STAFF ARTICLE

Low-ink printing that keeps aides on the floor

Updated October 2025

Paper is still the right tool for many room-bound residents. It is also the fastest way to empty a toner cartridge when every bingo card ships with a full-page colour background. This guide is for recreation staff and office coordinators in personal care homes who need large print, clear page counts, and fewer 4:45 pm printer emergencies.

Why ink matters on a 120-bed site

A single week of programming can include a wall calendar, three room cards, a word search, and a group script. Multiply that by four units and two float printers. Golden Carers members have publicly shared frustration when puzzles use heavy graphics. Your finance lead sees the same issue in the supply line item.

Low-ink design respects aide time. When the printer jams, the person who fixes it is often the same person who was about to run chair yoga.

Defaults that work in Canadian homes

Print black and white first. Label colour pages only when contrast truly needs them. Put estimated page count on every handout footer: **Two pages, B and W, large print.** Resident copies should meet 14 pt minimum on body text. Headers can be larger.

Use open space and bold outlines on word searches and bingo instead of full-page background textures. Slideshow-friendly HTML views help when a unit is digital-first. BetterCare keeps Canadian holidays and labelled page counts on each pack. We reduce waste when paper is optional.

Store masters in one folder named by week, for the whole team. Future you will thank present you.

Batch planning on Monday morning

Queue the whole week in one trip. Monday calendar and room cards. Wednesday word search. Friday leave-behind for volunteers. Write the batch on a sticky note on the printer: **Job 1: 40 copies, staple top left.**

If your home uses a print batch planner in team software, mirror the same order there. Fewer return trips mean aides stay on the floor during med passes.

When ink runs low, switch to draft mode for staff copies only. Keep best quality for resident-facing sheets. Note the change on the whiteboard so night shift knows why text looks light.

Accessibility checks before you hit print

High contrast beats cute pastels. Keep instructions on a clear background. Test one copy under hallway lighting, at the desk and in the hall. If a resident with low vision cannot track the bingo column, the card fails even if it used little ink.

For cognition, one instruction per bullet. Split compound steps. Volunteers should read the card on their own at the bedside.

When print stays optional

Outbreak isolation may limit paper movement. A tablet at the door with the same room card open can work when infection control approves. Save PDFs to a shared drive volunteers can open on their phones. Name files with date and unit: **2025-10-06-north-room-cards.pdf.**

Digital suites shine in common areas. Paper shines at the bedside when someone wants to fold a card and keep it in a drawer.

Partner with housekeeping and supply

Housekeeping often knows which rooms have clutter that blocks tray tables. Ask where folded handouts can wait within infection control rules. Supply can order recycled paper with enough weight that pens stay readable on both sides.

Track spend monthly. If one program type always prints 12 pages, redesign that program before you negotiate a new printer lease.

Printer settings cheat sheet

Post this list beside the copier. Update model numbers when IT replaces hardware.

1. **Default:** Letter, portrait, black and white, two-sided off for resident cards (easier to fold).
2. **Large print:** Scale 115 percent only when the source file is below 14 pt. Scaling too far blurs borders.
3. **Draft mode:** Staff copies and internal huddles only.

4. **Staple:** Top left for packets over two pages. Corner staple for single room cards.
5. **Label jobs** with unit and date in the print queue name so another department keeps your job in order.

In Nova Scotia homes we visited, a shared church printer sometimes supplements the home device. Keep a USB stick with PDFs encrypted per privacy policy if you walk to an off-site print shop.

Cost conversation with leadership

Translate pages into dollars once a quarter. **We printed 1,200 pages in September. Removing colour backgrounds on bingo saved roughly one cartridge.** Finance teams respond to numbers. Pair savings with resident outcomes: **Room cards reached north hall twice weekly because print time dropped.**

Request a small budget line for recycled heavier paper. It reduces complaints about pens bleeding through and about flimsy sheets tearing in walkers.

Reuse and archive with clear folders

Archive masters in a cloud folder with year and month. Shred resident-identifying marked copies per policy. Keep blank templates separate from filled examples.

When a vendor ships glossy colour PDFs, import them into your low-ink template rather than printing as-is. Recreation therapists can swap heavy backgrounds in ten minutes inside the layout tool.

Night shift and weekend gaps

Leave a three-day print buffer in a labelled bin when possible. Night aides appreciate ready room cards when day staff are short. Weekends still have loneliness. A one-page word search at the desk can be enough.

Your next step: open this week’s pack, count total pages, and circle one sheet you can convert to black and white today. Print a test copy and read it aloud in the hall. If it is clear in under two minutes, batch the rest.

BetterCare printable recreation resources for Canadian long-term care, personal care homes, and retirement residences. Share with your team. Adapt for local policy and clinical direction.