



Heirloom Software

The Idjits Guide to

Print Shield

Find the secret dots your printer hides. Cover them up.

Clean the hidden information out of your files - one easy step at a time.

Disclaimer and Hold Harmless Agreement

The Idjits Guide to Print Shield • October 2026 edition • Heirloom Software LLC

In plain words: This book is here to help you learn. We tried hard to get everything right, but we can make mistakes, and computers change. Save a copy of your important stuff before you try things. If something goes wrong, it is not our fault, and you agree not to blame or sue us. Kids: ask a grown-up before you install or change anything.

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Hi there! Read this first.

Did you know that many printers sign every page they print? They do it with **tiny yellow dots** that are too small and too pale to see. This book shows you how to find those dots, how to cover them up, and how to clean other hidden information out of your files with **Heirloom Print Shield**.

You don't need to know anything about computers. Each chapter is short. Read one, try it, and then read the next.

Gray boxes show things you type. Words in **bold** are names of buttons you click.

TIP

Shortcuts and smart tricks.

WATCH OUT

Mistakes to watch out for.

REMEMBER

The big idea from a section.

TRY IT!

Something to try on your own computer.

FUN FACT

Something cool to know.

Grown-ups: this book is written at a 3rd to 5th grade reading level, but it covers everything the program does: what printer tracking dots (Machine Identification Code) are and why software can't turn them off, scanning for them, the cover pattern and its strengths, printing in color mode, cleaning EXIF/GPS, PNG text, PDF and Office metadata, tracked-change author names, classifying printers, the test page, the free trial and key, and troubleshooting.

CHAPTER 1

The Secret Dots

Most **color laser printers** and big office copiers print a secret pattern on every page. The pattern is made of tiny **yellow dots**. Each dot is smaller than the tip of a pin. Yellow on white paper is very hard to see, so almost nobody knows the dots are there.

What do the dots say?

The dots are a code, like Morse code made of dots on paper. On many printers the code holds:

- the printer's **serial number** (its own special number),
- the **date** the page was printed,
- and the **time** it was printed.

So a page can be traced back to the exact printer that made it, and sometimes to the minute it came out.

FUN FACT

People only found out about the dots in the early 2000s, when researchers looked at printed pages under a blue light and a magnifier. The yellow dots showed up as a neat grid of black specks!

Why should I care?

Most of the time it doesn't matter. But some people need privacy. Someone reporting a problem at work, someone writing a private letter, or anyone who simply doesn't want their papers to carry a secret stamp. Print Shield helps them.

Can a program just turn the dots off?

No. The dots are made **inside the printer**, by the printer's own built-in computer. Your computer only sends the words and pictures. The printer adds the dots by itself, after the page leaves your computer. No program on your computer can reach in and switch them off - not this one, not any one.

REMEMBER

Nobody can turn the dots off from a computer. Print Shield does the next best things: it **FINDS** the dots, it **COVERS** them so they can't be read, and it **CLEANS** other hidden information out of your files.

What Print Shield does

Tab	What it does	Free after the trial?
Find the Dots	Looks at a scan of a printed page and shows the dots.	Yes, always free
Hide the Dots	Makes a copy of your paper with a cover pattern on it.	Needs a key
Clean Files	Takes hidden information out of pictures and papers.	Needs a key
Check My Printers	Tells you which of your printers likely print dots.	Yes, always free

CHAPTER 2

Getting Print Shield

Installing it

Print Shield comes as one file named **Install Heirloom Print Shield.exe**.

1. Double-click **Install Heirloom Print Shield.exe**.
2. If a blue box says "Windows protected your PC", click **More info**, then **Run anyway**.
3. Click **Install**. You don't need a grown-up's password to install it.
4. Wait a few seconds. When it says it's installed, it opens by itself.

Now there is a **Heirloom Print Shield** icon on your Desktop and in the Start menu.

TIP

This book is on your computer too. In the program, click the **Help** tab, then **Open the Guide**.

The two agreements

The first time Print Shield opens, it shows two agreements: the **End User License Agreement** and the **Hold Harmless and Indemnity Agreement**. Ask a grown-up to read them with you. If you agree, click the agree button. You can read them again any time with the **Agreements** button.

The free trial and your key

Every part of Print Shield is free for **30 days**. The top of the window says how many days are left. After that, Find the Dots and Check My Printers still work. Hide the Dots and Clean Files need a **key**. A key costs **\$29 one time** - it never runs out.

To buy one, call or text **(606) 521-7093**, or order at **needfulthingssoftware.com**. The key comes in an email.

