.83	3.83	6.33		★★★	★★	★★	43
7 COLORAMA	5 days	2.99	6.99	8.99	✓	★★	★★★★	★★	40
8 PHOTOBOX	2 days	2.35	6.35	11.35	✓	★★★	★	★★	39
INSTORE									
9 BOOTS	1 hour	3.00	15.00	20.00	✓	n/a	★★★★★★	★★★★	60
10 ASDA	1 hour	1.80	9.00	15.00	✓ ^a	n/a	★★★★★	★★★★	55
11 JESSOPS	1 hour	5.00	25.00	40.00	✓	n/a	★★	★★★★	48
12 KODAK KIOSK	Instant	4.20	19.50	25.00		n/a	n/a	★★	45
13 SNAPPY SNAPS	1 hour	4.00	10.00	10.00	✓	n/a	★★	★★★★	40
14 TESCO	1 hour	1.80	9.00	14.00		n/a	★	★★	31

^a Lustre option available

USING THE TABLE

The more stars the better.

Specification

Price Guide for 6x4-inch prints or nearest size, with postage. Price per print varies depending on number of prints ordered. **Matt option** Lustre photos have a slight sheen so aren't completely matt, but aren't as shiny as a glossy print.

Test performance

Speed Average to upload 20 images. **Enlargements** 12x8-inch enlargement or nearest size.

Image quality From pictures taken in bright and dim light and with flash.

Score

Ignores price, based on:

Image quality **56%**
Enlargements **16%**
Speed **20%**
Photoshop image **8%**

(We test whether a printer automatically applies enhancements made in Photoshop to an image.)