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TROUBLESHOOTING GUIDE

Zebra S4M troubleshooting guide: errors, faults and fixes

Updated 21 October 2026 · By TIMCOD maintenance technicians · Source: official Zebra documentation, S4M Midrange Printer user guide (13290L-004) (list at the end of the page)

In brief. The Zebra S4M is a midrange label printer in the Stripe series, at 203 or 300 dpi, that prints in direct thermal mode or, with the thermal transfer option, with a ribbon. Depending on its firmware, it runs ZPL, EPL, APL-D or APL-I. Zebra discontinued sales in July 2013 and support in October 2016. The Zebra user guide stresses the media settings (type, sensor, maximum length), the choice of ribbon (coated on the outside, at least as wide as the labels) and the darkness and printhead pressure settings; this guide covers those procedures, as well as connection and firmware updates. Click a question to open its entry.

- **A light is flashing or a message is displayed** (ALERT, PAUSE, ADVANCED SETUP, POOR SIGNAL...): find it in the [lookup table](#) and open the matching entry.
- **No message, but the print quality is poor:** skipped or misaligned labels, see [calibration](#); faded, too dark or incomplete print, see [print quality](#); ribbon or labels loaded incorrectly, see [loading](#).
- **The problem keeps coming back:** the [preventive maintenance](#) section explains how it reduces this type of fault.

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What is my Zebra S4M telling me? Lookup by light and by message

The S4M signals its errors with the ALERT light and a message on the LCD display; its other lights (POWER, PAUSE, FEED, CANCEL) show its status. The table links each light state or message documented by Zebra to its meaning and to the matching entry.

Message or state	Lights (Zebra guide)	Likely cause	Entry
ALERT light flashing or on	ALERT flashing or solid	Error or alert condition: a message is shown on the LCD display	<u>ALERT light</u>
PAUSE light flashing	PAUSE flashing	Printer in Pause mode: printing is suspended	<u>PAUSE light</u>
FEED light on	FEED on	Normal operation: a blank label can be fed	<u>PAUSE light</u>
CANCEL light on	CANCEL on	A label format can be cancelled	<u>Cancelling a print job</u>
POWER light on	POWER on	Printer powered on	<u>Installation and power supply</u>
PRINTER READY	—	Power-on self test complete, printer ready	<u>Installation and power supply</u>

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Message or state	Lights (Zebra guide)	Likely cause	Entry
DATA	—	The printer is receiving data	<u>Connection to the computer</u>
SAVE CHANGES	—	Exiting Configuration mode: save (YES) or discard (NO) the changes	<u>Settings not retained</u>
ADVANCED SETUP	—	Password-protected parameters (levels 1 to 4)	<u>ADVANCED SETUP</u>
RADIO WARNING / POOR SIGNAL	—	Wireless signal strength below the set threshold	<u>Wi-Fi connection</u>
NOT ASSOCIATED	—	Wireless card present but not connected to the network	<u>Wi-Fi connection</u>
NO CARD INSERTED	—	Wireless card missing or not fully inserted	<u>Wi-Fi connection</u>
192.168.254.254	—	Default address: incorrect static address or no address assigned by DHCP	<u>IP address</u>
Force Download	—	Forced firmware download mode	<u>Force Download</u>
Error messages during a language change	some lights on	Firmware for another language being downloaded: ignore them	<u>Language change</u>

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The light states come from the “Control Panel Lights” and “Control Panel Buttons” pages of the Zebra S4M user guide and from the “Control Panel” section of the S4M quick reference guide, which describe their state (on or flashing) without specifying their colour. The wireless messages and the 192.168.254.254 address come from the Zebra wireless print server guide. The user guide details the error messages in its “LCD Error Messages” section. The dash indicates that the page consulted does not specify the state of the lights.

Zebra S4M ALERT and PAUSE lights: what do they mean?

The S4M signals an error or an alert with the ALERT light and a message on the display; the PAUSE light flashes when printing is suspended. For each one: the short answer, the cause and the steps to follow according to the Zebra user guide.

Why is the ALERT light flashing on my Zebra S4M?

Light: ALERT flashing (or solid) · Display: alert or error message.

Short answer: According to the Zebra guide, the ALERT light flashes when the printer is in an error or alert condition, and the LCD display may then show a message. Read the message, correct the cause, then press PAUSE, which clears error messages; if the PAUSE light then flashes, press PAUSE again to resume printing.

LIKELY CAUSE

The Zebra guide distinguishes four LCD display states: operating, pause, configuration and error. In error mode, the display may show an alert or error message and the ALERT light flashes. The guide details each message in its “LCD Error Messages” section. The Zebra quick reference guide states that the ALERT light flashes or stays on when the printer needs attention.

WHAT TO DO

1. Read the message shown on the LCD display: it tells you the nature of the alert.

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2. Correct the cause indicated, using the entries in this guide: [loading labels](#), [loading the ribbon](#), [calibration](#).
3. Press PAUSE: the button clears error messages and the LCD display.
4. If the PAUSE light then flashes, the printer is paused: press PAUSE again to resume printing.

The Zebra guide describes the state of the S4M lights (on or flashing) without specifying their colour.

Sources: [Control Panel LCD](#) ⓘ – S4M Midrange Printer User Guide (13290L-004 Rev. A) · [Control Panel Buttons](#) ⓘ – S4M Midrange Printer User Guide (13290L-004 Rev. A) · [Control Panel Lights](#) ⓘ – S4M Midrange Printer User Guide (13290L-004 Rev. A) · [Control panel lights](#) ⓘ – S4M Midrange Printer user guide, French edition (13290L-024 Rev. A) · Control Panel – S4M Quick Reference Guide (13292L-002 Rev. A) (official documentation).

Why is the PAUSE light flashing on my Zebra S4M and why won't printing resume?

Light: PAUSE flashing.

Short answer: The PAUSE light flashes when the printer is in Pause mode: it has temporarily stopped printing. Press PAUSE to resume. After each label loading, the Zebra guide in fact asks you to press PAUSE if this light is flashing.

LIKELY CAUSE

According to Zebra, the PAUSE button starts and stops printing. If the printer is idle, it pauses immediately; if it is printing, it finishes the current label before stopping. In Pause mode, the PAUSE light flashes. In normal operation, it is the FEED light that is on: it indicates that a blank label can be fed.

WHAT TO DO

1. Check that the labels (and the ribbon in thermal transfer mode) are loaded and that the printhead is closed.
2. Press PAUSE: the light stops flashing and printing resumes.

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3. To cancel printing instead of resuming it, use CANCEL while the printer is paused (see [cancelling a print job](#)).

In Configuration mode, the PAUSE light stops flashing: the down arrow, which shares this button, becomes active.

Sources: [Control Panel Buttons](#)  – S4M Midrange Printer User Guide (13290L-004 Rev. A) · [Control Panel Lights](#)  – S4M Midrange Printer User Guide (13290L-004 Rev. A) · [Load Media in Tear-Off Mode](#)  – S4M Midrange Printer User Guide (13290L-004 Rev. A) · [Control panel lights](#)  – S4M Midrange Printer user guide, French edition (13290L-024 Rev. A) (official documentation).

Calibration problems: my Zebra S4M skips labels or prints out of position

The S4M calibrates automatically at power-on or when the head is closed, if the option is enabled. The media type, the sensor and its position, the maximum length and the print position are set from the control panel.

How do I calibrate a Zebra S4M?

Symptoms: labels skipped or not detected properly, after a change of label or ribbon type.

Short answer: If automatic calibration is enabled in the control panel, the S4M calibrates at power-on and each time the printhead is closed: it measures the label length and sets its sensors. After a change of label or ribbon type, Zebra also recommends a manual calibration of the media and ribbon sensors.

LIKELY CAUSE

According to Zebra, calibration determines the label length and the sensor settings. These values remain in memory, even when the power is off, until the next calibration. Manual calibration resets the sensitivity of the media and ribbon sensors so that they detect the media and the ribbon more accurately.

