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creativity and security

The Ultimate ID Printer Buyer's Guide

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Purchasing an ID card printer can feel like a daunting task. There is a wide range of ID printer models available, all with different features—including speed, connectivity, security, and customization capabilities.

In this guide, we'll explore how to choose the right ID card printer for your business or organization. We've also included an overview of our most popular printers available to help make your selection easier.

How to choose the right ID card printer for your business

1 Budget

ID card printers are a large investment. The cost of a printer can range from hundreds to thousands of dollars, depending on the type of printer, speed, and the supplies required.

While it may be tempting to choose the least expensive model, it's important to consider the longevity of printers. Many advanced models allow you to add features and upgrades as your business grows— saving you money in the long run.

2 Printer Type

There are two main options when choosing a printer—direct-to-card (DTC) or reverse transfer. These printer types use different technology to print images onto cards. The type of printer you choose will depend on your budget, expected volume, and customization needs.

Direct-to-card

Direct-to-card printers—also known as DTC printers—are the most common type of ID card printer. These models use a dye-sublimation process. A printhead heats the panel of the ribbon and converts the ink into vapor. The printhead then diffuses images and text directly onto the surface of the ID card.

DTC printers are fast and affordable, with the ability to print large volumes of ID cards at a time. However, these printers will leave a white border around the edge of the card after printing.

Retransfer printers

Retransfer printers—also known as reverse transfer printers—create durable and secure ID cards. These models use a two-step process, printing images on a clear film which is then diffused onto the card. This allows for edge-to-edge printing without any visible white space on the border.

Using a retransfer printer has many benefits. With an average resolution of 600 dpi, reverse transfer models provide unmatched image quality. These printers also offer enhanced customization and security features. And since the printhead doesn't come into contact with the ID card, retransfer printers can print on access control cards and uneven surface cards.

However, retransfer printers are more expensive. These models also need special film and ribbons, creating additional supplies and costs. Finally, with a more extensive printing process, retransfer printers can be slower than direct-to-card models.

3 Single-sided vs. dual-sided printers

Most direct-to-card and retransfer printers are available in single-sided or dual-sided models.

Single-sided printing

A single-sided printer only prints on one side of an ID card. Single-sided models are best for organizations with low-volume and simple printing needs. These models print basic cardholder information such as an employee's name and photo. Apart from being the most affordable, single-sided printers are easy to install and require little maintenance.

Dual-sided printers

With the ability to print on both sides of an ID card, dual-sided printers allow more options for customization. Organizations can print additional information such as employee information, important dates, and a list of emergency numbers. Dual-sided printers are best for medium and large-sized businesses with high-volume printing needs.

4 Speed

Determining the right speed will depend on your printing volume. Low-volume printers can print up to 100 cards per hour. High-volume printers—such as the Magicard 600—print over 300 cards per hour.

Faster models might need more supplies, such as high-capacity ribbons or large input and output hoppers.

5 USB, ethernet, and WIFI connectivity

All ID card printers come with a standard USB connection. However, if you want to operate your printer on a network, it's best to look for printers with Ethernet and WIFI connection options. A WIFI connection is the best option if you plan to travel with your printer.

6 ID Cards

Most printers use blank white cards to print photo IDs. ID cards come in three sizes:

CR80: The most popular ID card size. CR80 is the size of a credit card.

CR79: A slightly smaller size that is mostly used for access control.

CR100: This is the largest size available. While these cards are the most costly, they are ideal for printing large amounts of information.

7 Ribbons

ID card printers require special ribbons that differ from your standard desktop printer ink or toner cartridges. These ribbons—known as YMCKO ribbons—are sectioned into a number of panels. "YMCK" refer to the colors (e.g., yellow dye, magenta dye, cyan dye, and black resin). "O" refers to the protective overlay.

For best results, you should purchase ribbons that are specific to your printer model.

8 Laminations

Most high-end printers have built-in lamination capabilities. But while laminated cards are more durable, they are not always necessary. On average, standard ID cards without lamination last three to four years. The majority of cards will expire during this time or will be lost.

If you are looking for a more durable option, consider purchasing YMCKOO ribbons. These ribbons will provide 40% of the protection as lamination without the extra hardware—saving you money.

9 Printer Warranties

Most ID card printers come with a warranty of two to three years. If your printer does break, some manufacturers offer loaner printers as part of your warranty.

For additional protection, consider purchasing Bodno's Extended Warranty. Our five-year warranty includes all labor and free replacement of parts. Our average repair time is less than three days, and all repairs include a free loaner.

Top-selling printers at BODNO

Ready to get started?
Let's take a look at six of our best-selling printers.

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01

Magicard 300 ID Card Printer

The Magicard 300 is ideal for medium-sized businesses and organizations on a budget. As one of Magicard's newest offerings, the 300 is easy to set up and can print up to 10,000 cards per year. The Magicard 300 is available as a single-sided or dual-sided printer and includes Magicard's patented HoloKote security watermarks. And with a digital shredder feature, the model offers organizations optimal data protection.