1. Save the file from the email that ends in **.lic**.
2. In Print Shield, click **Enter Your Key** at the top.
3. Click **Load License File** and pick the **.lic** file. (Or paste the key. A Print Shield key starts with **PS1-**.)
4. Click **Save Key**. The top of the window now says **Licensed to** and your name.

Taking it off the computer

Click **Uninstall** at the top of the program. Or open Windows **Settings**, then **Apps**, find **Heirloom Print Shield**, and click **Uninstall**.

CHAPTER 3

Which Printers Print Dots?

Kind of printer	Prints yellow dots?
Color laser printer	Almost always. This is the main kind that does.
Big office color copier	Almost always.
Black-and-white laser printer	No. It has no yellow toner, so it can't print yellow dots.
Inkjet printer	Most don't use the yellow dot pattern.
"Print to PDF" or XPS	No. These make a file, not paper.

The Check My Printers tab

Click the **Check My Printers** tab. Print Shield lists every printer set up on this computer and makes a good guess from its name:

- **Color laser** - very likely prints tracking dots.
- **Black-and-white laser** - can't print yellow dots.
- **Inkjet** - most don't. Test it to be sure.
- **Not a real printer** - makes a file. No dots.
- **Not sure** - test it.

Just added a printer? Click **Look Again**.

REMEMBER

The list is a smart guess from the printer's name. The only way to know for sure is the test in the next chapter.

TIP

Want the most privacy with no work at all? Print on a **black-and-white laser printer**.

CHAPTER 4

Finding the Dots

Let's find out if your printer prints dots. You need a **scanner** (or a printer that scans). A phone camera is not sharp enough.

Step 1: make the test page

1. Click the **Check My Printers** tab.
2. Click **Make the Test Page...** and save it.
3. It opens. Print it on the printer you want to check. If the printer has a color setting, pick **color**.

The test page is mostly blank on purpose. Dots are easiest to find on white paper.

Step 2: scan it the right way

Scanner setting	Pick this
Color mode	Color (not black-and-white, not gray)
Resolution	600 dpi (300 dpi is the lowest that works)
File type	PNG or TIFF is best. JPG works too.

WATCH OUT

A black-and-white or gray scan throws the yellow away. Then no dots can be found!

Step 3: open the scan

1. Click the **Find the Dots** tab.
2. Click **Open a Scan...** and pick the scanned picture.
3. Wait a few seconds while the bar fills up.

Reading the answer

Print Shield says	What it means
TRACKING DOTS FOUND	Tiny yellow dots are spread over the whole page. That printer prints a hidden pattern.
MAYBE	A few yellow specks were found, but not all over the page. Try again with the test page.
NO TRACKING DOTS FOUND	That printer doesn't seem to print yellow dots.

Two pictures show up. On the left is the whole page with a **red circle** around every dot found. On the right is a close-up of one square inch, with the yellow turned dark so you can see the dots.

FUN FACT

Print Shield knows a printed yellow picture is not a tracking dot. It only counts specks smaller than about a third of a millimeter, and it checks that they cover the whole page.

TRY IT!

Do the test on every printer you use: home, school, work, the library.

CHAPTER 5

Hiding the Dots

If your printer prints dots, here's the trick. Print Shield adds **thousands of faint yellow dots of its own** all over the page. The printer still prints its dots, but now they are lost in a crowd. It's like hiding one grain of sand on a beach.

Making a shielded copy

1. Click the **Hide the Dots** tab.
2. Pick a strength (see below). **Normal** is best for most people.
3. Click **PICK FILES TO SHIELD** and pick one or more PDFs or pictures.
4. Wait for each row to say **Done**.
5. Double-click a row to open the new copy. Print that copy.

The new copy has the same name with **(shielded)** added, and it is always a PDF:

```
Letter.pdf          <- your paper (not changed)
Letter (shielded).pdf <- print this one
```

The three strengths

Strength	What it's like
Light	Fewest cover dots. Hardest to see. Good for most printers.
Normal	The best mix. Start with this one.
Strong	The most cover dots. The page may look a tiny bit yellow.

WATCH OUT

Print the shielded copy in **COLOR** mode. In black-and-white mode the printer skips the yellow cover dots - but a color laser can still print its own!

Word papers and web pages

Print Shield covers PDFs and pictures. For anything else, make a PDF first:

1. In Word (or your web browser), click **File**, then **Print**.
2. Pick the printer named **Microsoft Print to PDF**.
3. Click **Print** and save the PDF.
4. Now pick that PDF in Hide the Dots.

TIP

Check **Print each one when it's ready** and Print Shield sends each shielded copy to the printer for you.

Is it perfect?