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Caution: Before working near the open printhead, remove rings, watches, necklaces, badges and other metal objects that could touch it.

CALIBRATION PROCEDURE DESCRIBED BY ZEBRA

1. Load the labels and, in thermal transfer mode, the ribbon, then close the printhead.
2. Press MENU to enter Configuration mode and set MEDIA TYPE to match the media: GAP/NOTCH (labels separated by a gap, notch or hole, fanfold paper, card tags), CONTINUOUS (media with no separation) or MARK (black mark media).
3. Choose the sensor in SENSOR SELECT (REFLECTIVE by default, or TRANSMISSIVE) and position it correctly (see [skipped labels](#)).
4. Check LENGTH, the maximum length used during calibration (AUTO by default): Zebra asks you to set it at least 25.4 mm (1 inch) above the longest label used.
5. Press MENU, choose YES at SAVE CHANGES with the up or down arrows, then press ENTER.
6. Open and close the printhead, or switch the printer off and on again: if automatic calibration is enabled, the printer calibrates.
7. If detection is still poor, or after a change of media or ribbon type, run the manual calibration of the media and ribbon sensors from the control panel parameters (“Calibrate Media and Ribbon Sensors” procedure in the Zebra guide).

The Zebra firmware release notes state that from version V53.17.9Z, the S4M correctly calibrates labels shorter than 6 inches (152 mm) after the default parameters have been loaded.

Sources: [Calibrate the Printer](#)  – S4M Midrange Printer User Guide (13290L-004 Rev. A) · [Control Panel Parameters – Password Level 1 and 2 Parameters](#)  – S4M Midrange Printer User Guide (13290L-004 Rev. A) · [Setup Mode](#)  – S4M Midrange Printer User Guide (13290L-004 Rev. A) · [Printer calibration](#)  – S4M Midrange Printer user guide, French edition (13290L-024 Rev. A) · [V53.17.24Z and earlier – Summary of Firmware Changes](#)  – Summary of Firmware Changes – V53.17.24Z and earlier (14094L-034) (official documentation).

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Why does my Zebra S4M skip labels or fail to detect the gap between labels?

Symptoms: skipped labels, start of label not located correctly.

Short answer: The sensor does not correctly locate the start of the labels: media type set incorrectly, unsuitable sensor or reflective sensor badly positioned. Set MEDIA TYPE and SENSOR SELECT, align the sensor with the gap, notch or black mark, then recalibrate.

LIKELY CAUSE

According to Zebra, the S4M has two media sensors. The standard transmissive sensor is in a fixed position: the holes or notches in the media must pass through its slot. The reflective sensor suits most media: on non-continuous media, it locates the start of the label (notch, hole, black mark or gap); on all media, it detects the end of the paper. The MEDIA TYPE parameter must match the media loaded.

Caution: Before working near the open printhead, remove rings, watches, necklaces, badges and other metal objects that could touch it.

WHAT TO DO

1. Check MEDIA TYPE: GAP/NOTCH for separated labels (gap, notch, hole), fanfold paper and card tags; CONTINUOUS for media with no separation; MARK for black mark media.
2. With the reflective sensor (SENSOR SELECT set to REFLECTIVE, the default setting), open the printhead and slide the sensor positioning lever across the width of the media.
3. Place the sensor directly under the notch, hole or black mark; for labels separated by a gap, anywhere across the width, opposite the gap; for continuous media, anywhere under the media. The red light that shines through the media helps you align it. Close the head.

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4. If calibration is still difficult with the reflective sensor, set SENSOR SELECT to TRANSMISSIVE (except for black mark media) and check that the holes or notches pass correctly through the slot of the transmissive sensor.
5. Check that LENGTH exceeds the longest label by at least 25.4 mm, then run a new [calibration](#).

Sources: [Select or Adjust the Media Sensors](#)  – S4M Midrange Printer User Guide (13290L-004 Rev. A) · [Control Panel Parameters – Password Level 1 and 2 Parameters](#)  – S4M Midrange Printer User Guide (13290L-004 Rev. A) · [Selecting or adjusting the paper sensors](#)  – S4M Midrange Printer user guide, French edition (13290L-024 Rev. A) (official documentation).

Why is the print on my Zebra S4M out of position on the label?

Symptoms: image too high, too low or shifted towards one edge; label incorrectly positioned on the tear-off bar.

Short answer: Three control panel parameters set the position: LABEL TOP moves the print vertically, LEFT POSITION horizontally, and TEAR OFF sets the position of the label on the tear-off bar after printing.

LIKELY CAUSE

According to Zebra, positive LABEL TOP values move the image down the label (away from the printhead), negative values move it up. Positive LEFT POSITION values move the left edge of the image towards the centre of the label, negative values move it towards the left edge. TEAR OFF sets the position of the labels over the tear-off or peel-off bar. In ZPL and EPL, these three parameters range from -120 to +120, with 0 as the default.

WHAT TO DO

1. Press MENU to enter Configuration mode and scroll through the parameters with the left and right arrows.



2. At LABEL TOP, increase the value (up arrow) to move the image down the label, decrease it (down arrow) to move it up.
3. At LEFT POSITION, increase the value to move the image away from the left edge, decrease it to move it closer.
4. At TEAR OFF, adjust the position where the label stops over the tear-off bar.
5. Press MENU, choose YES at SAVE CHANGES with the up or down arrows, then press ENTER.
6. If the printer also skips labels, see the [skipped labels](#) entry.

LABEL TOP and TEAR OFF are among the parameters protected by the level 1 password: if the display shows ADVANCED SETUP, see [the corresponding entry](#). In APL-I mode, LABEL TOP and LEFT POSITION are called X FORMS ADJUST and Y FORMS ADJUST.

Sources: [Control Panel Parameters – Password Level 1 and 2 Parameters](#) [↗](#) · [Password Protection of Parameters](#) [↗](#) – S4M Midrange Printer User Guide (13290L-004 Rev. A) (official documentation).

Loading labels and ribbon on the Zebra S4M: roll, ribbon, coated side

Zebra describes loading roll or fanfold labels, loading and removing the ribbon, and two tests to find out whether media needs a ribbon and whether the ribbon is coated on the correct side.

How do I load a roll of labels into a Zebra S4M?

Tear-Off mode, roll or fanfold paper.

Short answer: Place the roll on its holder, open the printhead, pass the labels under the dancer roller, through the slot of the transmissive sensor and under the ribbon sensor, bring the media guide against the edge of the media and close the



head. If the PAUSE light is flashing, press PAUSE.

LIKELY CAUSE

According to Zebra, exposed media can get dirty during handling or storage: remove one full turn of labels and liner before starting a new roll. Fanfold paper is loaded like the roll, through the rear slot of the printer.

Caution: Before working near the open printhead, remove rings, watches, necklaces, badges and other metal objects that could touch it. Zebra recommends switching the printer off, without making it mandatory: switching off clears temporary settings, such as label formats, which will need to be reloaded before printing.

WHAT TO DO

1. In Configuration mode, check that REMOVAL is set to TEAR (tear-off, the default setting).
2. On a new roll, remove one full turn of labels and liner.
3. Fold down the roll guide, place the roll on its holder and push it all the way in. For fanfold paper, feed it through the rear slot and lay it on the roll holder.
4. Raise the roll guide and slide it up to the edge of the media, without squeezing it.
5. Press the printhead latch and lift the head until it locks in the open position. Pull the media guide outwards.
6. Pass the media under the dancer roller, through the slot of the transmissive sensor and under the ribbon sensor.
7. Push the media against the back of the transmissive sensor, then move the media guide in until it just touches the edge of the media.
8. Close the printhead. If the PAUSE light is flashing, press PAUSE to resume printing.

Sources: [Start a Roll of Media](#)  – S4M Midrange Printer User Guide (13290L-004 Rev. A) · [Insert Media into the Printer](#)  – S4M Midrange Printer User Guide (13290L-004 Rev. A) · [Load Media in Tear-Off Mode](#)  – S4M Midrange Printer User Guide (13290L-004 Rev. A) · [Opening a paper roll](#)  – S4M Midrange Printer user guide, French edition (13290L-024 Rev. A) (official documentation).