Our price: $1,916.20

02
Magicard Pronto ID Card Printer

The Magicard Pronto is ideal for small businesses, schools, conferences, and gyms who are new to ID card printing.This direct-to-card single-sided printer is lightweight and compact, making it easy to travel. The Pronto includes HoloKote watermarks for added security.

Our price: $935.00

03
Badgy100 ID Card Printer

The Badgy100 is one of the most affordable ID card printers on the market. This single-sided photo ID system is perfect for low-volume printing needs. The Badgy100 is easy to use and compact, taking up less desk space than a sheet of paper.

Our price: $699.00

The Magicard 600 is a high-volume printer with superior print quality. Businesses can print edge-to-edge images in under twenty seconds. The Magicard 600 also includes 10 HoloKote custom designs, allowing businesses to design their own watermarks. With digital shredding and automatic security scans, the Magicard 600 has some of the best security features on the market.

Our price: $2,720.85

04

Magicard 600 Dual-Sided ID Card Printer

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Zebra ZC350 Dual-Sided ID Card Printer

The Zebra ZC350 is a dual-sided printer with a 300 dpi resolution. Easy to set up, the printer includes a visual touchscreen. Businesses can preview cards before printing, saving time and money. And with advanced security features such as customizable encoding and government-grade AES data encryption, sensitive data is protected.

Our price: $2,595.00

Magicard Pronto 100 ID Card

The Magicard Pronto 100 is a high-volume printer with superior print quality. Designed from the ground up to be best in class, the powerful Pronto100 packs a mighty punch. With a focus on high speed, the highest quality and the environment as a key factor in every aspect of its design and manufacture, the Pronto100 has been developed to exceed expectations.

Our price: $1, 204.50

REMAINING DIRECT-TO-CARD PRINTERS

Looking for a direct-to-card printer? Here's an overview of our favorite models.

EVOLIS ZENIUS SINGLE-SIDED ID CARD PRINTER

The Evolis Zenius printer is best for organizations with high-volume ID printing and low-level security requirements. This single-sided printer is fast, able to print up to 150 full-color cards or 500 monochrome cards per hour. The Evolis Zenius is compatible with Windows and MAC operating systems, and includes a standard USB connection.

Our price: $1,199.00

MAGICARD ENDURO 3E ID CARD PRINTER

The Magicard Enduro 3e creates professional ID cards with edge-to-edge printing. With the ability to print up to 100 cards per hour, the Enduro 3e is best for organizations with medium-volume printing needs. The model comes with USB and ethernet connections, as well as a choice of five complimentary HoloKote designs for maximum security.

Our price: $1,995.00

FARGO DTC1250E ID CARD PRINTER

The Fargo DTC1250e offers high-speed printing at an affordable price. With the ability to print a card in 16 seconds, the DTC1250e is best for small businesses, schools, and government agencies. The printer includes Fargo's built-in erase and rewrite function for temporary cards and features color assist technology. With optional upgrades—including WIFI connectivity—the printer can grow with your organization.

Our price: $1,795.00

ZEBRA ZXP SERIES 3 ID CARD PRINTER

The Zebra ZXP Series 3 is best for organizations with low to medium-volume printing needs. This user-friendly printer requires no training and comes standard with a USB connection.

Our price: $3,195.00

EVOLIS PRIMACY ID CARD PRINTER

The Evolis Primacy is one of the easiest-to-use and quietest ID card printers on the market. With optional encoding, holographic, and lamination features, the Evolis Primacy is best for mid to large-size organizations with greater security needs. The Primacy is fast—businesses can print up to 225 full-color and 1,000 monochrome cards in a single hour. The model can also detect defective cards, removing cards into a reject box without interrupting the print job. The Primacy comes with USB and ethernet connections.

Our price: $2,095.00

MAGICARD RIO PRO 360 ID CARD PRINTER

The Magicard Rio Pro 360 is the manufacturer's fastest printer to date. It's also the first desktop ID card printer to include a Linux-based CPU for easy navigation. The model comes with custom HoloKote watermarks for additional security and comes with USB, ethernet, and WIFI connections.

Our price: $2,395.00

ZEBRA ZC300 ID CARD PRINTER

The Zebra ZC300 ID offers some of the most advanced security features on the market. The Zebra ZC300 can be customized to fit your organizations' needs with encoding, lamination, and WIFI compatibility options.

Our price: $2,295.00

MATICA MC320 ID CARD PRINTER

The Matica MC320 is a fast and affordable option for small businesses and organizations. Only compatible with Windows, the MC320 prints monochrome cards in six seconds and full-color cards in twenty seconds. The MC320 also includes both USB and ethernet connections.

Our price: $1,395.00

IDP SMART 31

The IDP Smart 31 is compact, affordable, and reliable. Compatible with Windows and MAC operating systems, the Smart 31 can print UV graphics to ensure additional security. With multiple upgrade options, this printer is best for small and medium-sized businesses that are growing.

