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TROUBLESHOOTING GUIDE

Zebra ZC100 and ZC300 troubleshooting guide: errors, faults and fixes

Updated 21 October 2026 · By TIMCOD maintenance technicians · Source: official Zebra documentation, ZC100/300 Series user guide (list at the end of the page)

TIMCOD PRODUCT PAGE (IN FRENCH)

See the Zebra ZC100 and ZC300 product page →

In brief. The Zebra ZC100 and ZC300 are plastic card printers that print in colour by dye sublimation or in monochrome by thermal transfer; the ZC300 adds an LCD display, and a card flipper module provides double-sided printing on the relevant models, with magnetic encoding, smart cards and Wi-Fi as options. According to the Zebra documentation, the causes cited most often are cards that stick together or are out of specification, a broken or unrecognised ribbon, a ribbon sensor that needs calibrating and overdue cleaning. This guide covers the error codes published by Zebra, the light states, ribbon calibration, cleaning, encoding and firmware updates. Click a question to open the entry.

- **A code or a red light is displayed** (4001, 7036, 5001, Ribbon light red...): find it in the [lookup table](#) and open the matching entry. On the ZC100, which has no display, read the code in the driver's status bar.

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- **No message, but the cards are printed poorly:** see [ribbon calibration](#), the [ribbon and card problems](#) and the [print quality](#) section.
- **The problem keeps coming back:** the [preventive maintenance](#) section explains how it reduces this type of fault.

Which error is my Zebra ZC100 or ZC300 showing? Lookup by code and by lights

The ZC300 shows its errors on its LCD display; both models also report them through five lights (Power, Card, Ribbon, Cleaning, Manual Feed) and through the Windows driver's status bar, which gives the numerical code. The table links each code or light to its cause and to the troubleshooting entry.

Message or state	Lights (Zebra guide)	Likely cause	Entry
Power light solid red	● Power solid red	Critical error	Critical error
7008 Print cover open	—	Print cover not properly closed, no sensor contact or faulty sensor	Print cover open
7010 Printhead motion blocked	—	Obstruction in the printer or faulty printhead cam motor	Printhead motion blocked
7003 Check printhead cable	—	Printhead cable disconnected, not fully inserted or damaged	Check printhead cable
4001 Out of cards	● Card solid red (out of cards)	Input hopper empty or faulty card presence sensor	Out of cards

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Message or state	Lights (Zebra guide)	Likely cause	Entry
7028 Input hopper open	—	Input hopper cover open or faulty sensor	<u>Input hopper open</u>
7045 Pusher plate jam	—	Pusher plate blocked by an obstruction or faulty lift mechanism	<u>Pusher plate jam</u>
7001 Card feeding failed	—	Cards stuck together, back too smooth, dirty feed roller, card out of specification	<u>Card feeding failed</u>
7038 Card entrance jam	—	Cards stuck together, dirty feed roller or entrance module, card out of specification	<u>Card entrance jam</u>
7036 Card jam in printer	● Card flashing red (card jam)	Obstruction, ribbon stuck to the card, card slipping, card out of specification, rear module incorrectly installed	<u>Card jam in printer</u>
7032 Manual feed failed	—	Card inserted in the manual feed slot when none was expected	<u>Manual feed failed</u>
Manual Feed light solid red	● Manual Feed solid red	Card insertion error	<u>Manual feed</u>
5001 Out of ribbon	● Ribbon flashing red (out of ribbon, jam or torn ribbon)	Ribbon broken, no panels left on the ribbon chip, faulty chip, sensor needs calibrating	<u>Out of ribbon</u>