How do I load and change the ribbon on a Zebra S4M?

Models fitted with the thermal transfer option.

Short answer: Set the tension of the ribbon supply spindle, open the head, place the ribbon so that its end unwinds clockwise, push it all the way in, pass it under the head, then wind it in the same direction onto the take-up spindle. Remove the used ribbon each time you change the roll.

LIKELY CAUSE

According to Zebra, normal tension on the ribbon supply spindle suits most jobs; low tension is reserved for narrow ribbons or for cases where normal tension prevents the ribbon from moving freely. The used ribbon is removed at each roll change and when switching from thermal transfer to direct thermal.

Caution: Before working near the open printhead, remove rings, watches, necklaces, badges and other metal objects that could touch it. Do not cut the ribbon directly on the take-up spindle, as this could damage it: if the ribbon has not run out, cut or break it before this spindle.

WHAT TO DO

1. Set the tension: pull the end cap of the ribbon supply spindle out until it clicks for normal tension, or push it in until it clicks for low tension.
2. Press the latch and lift the printhead until it stays open.
3. Orient the ribbon roll so that its loose end unwinds clockwise, place it on the spindle and push it all the way in.
4. Pull the end of the ribbon under the printhead assembly and bring it out at the front of the printer.
5. Close the printhead, then wind the ribbon clockwise onto the take-up spindle.

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6. To remove used ribbon: press it against the tension blades of the take-up spindle while turning the release knob anticlockwise; the blades retract. Slide the ribbon off the spindle and discard it.

The ribbon must be coated on the outside and at least as wide as the labels (see [coated side of the ribbon](#)).

Sources: [Load Ribbon](#) · [Remove Used Ribbon](#) – S4M Midrange Printer User Guide (13290L-004 Rev. A) (official documentation).

Which side of the ribbon must be coated on a Zebra S4M, and how do I check it?

Situation: new ribbon, doubt about the coated side or the width.

Short answer: The S4M only accepts ribbons coated on the outside. To check, do the adhesive test with a label, or the ribbon scratch test if you have no labels. The ribbon must also be at least as wide as the labels.

LIKELY CAUSE

According to Zebra, ribbon is a film coated on one side with wax, resin or a wax-resin blend, which is transferred to the media during printing. It can be wound coated side in or coated side out, but the S4M only uses ribbons coated on the outside. A ribbon narrower than the media leaves areas of the printhead unprotected and exposed to premature wear.

TESTS DESCRIBED BY ZEBRA

1. Adhesive test: peel a label off its liner, press a corner of its adhesive side onto the outer surface of the ribbon roll, then peel it off.
2. If ink particles stick to the label, the ribbon is coated on the outside and is suitable. Otherwise, it is coated on the inside; repeat the test on the other side to confirm.
3. Ribbon scratch test (without a label): unwind a little ribbon, lay it on a sheet of paper, outer side against the paper, and scratch the inner side with your fingernail.

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4. Lift the ribbon: if there is a mark on the paper, the ribbon is coated on the outside and is suitable. Otherwise, it is coated on the inside; repeat the test on the other side to confirm.
5. Finally, check that the ribbon is at least as wide as the media.

Sources: [Ribbon Overview](#)  – S4M Midrange Printer User Guide (13290L-004 Rev. A) · [Coated side of the ribbon](#)  – S4M Midrange Printer user guide, French edition (13290L-024 Rev. A) (official documentation).

How do I know whether my labels need a ribbon on a Zebra S4M?

Situation: choosing between direct thermal and thermal transfer.

Short answer: Quickly scratch the print surface of the media with your fingernail. If a black mark appears, the media is direct thermal and prints without a ribbon; otherwise, it is thermal transfer media and needs a ribbon, and therefore an S4M fitted with the thermal transfer option.

LIKELY CAUSE

According to Zebra, thermal transfer media needs a ribbon, direct thermal media does not. It is the media that determines whether a ribbon is needed and what ribbon width to use.

WHAT TO DO

1. Quickly scratch the print surface of the media with your fingernail.
2. Black mark: direct thermal media, no ribbon. Do not load a ribbon and remove the used ribbon from the take-up spindle (see [changing the ribbon](#)).
3. No mark: thermal transfer media. Use a ribbon coated on the outside, at least as wide as the media (see [coated side](#)).

The operating temperature ranges differ: 5 to 40 °C in thermal transfer, 0 to 40 °C in direct thermal, with 20 to 85% non-condensing relative humidity.

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Sources: [Ribbon Overview](#) – S4M Midrange Printer User Guide (13290L-004 Rev. A) · [Remove Used Ribbon](#) – S4M Midrange Printer User Guide (13290L-004 Rev. A) · [Select a Site for the Printer](#) – S4M Midrange Printer User Guide (13290L-004 Rev. A) · [Load Ribbon](#) – S4M Quick Reference Guide (13292L-002 Rev. A) · [Conditions for using ribbon](#) – S4M Midrange Printer user guide, French edition (13290L-024 Rev. A) (official documentation).

Several of these faults involve the ribbon or labels used. TIMCOD, [Zebra reseller](#), supplies [labels](#), [thermal transfer ribbons and printheads](#) for thermal printers (pages in French).

Zebra S4M print quality: faded, too dark or incomplete print

The Zebra guide links print defects to the darkness (DARKNESS), speed (PRINT SPEED) and print width (PRINT WIDTH) settings, as well as to the printhead pressure, which is adjusted with two knobs.

Why is my Zebra S4M printing too faintly or with voids?

Symptoms: light print, voids in the printed areas.

Short answer: According to Zebra, print that is too light or has voids is first corrected by increasing the darkness (DARKNESS), which takes effect immediately. A slower print speed also generally improves quality. If only one side is faded, or if the media needs more pressure, adjust the printhead pressure.

LIKELY CAUSE

The Zebra guide links this defect to the darkness setting and states that slower print speeds generally give better quality. With thermal transfer media, printing requires a ribbon coated on the outside, the only type the S4M accepts.

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WHAT TO DO

1. Press MENU: the first parameter displayed is DARKNESS. Increase the value with the up arrow (from 0.0 to +30.0 in ZPL, +10.0 by default); the setting is applied and saved immediately.
2. Keep the lowest darkness that gives good quality: set too high, it makes the ink bleed, can make holes in the ribbon and wears the printhead prematurely.
3. Reduce PRINT SPEED (from 2 to 6 inches per second); the new speed applies when you exit Configuration mode.
4. If the media needs more pressure to print properly, increase both pressure knobs by one position (see [printhead pressure](#)).
5. In thermal transfer mode, check that the ribbon is coated on the outside and at least as wide as the media (see [coated side](#)).

In EPL mode, darkness is called DENSITY. Cleaning the printhead and platen roller is described in the “Routine Maintenance” chapter of the Zebra user guide (“Clean the Printhead and Platen Roller”).

Sources: [Control Panel Parameters – Password Level 1 and 2 Parameters](#) · [Adjust Printhead Pressure](#) · [Ribbon Overview](#) – S4M Midrange Printer User Guide (13290L-004 Rev. A) (official documentation).

Why is my Zebra S4M print bleeding or too dark?

Symptoms: print too black, printed areas spreading, holes in the ribbon.

Short answer: The darkness (DARKNESS) is set too high. Zebra asks you to decrease it when the print is too dark or the printed areas spread, and to keep the lowest value that gives good quality.

LIKELY CAUSE

According to Zebra, darkness set too high can make the ink bleed, make holes in the ribbon or wear the printhead prematurely.

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WHAT TO DO

1. Press MENU: the display shows DARKNESS.
2. Decrease the value with the down arrow; the setting is applied and saved immediately.
3. Print a label and adjust in small steps until the print is sharp, without going back to faded print.
4. Press MENU and answer SAVE CHANGES to exit Configuration mode.

In EPL mode, this parameter is called DENSITY.