No tool can promise 100%. The cover pattern makes the printer's code very hard to read, but the safest choice is still a black-and-white laser printer. You can check your work: print a shielded page, scan it, and look at it in Find the Dots. You'll see dots everywhere - so many that the printer's own pattern is buried.

CHAPTER 6

Cleaning Your Files

Printers aren't the only thing that tells on you. Files have **hidden information** inside them, too. Grown-ups call it **metadata**. It's like a label stuck on the back of a photo that you never turn over.

Kind of file	What can be hiding inside
Phone and camera photos	The exact GPS spot where it was taken, the camera, the date and time
PNG pictures	Notes like the author's name and the program used
PDF papers	The author, the title, the program used, dates
Word, Excel, PowerPoint	The author, who changed it last, the company, names on comments and tracked changes

WATCH OUT

A photo taken at home can carry your home's exact location! Clean photos before you share them with people you don't know.

Cleaning files

1. Click the **Clean Files** tab.
2. Click **Pick Files...** and pick some files. Print Shield shows what's hiding in each one.
3. Click a row to see everything it found at the bottom.
4. Click **CLEAN THEM**.

Each file gets a clean copy with **(clean)** in its name. Print Shield checks each clean copy again and tells you if anything is left.

```
Beach.jpg          <- has GPS and camera info (not changed)
Beach (clean).jpg  <- safe to share
```

Good to know

- **JPG and PNG pictures** are cleaned without changing the picture at all.

- A photo the camera saved **sideways** gets turned the right way up, and is saved again at high quality.
- **TIFF and WebP** pictures are saved again without the hidden information.
- In **Word** files, names on comments and tracked changes become "Author".
- **Locked PDFs** (with a password) can't be cleaned.

FUN FACT

The hidden photo information has a funny name: **EXIF**. It stands for Exchangeable Image File Format.

CHAPTER 7

Using It the Right Way

Print Shield is for **privacy**. Here are the rules:

- Never use it to copy money, checks, IDs, tickets, or anyone else's papers. That's against the law.
- Print Shield doesn't change the features that stop printers and copiers from copying money, and it never will.
- Only use it on printers and computers you own or are allowed to use.
- Following your school's or workplace's rules is still your job.

REMEMBER

Privacy is good. Breaking the law is not. Print Shield is only for the first one.

CHAPTER 8

Troubleshooting

"It says NO TRACKING DOTS FOUND, but I know it's a color laser."

- Was the scan in **color**? Gray or black-and-white scans lose the yellow.
- Was it **300 dpi or more**? 600 is best.
- Did you print in color mode? Some printers skip the dots in black-and-white mode.
- Some printers use a pattern that's even harder to see. A grown-up can try a scan at 1200 dpi.

"It says MAYBE."

Something on the page has small yellow specks - maybe a colorful picture. Print the test page, which is mostly blank, and scan that instead.

"The shielded page looks a little yellow."

Switch to **Light** strength and make the copy again.

"Hide the Dots says it can't cover my file."

It only covers PDFs and pictures. Print the file to **Microsoft Print to PDF** first (Chapter 5).

"My printer isn't in the list."

Set it up in Windows first: **Settings**, then **Printers & scanners**. Then click **Look Again**.

"The buttons say I need a key."

The 30-day trial is over. Find the Dots and Check My Printers are still free. For the rest, click **Enter Your Key** (Chapter 2).

Still stuck?

Call or text Heirloom Software at **(606) 521-7093**, or visit **needfulthingssoftware.com**.

QUICK REFERENCE

Cheat Sheet

To do this	Do this
See which printers print dots	Check My Printers tab
Test a printer for sure	Make the Test Page, print it in color, scan at 600 dpi in color, open it in Find the Dots
Cover the dots	Hide the Dots, Normal, PICK FILES TO SHIELD, print the (shielded) copy in color
Cover a Word paper	Print it to Microsoft Print to PDF, then shield that PDF
Take GPS out of photos	Clean Files, Pick Files, CLEAN THEM
Most privacy, least work	Print on a black-and-white laser printer

QUICK REFERENCE

Glossary

Word	What it means
Color laser printer	A printer that uses colored powder (toner) and heat to print.
Cover pattern	Print Shield's own faint yellow dots that bury the printer's dots.
dpi	Dots per inch. How sharp a scan is. Bigger is sharper.
EXIF	Hidden information inside photos, like the camera and GPS spot.
GPS	The system that knows exactly where on Earth something is.
Metadata	Hidden information stuck inside a file.
Scan	A picture of a paper made with a scanner.
Serial number	A printer's own special number. No two are the same.
Toner	The powder a laser printer prints with.
Tracking dots	Tiny yellow dots some printers add to every page as a secret code.