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There are proper places and uses for 'local' and 'network' printers. It depends what you're doing and the workload as well. This time around, let's clarify the two and perhaps this information can assist you in how to best align with your operations.

First, 'local' printing. This means the printer is connected to a local computer, be it a basic home computer, a work station at the office, or a Server. Generally speaking the printer or 'peripheral' is connected with a common USB cable directly from computer to printer. The printer software is then installed telling the computer how to communicate with the printer (drivers) and the tools that help you print, scan, whatever other options the attached peripheral might provide. This is what we see in the majority of home setups or small office environments. You CAN use the printer from other devices (computers, mobile devices) but it must be properly configured or 'shared' to do so. The other catch is the system it is connected directly to, or 'slaved' to, MUST BE ON.   Other factors are when a printer is shared on a workstation, the workstation's processor and disk are used during network print jobs that other users send to the print queue. This means that the shared printer program that is running on the workstation where the printer is connected uses valuable processor clock cycles to do its job. At the same time, your disk drive is also being used as temporary storage while the print job is sent to the printer. Generally speaking, this will be minimal impact but since I'm sharing, might as well share this.

Now, 'network' printing. When you use a network printer, you basically set it up 'independently' on your network. This can be done via Cat5 or Cat6 Ethernet cable (preferable) or via Wi-Fi. All print jobs are sent directly to the printer's network interface card via a network cable which is of course connected on your network, generally to a 'switch' or 'router'. On many occasions, this built into the printer card has additional memory for spooling and therefore results in faster printing. Besides, the printer is now dedicated, so printing is the only job it does; it is much faster and more efficient than a shared printer attached to a workstation. The other advantage is no other system need be on as in the case of a shared local printer – it's a completely stand-alone device. Another advantage I see with a network printer is you can get a higher quality and share in the office. Since you only buy one printer, you can step it up for quality AND the network printers generally support faster printing, enhanced paper trays, and much higher printing capacity (number of pages before you're overwhelming it and it dies).

Wireless network printing is a bit of a different animal. It can be a nice fit in a small business or home operation. It works similar to the Ethernet option in that it is independent and does not need to be attached to a computer. The considerations are you must have a wireless network and the wireless can be a bit more finicky. It has a higher chance of losing its configuration or dropping connection than the hard wire does. Don't get me wrong; this is sometimes a nice and cost effective fit. Some may argue with me but they'll never convince me otherwise on this point - 'hardwired is always better than wireless'.

I hope this information helps and keep in mind we can assist with identifying and setting up your printer operations to best fit your specific needs, or assist you with any of your computer operations.

NOTE: These are suggestions only so USE AT YOUR OWN RISK. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact our offices for professional service/guidance.

I hope our suggestions help you in your computer operations. Until next time, don't forget your backups! For more information, contact Harv Oliver, HANDS-ON Consultations, (805) 524-5278, www.hocsupport.com