Sources: [Control Panel Parameters – Password Level 1 and 2 Parameters](#) · [Setup Mode](#) – S4M Midrange Printer User Guide (13290L-004 Rev. A) (official documentation).

Why is the print from my Zebra S4M lighter on one side, or why do the labels drift sideways?

Symptoms: one side of the label more faded, media shifting to the left or right, thick media.

Short answer: The printhead pressure is not suited to the media. The S4M has two pressure knobs, inner and outer, with four positions: start from the values Zebra recommends for the width of your labels, then adjust one position at a time.

LIKELY CAUSE

According to Zebra, printhead pressure needs adjusting if the print is too light on one side, if the media is thick or if it drifts sideways during printing. Each knob has four positions, marked by blocks of increasing size: position 1 (smallest block, turned fully anticlockwise) to position 4 (largest block, turned fully clockwise).

ADJUSTMENT DESCRIBED BY ZEBRA

1. Set the knobs according to the media width (inner knob / outer knob): 25.4 mm (1 in): 3 / 1; 51 mm (2 in): 4 / 1; 76 mm (3 in): 3 / 2; 89 mm (3.5 in) and over: 3 / 3.
2. Left side of the label too light: increase the inner knob by one position.

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3. Right side too light: increase the outer knob by one position.
4. Media shifting to the left: increase the outer knob by one position, or decrease the inner knob by one position.
5. Media shifting to the right: increase the inner knob by one position, or decrease the outer knob by one position.
6. Media that needs more pressure to print properly: increase both knobs by one position.

Also check that the media guide just touches the edge of the media, as the loading procedure requires.

Sources: [Adjust Printhead Pressure](#) · [Load Media in Tear-Off Mode](#) – S4M Midrange Printer User Guide (13290L-004 Rev. A) (official documentation).

Why is part of the label not printed by my Zebra S4M?

Symptoms: image cut off at one edge, printing off the label.

Short answer: The print width (PRINT WIDTH) may be set incorrectly. Too narrow, and parts of the label are not printed; too wide, and it wastes formatting memory and can cause printing off the label, onto the platen roller.

LIKELY CAUSE

According to Zebra, PRINT WIDTH sets the printable area across the width of the label: from 2 to 832 dots at 8 dots/mm, from 2 to 1248 dots at 12 dots/mm, the maximum value being the default setting.

WHAT TO DO

1. Press MENU and scroll through the parameters to PRINT WIDTH.
2. Set the width to that of your labels with the up and down arrows.
3. If the image is still shifted towards one edge, adjust LEFT POSITION (see [print position](#)).

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4. Press MENU, choose YES at SAVE CHANGES with the up or down arrows, then press ENTER.

Source: [Control Panel Parameters – Password Level 1 and 2 Parameters](#)  – S4M Midrange Printer User Guide (13290L-004 Rev. A) (official documentation).

Zebra S4M printhead: how do you avoid premature wear?

Zebra points out several causes of premature printhead wear: ribbon too narrow, darkness too high and unsuitable consumables.

How do I avoid premature printhead wear on a Zebra S4M?

Prevention: choice of ribbon, darkness setting, consumables.

Short answer: Zebra gives three precautions: use a ribbon at least as wide as the labels, keep the darkness at the lowest level that gives good quality, and use consumables designed to limit printhead wear; Zebra recommends its own.

LIKELY CAUSE

According to the Zebra guide, a ribbon narrower than the media leaves areas of the printhead unprotected and exposed to premature wear. Darkness set too high can also wear the printhead prematurely. Zebra states that its papers, polypropylenes, polyesters and vinyls are designed to prevent this wear.

Caution: Before working near the open printhead, remove rings, watches, necklaces, badges and other metal objects that could touch it.

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WHAT TO DO

1. Choose a ribbon at least as wide as the media (see [coated side and width of the ribbon](#)).
2. Set DARKNESS to the lowest level that gives acceptable print (see [print too dark](#)).
3. Use suitable consumables; Zebra strongly recommends its own consumables.
4. Before any work with the printhead open, remove metal objects that could touch it.

Printhead cleaning and parts replacement are covered in the “Routine Maintenance” chapter of the Zebra user guide.

Sources: [Ribbon Overview](#) · [Types of Media](#) · [Control Panel Parameters – Password Level 1 and 2 Parameters](#) – S4M Midrange Printer User Guide (13290L-004 Rev. A) (official documentation).

TIMCOD supplies [printheads for thermal printers](#) (page in French).

Zebra S4M connection: serial, parallel, USB, Ethernet and Wi-Fi

The S4M comes as standard with serial, parallel and USB ports, and optionally with a wired or wireless Ethernet print server. The entries follow the instructions in the user guide and the Zebra wireless print server guide.

Why is my Zebra S4M not receiving the labels sent by the computer?

Symptoms: nothing prints, the display does not show DATA when a label is sent.

Short answer: First check the cable and the interface used: RS-232 serial, IEEE 1284 parallel, USB, or the optional wired or wireless Ethernet print server. While data is being received, the display shows DATA. With a serial connection, the printer parameters must match those of the computer.

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LIKELY CAUSE

According to Zebra, the S4M comes as standard with an RS-232 serial interface (cable of 15.24 m maximum), an IEEE 1284 bidirectional parallel interface (3 m maximum, 1.83 m recommended) and a USB interface (5 m maximum). An Ethernet print server, if installed, uses or covers the parallel port. Wired and wireless Ethernet print servers must be configured for the network.

Caution: Zebra asks for the printer to be switched off (switch set to O) before connecting the communication cables.

WHAT TO DO

1. Switch the printer off (switch set to O) before connecting a data cable.
2. Respect the maximum cable lengths. Use shielded cables (the Ethernet cable does not need to be), keep them short and do not bundle them with power cords.
3. Do not plug a USB cable into the wired Ethernet print server connector: it would be damaged. This connector may be closed by a factory plug that must be removed before use.
4. With a parallel connection, check the PARALLEL COMM. parameter (UNIDIRECTIONAL by default, or BIDIRECTIONAL), which must match the mode of the computer.
5. With a serial connection, set the baud rate, data bits, parity and handshake protocol to match those of the computer (see [serial connection](#)).
6. Send a label and watch the display: during reception, it shows DATA followed by a series of dots.
7. Print a [configuration label](#) to check the printer settings.

Depending on its firmware, the S4M runs ZPL, EPL, APL-D (Datamax) or APL-I (Intermec): see [language change](#). The printer's web pages are only accessible in ZPL mode.

Sources: [Select a Data Communication Interface](#) · [Connect the Printer to the Computer or Network](#) · [Control Panel LCD](#) · [Control Panel Parameters – Password Level 3 Parameters](#) · [Printer Language Modes](#) · [S4M Midrange Printer User Guide \(13290L-004 Rev. A\)](#) (official documentation).

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How do I set up the serial (RS-232) connection on a Zebra S4M so that it communicates with the computer?

Parameters: BAUD, DATA BITS, PARITY, HOST HANDSHAKE.

Short answer: The printer's serial parameters must be identical to those of the computer: baud rate (BAUD, 9600 by default), data bits (DATA BITS, 8 by default), parity (PARITY, NONE by default) and handshake protocol (HOST HANDSHAKE, XON/XOFF by default in ZPL). With a standard modem cable, a null-modem adapter is required.

LIKELY CAUSE

According to Zebra, the baud rate, data and stop bits, parity and flow control (XON/XOFF or DTR) must match those of the host computer. These parameters can be viewed and changed from the control panel, among the password level 3 parameters.

Caution: Switch the printer off before connecting the serial cable.

WHAT TO DO

1. Note the settings of the computer's serial port.
2. Press MENU then the left arrow to reach the advanced parameters; if the display shows ADVANCED SETUP, a password is required (see [ADVANCED SETUP](#)).
3. Set BAUD (from 300 to 115200 in ZPL, from 1200 to 115200 in EPL) to the computer's baud rate.
4. Set DATA BITS (7 or 8; 8 is mandatory with code page 850) and PARITY (NONE, ODD or EVEN).
5. Set HOST HANDSHAKE: XON/XOFF, DSR/DTR or RTS/CTS in ZPL; DTR & XON/XOFF or DTR in EPL.
6. Press MENU, choose YES at SAVE CHANGES with the up or down arrows, then press ENTER.