Our price: $1,399.00

IDP SMART 51 ID CARD PRINTER

While similar to its Smart 31 counterpart, the Smart 51 is better for medium-sized organizations with high-volume printing needs. As your business grows, the IDP Smart 51 gives you the flexibility to add security and performance features.

Our price: $1,999.00

FARGO DTC4250E ID CARD PRINTER

The Fargo DTC4250 is an easy-to-use and compact ID Card printer. The printer supports all types of ID cards and includes UV technology for additional security. The DTC4250e is equipped with Fargo's rewrite technology, making it ideal for use with temporary cards.

Our price: $2,799.00

FARGO DTC4500E ID CARD PRINTER

The Fargo DTC4500e is a high-volume ID card printer with advanced security features. Equipped with AES-256 data encryption, the DTC4500e includes UV technology and printer password protection. Only compatible with Windows, the DTC4500e also features Fargo's rewrite technology for use with temporary cards.

Our price: $3,333.99

IDP SMART 70 ID CARD PRINTER

Compatible with Windows and Mac operating systems, the IDP Smart 70 supports medium-sized printing needs. Organizations can customize a SmartMark watermark and include a secure UV layer for added security.

Our price: $3,499.00

EVOLIS PRIMACY 2 ID CARD PRINTER

The Evolis Primacy 2 is an affordable printer for small and medium-sized businesses. The Primacy 2 is reliable and fast—the model can print monochrome cards in five seconds and full-color cards in thirteen seconds.

Our price: $1,816.00

ALL RETRANSFER PRINTERS

Interested in purchasing a retransfer printer? Here are some of our favorites.

FARGO HDP5000 ID CARD PRINTER

The Fargo HDP5000 is the most affordable high-definition printer on the market. With the ability to print 150 cards per hour, the HDP5000 prints professional-looking images at record speeds. The model is best for organizations with high-security needs —pulling apart a card will destroy it.

Our price: $3,999.00

ZEBRA ZXP SERIES 9 ID CARD PRINTER

The Zebra ZXP Series 9 is one of the fastest high-definition ID card printers. With the ability to print up to 190 cards per hour, the ZXP Series 9 is best for medium to large-sized businesses. The ZXP Series 9 offers multiple upgrade options, including high-capacity hoppers, encoding, and WIFI connection.

Our price: $3,495.00

MAGICARD ULTIMA ID CARD PRINTER

The Magicard Ultima is known for its clear image quality, security features, and durability. Organizations can choose from 10 standard HoloKote patterns or create a custom watermark. The Ultima also includes UV printing for additional security.

Our price: $5,681.00

FARGO HDP6600 ID CARD PRINTER

The Fargo HDP6600 prints ID cards in sixteen seconds or less. Only compatible with Windows, the printer can be purchased as a single-sided or dual-sided printer. The printer comes standard with a USB and ethernet connection.

Our price: $6,099.00

PRINTERS BY MANUFACTURER

MAGiCARD

Magicard printers are among the best-selling and most cost-effective printers available. Founded in 1992, the company pioneered ID card printing technology. With its reputation for innovation, Magicard offers a wide range of printers to meet the needs of any organization. All printers include the company's HoloKote secure watermark feature and encoding capability.

See all Magicard printers

evolis

Evolis is a market leader in identification solutions with a reputation for high-quality and reliable printers. Evolis printers are easy to operate and adaptable, capable of growing with the needs of your business.

See all Evolis printers

IDP

IDP has been developing and manufacturing ID card printers since 2005. With encoding options and high-security support, IDP printers are well suited for a variety of industries—including school, businesses, nonprofit organizations, gyms, and government agencies. All IDP printers include technical support and worry-free warranties.

See all IDP printers

ZEBRA

With innovate designs and technology, Zebra offers a variety of cost-effective printers. With edge-to-edge color printing, organizations create clear and professional ID cards.

See all Zebra printers

FARGO
Part of HID Global

ID card printers from Fargo offer a wide range of features to fit the needs of any organization. With unlimited upgrade options—including security and encoding features—Fargo can grow with you as your business evolves.

See all Fargo printers

Choosing the right ID card printer with Bodno

Bodno makes it easy to find the right ID card printer. With our user-friendly website and everyday low prices, businesses and organizations of all sizes can find an ID card printer that best suits their needs.

All printers come with a range of upgrade options so customers can customize their printing solution to meet their needs. And every purchase at Bodno includes free printer setup and in-house technical support.

Reach out to our experienced ID card printer experts today to find the right ID printing solution for you.

www.Bodno.com

Speak with an ID Printer Expert
Call Us (732) 987-5300

Phone:	Live Chat:	Email:	Tech Support:	Mailing Address:
(732) 987-5300	Monday - Friday: 9am - 7pm EST Saturday - Sunday: Closed	info@bodno.com	(732) 987-5300	BODNO PO Box 80 Lakewood NJ 08701