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7. Use a cable of 15.24 m maximum; with a standard modem cable, add a null-modem adapter.

Sources: [Select a Data Communication Interface](#) · [Connect the Printer to the Computer or Network](#) · [Control Panel Parameters – Password Level 3 Parameters](#) – S4M Midrange Printer User Guide (13290L-004 Rev. A) (official documentation).

Why won't my Zebra S4M connect to the Wi-Fi network (“POOR SIGNAL”, “NOT ASSOCIATED”)?

Messages: RADIO WARNING / POOR SIGNAL , NOT ASSOCIATED , NO CARD INSERTED .

Short answer: According to the Zebra wireless print server guide, a signal that is too weak or of poor quality, or a printer that is associated with the access point but not authenticated, prevents connection. Move the printer closer to the access point or remove obstacles, then check the encryption and the authorisation of the printer's MAC address on the access point.

LIKELY CAUSE

The Zebra guide describes the indicators that can be viewed on the display: SIGNAL STRENGTH and SIGNAL QUALITY (as a percentage, a higher value indicating a better link), NOISE LEVEL (electrical interference), NO CARD INSERTED (card missing or not fully inserted) and NOT ASSOCIATED (card present but unable to connect to the network). RADIO WARNING / POOR SIGNAL alternates with the idle message when the signal strength falls below a threshold set in the Wireless Setup web page; this threshold only triggers the warning and does not change the printer's ability to associate.

WHAT TO DO

1. Wait until the display shows PRINTER READY, then press the up arrow: the display scrolls through SIGNAL STRENGTH, NOISE LEVEL and SIGNAL QUALITY, then returns to PRINTER READY.



2. If the signal is weak or the noise high, move the printer or the access point, remove obstacles or move the printer away from the source of interference; a direct line of sight gives the best results.
3. If the printer shows a signal but still cannot be reached, check the encryption settings and that its MAC address is authorised on the access point.
4. If the display shows NO CARD INSERTED, reinsert the wireless card in its PCMCIA slot and check that it is a supported card.
5. If the signal varies widely, check the neighbouring access points, especially the one closest to the printer.

The “ZebraNet Wireless Print Server User Guide” (firmware V50.14 and earlier) covers the S4M in ZPL mode; only one print server can be installed at a time on the S4M. Problems specific to cards and access points are covered by their manufacturers' documentation.

Sources: [Wireless Signal Indicators](#) · [Poor Signal Setting](#) · [Troubleshooting – General Issues](#) – ZebraNet Wireless Print Server User Guide (13422L-003 Rev. A) (official documentation).

Why does my Zebra S4M show the IP address 192.168.254.254 or an all-zero address?

Display or network label: address `192.168.254.254` or IP parameters at zero.

Short answer: According to the Zebra wireless print server guide, 192.168.254.254 is a default address, displayed when the printer has not obtained an address within the allotted time: the static address entered is incorrect, or the DHCP server is not assigning one. Enter a valid static address or set the IP protocol to ALL, and check the DHCP server.

LIKELY CAUSE

The real IP parameters only appear once the printer is associated and authenticated on the network; zeros may also be displayed while it is still searching for a print server. On the S4M, the OBTAIN IP ADDRESS parameter offers AUTO SELECT (address assigned by

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a server, the default setting) or PERMANENT (address, subnet mask and gateway entered by the user).

WHAT TO DO

1. Print the network configuration label: PRINT OUT parameter, NETWORK option. An asterisk marks the active print server.
2. For a static address, set OBTAIN IP ADDRESS to PERMANENT, then CHANGE IP ADDRESS, CHANGE SUBNET and CHANGE GATEWAY.
3. With automatic addressing (AUTO SELECT), check CHANGE IP PROTOCOL (ALL by default) and the DHCP server.
4. If the IP parameters remain at zero, give the printer time to connect; if this fails, check the signal strength (see [Wi-Fi connection](#)).
5. Do not use the GLEANING ONLY option with the wireless option: Zebra does not recommend it, and the permanent address may be lost.

On the S4M, the IP address is read in the CHANGE IP ADDRESS parameter. These network parameters are among the password level 3 parameters.

Sources: [Troubleshooting – IP Issues](#)  – ZebraNet Wireless Print Server User Guide (13422L-003 Rev. A) · [Control Panel Parameters for the ZebraNet Wireless Print Server \(S4M only\)](#)  – ZebraNet Wireless Print Server User Guide (13422L-003 Rev. A) · [Print a Network Configuration Label](#)  – ZebraNet Wireless Print Server User Guide (13422L-003 Rev. A) · [Printing Configuration Labels](#)  – S4M Midrange Printer User Guide (13290L-004 Rev. A) (official documentation).

How do I reset the network settings on a Zebra S4M?

Situation: encryption keys forgotten or entered incorrectly, firmware change.

Short answer: According to the Zebra wireless print server guide, the DEFAULT NET option on the control panel does not apply to the S4M: use the Restore Default Network Configuration button in the printer's web pages. Only the network settings are reset; then reconfigure the printer and restart it.

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LIKELY CAUSE

Zebra recommends this reset after downloading different firmware, or to clear encryption keys that were entered incorrectly or forgotten. The other printer settings are not changed.

WHAT TO DO

1. Open the printer's home page in a browser, using the address read in CHANGE IP ADDRESS or on the network label.
2. Open the View and Modify Printer Settings page; the printer password is requested (see the Zebra guide).
3. Click Restore Default Network Configuration.
4. Reconfigure the wireless link, for example by resending your saved SetWLAN script, then switch the printer off and on again.

This Zebra guide covers firmware V50.14 and earlier. The Zebra release notes for version V53.15.8Z, which also applies to the S4M, describe a “Default Network” selection on the front panel that resets the network settings, without specifying whether it is present on the S4M.

Sources: [Return Network Parameters to Defaults](#)  – ZebraNet Wireless Print Server User Guide (13422L-003 Rev. A) · [V53.17.24Z and earlier – Summary of Firmware Changes](#)  – Summary of Firmware Changes – V53.17.24Z and earlier (14094L-034) (official documentation).

Zebra S4M peeler and cutter: loading and removal mode

Peel-Off and Cutter modes require the corresponding option and a REMOVAL parameter setting that matches the hardware installed.

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How do I load labels in Peel-Off mode on a Zebra S4M?

Peeler (Peel-Off) option required.

Short answer: In Peel-Off mode, the S4M separates each label from its liner, waits for it to be removed, then ejects the liner at the front. To load: pull out about 500 mm of media, remove the labels from it, pass the liner over the peel bar and behind the peel assembly, close the head and then the assembly, and set REMOVAL to PEEL.

LIKELY CAUSE

According to Zebra, Peel-Off mode requires the peeler option. The peel assembly has spring-loaded rollers, which are opened and closed with the peel mechanism release lever.

Caution: Operate the peel lever with your right hand and keep your left hand clear: the upper edge of the peel roller assembly can pinch fingers. Before working near the open printhead, remove rings, watches, necklaces, badges and other metal objects that could touch it.

WHAT TO DO

1. Press the printhead latch and lift the head until it locks in the open position, then pull out the media guide.
2. Pass the media under the dancer roller, through the slot of the transmissive sensor and under the ribbon sensor.
3. Push down the peel mechanism release lever to open the peel assembly.
4. Pull about 500 mm (18 in) of media out through the front of the printer and remove the labels from this section, keeping only the liner.
5. Pass the liner over the tear-off/peel-off bar and then behind the peel assembly; its end should hang out of the printer.

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6. Push the media against the transmissive sensor, move the media guide in to the edge of the media and close the printhead.
7. Close the peel assembly with the lever, using your right hand only.
8. In Configuration mode, set REMOVAL to PEEL. If the PAUSE light is flashing, press PAUSE: peeling starts automatically.

The REMOVAL parameter also offers TEAR, CUTTER, REWIND and DELAYED CUT: Zebra asks you to choose only a mode supported by the installed options.

Sources: [Load Media in Peel-Off Mode](#) · [Print Modes and Printer Options](#) · [Control Panel Parameters – Password Level 1 and 2 Parameters](#) – S4M Midrange Printer User Guide (13290L-004 Rev. A) (official documentation).

How do I load labels in Cutter mode on a Zebra S4M?

Cutter option required.

Short answer: Set REMOVAL to CUTTER, open the head, pass the media under the dancer roller, through the slot of the transmissive sensor, under the head-open sensor and then through the cutter, adjust the media guide and close the head. In Cutter mode, the S4M prints each label and then cuts it.

LIKELY CAUSE

According to Zebra, Cutter mode requires the cutter option, possibly supplemented by a catch tray. The removal mode chosen in REMOVAL must be supported by the printer's hardware configuration.

Caution: The cutter blade is sharp: do not touch it or rub it with your fingers. Before working near the open printhead, remove rings, watches, necklaces, badges and other metal objects that could touch it.

WHAT TO DO

1. In Configuration mode, set REMOVAL to CUTTER.

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2. Insert the roll or fanfold paper (see [loading labels](#)).
3. Press the printhead latch and lift the head until it locks in the open position, then pull out the media guide.
4. Pass the media under the dancer roller, through the slot of the transmissive sensor, under the head-open sensor, then through the cutter.
5. Push the media against the transmissive sensor, move the media guide in to the edge of the media and close the head.
6. If the PAUSE light is flashing, press PAUSE to start printing.

Cleaning the cutter module is described in the “Routine Maintenance” chapter of the Zebra user guide (“Clean the Cutter Module”).

Sources: [Load Media in Cutter Mode](#)  – S4M Midrange Printer User Guide (13290L-004 Rev. A) · [Print Modes and Printer Options](#)  – S4M Midrange Printer User Guide (13290L-004 Rev. A) · [Control Panel Parameters – Password Level 1 and 2 Parameters](#)  – S4M Midrange Printer User Guide (13290L-004 Rev. A) · [Loading paper in cutter mode](#)  – S4M Midrange Printer user guide, French edition (13290L-024 Rev. A) (official documentation).

Zebra S4M installation and power supply: power cord, temperature, ventilation

Zebra specifies the power cord to use, the operating temperature ranges and the precautions against overheating.

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Under what temperature and power conditions does a Zebra S4M operate?

Installation: location, mains power cord, power-on.

Short answer: According to Zebra, the S4M operates from 5 to 40 °C in thermal transfer mode and from 0 to 40 °C in direct thermal mode, between 20 and 85% non-condensing relative humidity. Place it on a solid, level surface, with space around it for ventilation, with no padding underneath or behind it, and power it with an approved three-conductor cord.

LIKELY CAUSE

Zebra states that padding placed under or behind the printer restricts airflow and can cause overheating. At power-on, the display and the lights activate during start-up; once the media and ribbon are installed and the power-on self test is complete, the display shows PRINTER READY. The POWER light indicates that the printer is powered on.

Caution: For the safety of people and equipment, always use an approved three-conductor power cord for the country: the chassis earth must be connected.

WHAT TO DO

1. Install the printer on a solid, level surface, near a socket, with room to open the media cover and space on all sides for ventilation.
2. Do not place any padding or cushioning material under or behind the printer.
3. Use a three-conductor cord approved for your country, with an IEC 320 female connector and an earthed plug, less than 3 m long, rated for at least 10 A and 250 V.
4. With the switch set to off (O), connect the cord to the back of the printer and then to a nearby socket, and switch the printer on.
5. To store the printer, repack it in its original packaging: from -40 to 60 °C, between 5 and 85% non-condensing humidity.

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Sources: [Select a Site for the Printer](#) · [Connect the Printer to a Power Source](#) · [Power Cord Specifications](#) · [Handling the Printer](#) · [Setup Mode](#) · [Control Panel Lights](#) – S4M Midrange Printer User Guide (13290L-004 Rev. A) (official documentation).

Zebra S4M firmware: update, Force Download and language change

The firmware determines the language of the S4M (ZPL, EPL, APL-D or APL-I). Zebra describes forced downloading (Force Download) and the procedure to follow after a language change.

How do I update the firmware on a Zebra S4M in “Force Download” mode?

Message: `Force Download` (display, during the procedure).

Short answer: With the printer off, hold down the MENU and up arrow buttons, switch it on and keep them pressed until the display shows “Force Download”. Then send the firmware with the ZDownloader utility, via the serial or USB port. Zebra provides this mode for when the usual methods fail, and for switching from ZPL to EPL or vice versa.

LIKELY CAUSE

According to the Zebra knowledge base article, Force Download mode forces the firmware download when standard methods fail; the same procedure allows the S4M firmware to be changed between EPL and ZPL.

Caution: In Force Download mode, only the serial and USB connections work: the Ethernet and parallel ports are inactive.

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FORCE DOWNLOAD PROCEDURE DESCRIBED BY ZEBRA

1. Download the latest firmware from the Zebra S4M Support and Downloads page.
2. Switch the printer off.
3. Hold down the MENU and up arrow buttons.
4. Switch the printer on while keeping both buttons pressed, until the display shows “Force Download”.
5. Send the firmware with the ZDownloader utility, via a serial or USB connection.
6. At the end of the installation, the printer prints a configuration label showing the new firmware version, which is also shown on the display.

Zebra states that the S4M has reached its end of service life: the article is kept for reference only and is no longer updated. According to the Zebra release notes, the S4M moved to V58 firmware (version V58.17.12Z in the 2012 notes).

Sources: Changing S4M Firmware Using the Force Download Mode – Zebra knowledge base (link removed on 21 October 2026: the page is no longer available at its former address) · [S4M Midrange Printer User Guide \(PDF\)](#) · [Firmware Downloads](#) · [V53.17.24Z and earlier – Summary of Firmware Changes](#) – Summary of Firmware Changes – V53.17.24Z and earlier (14094L-034) · [Summary of Firmware Release – V58.17.12Z](#) – Zebra firmware release notes (P1052548-001 Rev. A) (official documentation).

Why does my Zebra S4M show error messages during a language change (ZPL, EPL, APL)?

Symptoms: error messages and lights on during the firmware download.

Short answer: Zebra expects this: during a language change by firmware download, the display may show error messages and some lights may come on, which can be ignored. When the download is complete, restart the printer and load the default parameters to return it to Operating mode.



LIKELY CAUSE

According to the Zebra guide, the S4M ships with firmware that supports a single language, depending on the order: ZPL, EPL, APL-D (Datamax) or APL-I (Intermec). New firmware can be downloaded at any time to change the language.

WHAT TO DO

1. Download the firmware for the language you want from the Zebra website (S4M Support and Downloads page).
2. Send it to the printer; if the usual method fails, use [Force Download mode](#).
3. Ignore the error messages and the lights that come on during the download.
4. At the end, restart the printer and load the default parameters; to restore the initial values, the Zebra guide refers to the “FEED and PAUSE Self Test”.
5. Then check the settings on a [configuration label](#).

The programming guides for each language are on the product CD and on the Zebra manuals page.

Sources: [Printer Language Modes](#)  – S4M Midrange Printer User Guide (13290L-004 Rev. A) · [Setup Mode](#)  – S4M Midrange Printer User Guide (13290L-004 Rev. A) · Changing S4M Firmware Using the Force Download Mode – Zebra knowledge base (link removed on 21 October 2026: the page is no longer available at its former address) · [S4M Midrange Printer User Guide \(PDF\)](#) > [Firmware Downloads](#)  (official documentation).

Other Zebra S4M questions: settings, password, language, end of support

Settings not saved, password-protected parameters, display language, configuration label, cancelling a print job and the end of Zebra support.

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Why are the settings I change on my Zebra S4M not retained?

Message: **SAVE CHANGES** when exiting Configuration mode.

Short answer: When you exit Configuration mode, the S4M displays **SAVE CHANGES**: you must choose **YES** then press **ENTER** to save. With **NO**, the changes are discarded. Temporary settings, such as label formats, are also cleared when the power is switched off.

LIKELY CAUSE

According to Zebra, pressing **MENU** in Configuration mode displays **SAVE CHANGES**: **YES** saves the changes, **NO** discards them. Some settings take effect immediately (**DARKNESS**), others when you exit Configuration mode (**PRINT SPEED**). Unlocking password-protected parameters only lasts until you exit Configuration mode.

WHAT TO DO

1. After making your settings, press **MENU**: the display shows **SAVE CHANGES**.
2. Choose **YES** with the up or down arrows, then press **ENTER**: the printer saves and exits Configuration mode.
3. To go back to the settings instead of exiting, press **MENU** again (same parameter) or the left or right arrows.
4. If a parameter does not appear, it is password-protected (see [ADVANCED SETUP](#)).
5. After switching the power off, resend the label formats from the computer before printing.

Sources: [Setup Mode](#) · [Password Protection of Parameters](#) · [Control Panel Parameters – Password Level 1 and 2 Parameters](#) · [Load Media in Tear-Off Mode](#) – S4M Midrange Printer User Guide (13290L-004 Rev. A) (official documentation).

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Why does my Zebra S4M display “ADVANCED SETUP” and ask for a password?

Message: **ADVANCED SETUP** followed by a level number, then **PASSWORD**.

Short answer: The S4M parameters are protected by four password levels: only unprotected parameters are shown in Configuration mode, and ADVANCED SETUP followed by a number indicates a protected level. Press ENTER and use the arrows to enter the password for this level or a higher level.

LIKELY CAUSE

According to Zebra: level 1 protects the darkness, the tear-off position and the label top; level 2, the label configuration (media type, removal mode, length); level 3, installation and reconfiguration, and is also used for the printer's web pages; level 4, all functions, including the sensor settings, reserved for advanced use. A higher-level password also unlocks the lower levels.

WHAT TO DO

1. At the ADVANCED SETUP screen, press ENTER: the display shows PASSWORD and four digits.
2. Choose a digit position with the left and right arrows, and change its value with the up and down arrows.
3. Once all four digits have been entered, press ENTER: the protected parameters are displayed.
4. The unlock lasts until you exit Configuration mode: the password will be requested again the next time.

When to call a technician: for level 4 parameters, the Zebra guide refers you to the maintenance manual or technical support; as Zebra support for the S4M ended on 31 October 2016, Zebra directs you to an authorised service provider.

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The password for a level can be changed with the ZPL command ^KP. For the default password, refer to the Zebra user guide.

Sources: [Password Protection of Parameters](#)  – S4M Midrange Printer User Guide (13290L-004 Rev. A) · [Setup Mode](#)  – S4M Midrange Printer User Guide (13290L-004 Rev. A) · [S4M Industrial Printer Support & Downloads](#)  – Zebra website – Support and Downloads (official documentation).

How do I set the display on my Zebra S4M back to French?

Symptoms: display shown in an unfamiliar language.

Short answer: Press MENU then the left arrow: the display shows LANGUAGE, or ADVANCED SETUP if a level 3 or 4 password is set. Choose the language with the up and down arrows, press MENU, select YES and confirm with ENTER.

LIKELY CAUSE

The Zebra guide describes choosing the display language in Configuration mode.

PROCEDURE DESCRIBED BY ZEBRA

1. Press MENU: the printer enters Configuration mode.
2. Press the left arrow. If the display shows ADVANCED SETUP with a level number, press ENTER, enter the password and press ENTER again. Otherwise, the display shows LANGUAGE.
3. Choose the language with the up and down arrows.
4. Press MENU: the printer offers to save the changes.
5. Select YES with the up or down arrows if necessary, then press ENTER.

Source: [Select a Display Language](#)  – S4M Midrange Printer User Guide (13290L-004 Rev. A) (official documentation).

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How do I print a configuration label on a Zebra S4M?

Parameter: PRINT OUT (SETTINGS or NETWORK).

Short answer: Press MENU, then the left arrow, and scroll to the PRINT OUT parameter. Choose SETTINGS for the printer configuration label, or NETWORK for the network configuration label, then press ENTER.

LIKELY CAUSE

The Zebra guide describes printing these labels from the PRINT OUT parameter, which falls under password level 3.

PROCEDURE DESCRIBED BY ZEBRA

1. Press MENU: the printer enters Configuration mode and displays DARKNESS.
2. Press the left arrow. If the display shows LANGUAGE, scroll through the parameters to PRINT OUT.
3. If the display shows ADVANCED SETUP 1, 2 or 3, press ENTER, enter the level 3 (or higher) password, confirm with ENTER then scroll to PRINT OUT. With ADVANCED SETUP 4, no password is needed to reach PRINT OUT.
4. Choose SETTINGS (printer configuration) or NETWORK (network configuration) with the up or down arrows, then press ENTER.
5. If the printer was paused when you entered Configuration mode, the labels print after you exit Configuration mode and resume printing.

PRINT OUT also offers FONTS, FORMATS, BARCODES (ZPL), ALL and IMAGES. On the network label, an asterisk indicates the active print server.

Sources: [Printing Configuration Labels](#) · [Control Panel Parameters – Password Level 3 Parameters](#) – S4M Midrange Printer User Guide (13290L-004 Rev. A) (official documentation).

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How do I cancel a print job in progress on a Zebra S4M?

Light: CANCEL on when cancelling is possible.

Short answer: Pause the printer with PAUSE: the CANCEL button only works in Pause mode. One press cancels the label format being printed, or failing that the next one in the queue; pressing and holding clears the entire label format memory.

LIKELY CAUSE

According to Zebra, if no format is waiting, pressing CANCEL is ignored. The CANCEL light is on when a label format can be cancelled.

WHAT TO DO

1. Press PAUSE: if the printer is printing, it finishes the current label then pauses (PAUSE light flashing).
2. Press CANCEL once to cancel the format being printed or, failing that, the next format.
3. To clear the entire label format memory, press and hold CANCEL.
4. Press PAUSE to exit Pause mode.

Sources: [Control Panel Buttons](#)  – S4M Midrange Printer User Guide (13290L-004 Rev. A) · [Control Panel Lights](#)  – S4M Midrange Printer User Guide (13290L-004 Rev. A) · [Control panel buttons](#)  – S4M Midrange Printer user guide, French edition (13290L-024 Rev. A) (official documentation).

Is the Zebra S4M still supported by Zebra?

End of sale: 31 July 2013 · End of service and support: 31 October 2016.

Short answer: No. According to the Zebra support page, the S4M has not been sold since 31 July 2013 and its service and support ended on 31 October 2016. Zebra customer support is no longer available after that date: Zebra directs you to

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an authorised service provider.

LIKELY CAUSE

The Zebra article on the S4M firmware states that Zebra no longer provides services or support for this model and names the ZT230 as the replacement model.

WHAT TO DO

1. For firmware, see the Zebra S4M Support and Downloads page.
2. For a repair, contact an authorised Zebra service provider (Zebra Authorized Service Provider).
3. For a replacement, Zebra names the ZT230.

When to call a technician: after the end of Zebra service and support (31 October 2016), Zebra directs you to an authorised Zebra service provider.

Sources: [S4M Industrial Printer Support & Downloads](#)  – Zebra website – Support and Downloads · Changing S4M Firmware Using the Force Download Mode – Zebra knowledge base (link removed on 21 October 2026: the page is no longer available at its former address) · [S4M Midrange Printer User Guide \(PDF\)](#) > [Firmware Downloads](#)  (official documentation).

When should you call a technician for a Zebra S4M?

The entries above first suggest reloading, adjusting or calibrating. As the S4M has no longer been covered by Zebra support since 31 October 2016, the Zebra documentation directs you in the following cases to technical support or an authorised service provider:

- **Level 4 parameters (“ADVANCED SETUP 4”):** sensor settings and sensitive parameters, reserved for the maintenance manual or technical support.
- **Repair after the end of Zebra support:** Zebra directs you to an authorised Zebra service provider.

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Avoiding recurring faults on the Zebra S4M: preventive maintenance

Several entries in this guide point to sensors that are badly positioned or dirty, a printhead or platen roller that needs cleaning, or unsuitable settings or consumables. These are exactly the points a preventive maintenance visit checks before they cause a breakdown.

TIMCOD preventive maintenance is part of the through-life maintenance (MCO). TIMCOD provides for your fleet (page in French): scheduled preventive visits by certified technicians, with a detailed report. What it brings to a S4M fleet:

Fewer breakdowns, less downtime

Fewer production interruptions caused by label printers.

Worn parts detected in time

Printhead, platen roller, sensors: spotted before they cause a breakdown.

Regular cleaning and checks

Printhead, rollers and sensors cleaned and checked at every visit.

Longer service life

A well-maintained, properly adjusted printer lasts longer.

Print quality maintained

Legible barcodes, with darkness and printhead pressure suited to your consumables.

Fewer emergency call-outs

Incidents are handled during scheduled visits rather than as emergency repairs.

Controlled maintenance costs

A predictable budget instead of unplanned repairs.

Specialist Zebra technicians

Support from teams who know your equipment.

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In addition, TIMCOD corrective maintenance includes phone support (hotline), repair to working order, express exchange and, as an option, SWAP. Maintenance contracts come in three levels (Essentiel, Confort, Premium).

Zebra S4M troubleshooting: frequently asked questions

How do I calibrate a Zebra S4M?

If automatic calibration is enabled, the S4M calibrates at power-on and each time the printhead is closed: it measures the label length and sets its sensors. First set MEDIA TYPE, SENSOR SELECT and LENGTH (at least 25.4 mm more than the longest label). After a change of label or ribbon type, Zebra recommends a manual calibration of the media and ribbon sensors. [See the detailed entry.](#)

Why is the ALERT light flashing on my Zebra S4M?

According to Zebra, the ALERT light flashes in an error or alert condition, and the LCD display may show a message. Read this message and correct the cause, then press PAUSE, which clears error messages; if the PAUSE light then flashes, press PAUSE again to resume printing. [See the detailed entry.](#)

Why does my Zebra S4M skip labels?

The sensor does not correctly locate the start of the labels. Check MEDIA TYPE (GAP/NOTCH, CONTINUOUS or MARK) and the sensor chosen in SENSOR SELECT, align the reflective sensor with the notch, hole or black mark, or switch to the transmissive sensor if calibration is still difficult. Then recalibrate. [See the detailed entry.](#)

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Why is the print on my Zebra S4M faded?

According to Zebra, print that is too light or has voids is corrected by increasing the darkness (DARKNESS), which takes effect immediately. A slower print speed generally improves quality. If only one side is faded, adjust the printhead pressure knobs. [See the detailed entry.](#)

Which side of the ribbon should I use on a Zebra S4M?

The S4M only accepts ribbons coated on the outside. To check, press the adhesive side of a label onto the outside of the roll: if ink particles stick to it, the ribbon is suitable. The ribbon must also be at least as wide as the labels. [See the detailed entry.](#)

How do I update the firmware on a Zebra S4M?

When the usual method fails, Zebra describes Force Download mode: with the printer off, hold down MENU and the up arrow, switch it on and keep the buttons pressed until “Force Download” is displayed. Then send the firmware with the ZDownloader utility, via the serial or USB port only. [See the detailed entry.](#)

How do I change the display language on a Zebra S4M?

Press MENU then the left arrow: the display shows LANGUAGE, or ADVANCED SETUP if a level 3 or 4 password is set. Choose the language with the up and down arrows, press MENU, select YES and confirm with ENTER. [See the detailed entry.](#)

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Is the Zebra S4M still supported by Zebra?

No. Zebra stopped selling it on 31 July 2013, then ended its service and support on 31 October 2016. Zebra customer support is no longer available: Zebra directs you to an authorised service provider. [See the detailed entry](#).

Sources consulted

All the causes, procedures and light states in this guide come from the pages below of the official Zebra documentation (S4M user guide in English and French, wireless print server guide, knowledge base and firmware release notes), consulted on 20 October 2026.

- [S4M™ Midrange Printer User Guide \(13290L-004 Rev. A\): Introduction, Printer Setup, Operations, Configuration](#) [↗](#) – S4M Midrange Printer User Guide (PDF, English) **official**
- [S4M™ mid-range printer – User guide \(13290L-024 Rev. A\): Introduction, Printer setup, Operation](#) [↗](#) – S4M user guide (PDF, French) **official**
- [ZebraNet® Wireless Print Server User Guide \(13422L-003 Rev. A\)](#) [↗](#) – Zebra wireless print server guide (PDF, English) **official**
- [Changing S4M Firmware Using the Force Download Mode](#) – Zebra knowledge base (link removed on 21 October 2026: the page is no longer available at its former address) **official**
- [S4M Midrange Printer User Guide \(PDF\) > Firmware Downloads](#) [↗](#) **official**
- [V53.17.24Z and earlier – Summary of Firmware Changes \(14094L-034\)](#) [↗](#) – Zebra firmware release notes **official**
- [Summary of Firmware Release – V58.17.12Z \(P1052548-001 Rev. A\)](#) [↗](#) – Zebra firmware release notes **official**
- [S4M Industrial Printer Support & Downloads](#) [↗](#) – Zebra website – Support and Downloads **official**
- [S4M Quick Reference Guide \(13292L-002 Rev. A\): External View, Control Panel, Load Media, Load Ribbon, Remove the Ribbon](#) – S4M quick reference guide (Zebra PDF) **official**

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The following official pages were not consulted for this guide: the end of the S4M user guide, from the end of the control panel parameters onwards (including “Calibrate Media and Ribbon Sensors”), with the “Routine Maintenance” chapters (cleaning the printhead, platen roller, sensors, peeler and cutter) and “Troubleshooting” (LCD Error Messages, Memory Errors, Print Quality Problems, Calibration Problems, Communications Problems, Ribbon Problems, Miscellaneous Printer Problems, Printer Diagnostics), that is, the pages beyond page 79 of the English PDF and page 59 of the French PDF; the Zebra articles “S4M - Loading the Ribbon and Resolving Ribbon Issues”, “S4M Printer -- Resolving Print Quality Issues”, “Video: Calibrating Media on S4M Printer”, “S4M EPL Menu Details” and “Defaulting the Wireless Plus Print Server on the S4M”; the guide extracts published on cpws.zebra.com; the ZebraNet Wireless guide 14143L-008; the “S4M Industrial/Commercial Printer Maintenance Manual” (13291L-001 Rev. A) beyond page 33, including the “Operations” (calibration, LCD display), “Troubleshooting” (page 83) and “Preventive and Corrective Maintenance” (page 105) chapters. They are not cited. If the fault falls under these documents, refer to the manufacturer's documentation or ask the TIMCOD technicians.

See also

- [All Zebra printer troubleshooting guides \(ZT230, ZT410, ZT421, ZT420, ZT411, GK420, ZD421, GX420, QLn420, ZQ630, ZQ511, ZQ610 Plus, ZQ510, ZC100 and ZC300, ZD410, ZD411, ZD420, ZD500R, ZD510-HC, ZD611, ZD620, ZD621, ZQ310 Plus, ZQ320 Plus, ZQ620 Plus, ZT231, ZT510, ZT610 and ZT620, ZXP Series 7\)](#)
- [Maintenance and repair of Zebra printers](#)
- [All printer troubleshooting guides, all brands](#)
- [Through-life maintenance \(MCO\): preventive and corrective maintenance](#) (in French)
- [TIMCOD, Zebra reseller](#) (in French)
- [Zebra labels and consumables for thermal printers](#) (in French)
- [Printer cleaning kits](#) (in French)

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PDF version of the page <https://www.timcod.fr/repairation/en/printer-troubleshooting/zebra/s4m>, updated on 21 October 2026.

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