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Message or state	Lights (Zebra guide)	Likely cause	Entry
Ribbon Low	● Ribbon solid orange (ribbon low)	Warning: 10 panel sets left on the cartridge	<u>Ribbon Low</u>
5002 Incompatible ribbon	● Ribbon solid red (incorrect ribbon)	Ribbon not compatible with the printer model	<u>Incompatible ribbon</u>
5008 Ribbon authentication failed	—	Ribbon chip dirty, damaged or incorrectly programmed, damaged contacts, non-Zebra ribbon	<u>Ribbon authentication failed</u>
5003 Ribbon jam	● Ribbon flashing red (out of ribbon, jam or torn ribbon)	Ribbon broken or stuck to the card, supply encoder faulty or displaced	<u>Ribbon jam</u>
5007 Ribbon color detection failed	—	Colour sensor needs calibrating, chip does not match the ribbon, dirty reflector, faulty sensor	<u>Ribbon calibration</u>
7035 Card jam in encoder	—	Obstruction in the options module, module incorrectly installed or faulty	<u>Card jam in encoder</u>
7023 Encoding cam blocked	—	Obstruction or wires blocking the encoding module cam	<u>Encoding cam blocked</u>
9001 Magnetic read failed / 9002 Magnetic encoding failed	—	Damaged card, wrong coercivity, dirty encoder, module incorrectly installed or faulty	<u>Magnetic encoding</u>

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Message or state	Lights (Zebra guide)	Likely cause	Entry
9004 No magnetic stripe	—	Card without a magnetic stripe or inserted the wrong way round	<u>No magnetic stripe</u>
21017 Options PCBA failed	—	Communication error between the main board and the options module board	<u>Options PCBA failed</u>
Cleaning light orange	● Cleaning orange (cleaning-related warning)	The printer needs cleaning	<u>Cleaning</u>
Cleaning light solid red	● Cleaning solid red	Cleaning error or reject bin full	<u>Cleaning</u>
Ethernet lights off	○ Orange and green Ethernet port lights off	No network cable detected	<u>Ethernet</u>

The codes and messages come from the Zebra knowledge base articles on the ZC Series (print engine, feeder module, ribbons, rear options module). The lights come from the “LED Warnings and Errors” table in the ZC100/300 user guide and its French version; we have associated a light with a code only when the light's label describes the same situation. A dash indicates that the page consulted does not specify the state of the lights.

Zebra ZC100 and ZC300 error messages: causes and solutions

These entries cover the errors that block printing without directly involving the cards or the ribbon: critical error, cover open, printhead blocked or printhead cable. For each one: the short answer, the cause according to Zebra, the steps to follow and, when the documentation provides for it, the point at which you should hand over to a technician.

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Why has my Zebra ZC300 stopped printing with its power light red?

Lights: Power solid red · Driver: red status bar.

Short answer: According to Zebra, a solid red power light indicates a critical error, and a red status bar in the driver blocks printing until the error has been corrected. Note the code displayed, find it in the lookup table and apply the matching entry.

LIKELY CAUSE

The Zebra guide distinguishes warnings, which require the operator's attention without stopping the job, from errors, which require immediate action before printing can resume. The driver guide specifies that a green or yellow status bar allows printing, whereas a red bar blocks printing until the error has been corrected.

WHAT TO DO

1. Read the message shown on the ZC300 display, or the code given in the driver's status bar (for example "Status: Out of Cards 4001").
2. Find this code in the [lookup table](#) and follow the matching entry.
3. On the ZC300, the Help menu on the display offers animations for loading cards and ribbon, cleaning the printer and clearing a card or ribbon jam; the More help option displays a QR code linking to the Zebra support page.
4. For a warning, the left soft key displays an animation showing how to resolve it. The guide specifies that no animation is offered for errors.

When to call a technician: if the critical error persists, the Zebra driver lets you generate a configuration request (Config Request) to send to Zebra technical support, and the Help & Support tab gives access to technical support and to the repair request (Request a Repair).

Sources: [ZC100/300 Series User Guide](#)  – Zebra ZC100/ZC300 user guide (P1094920-001), LCD Warnings and Errors and LED Warnings and Errors sections · [ZC100/300 Series Card Printer – Windows Driver User Guide](#)  – Zebra ZC100/ZC300 Windows driver guide (P1101331-003) (official documentation).

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Why does my Zebra ZC300 show “Print cover open” (error 7008) when the cover is closed?

Message: 7008 Print cover open · Lights: —

Short answer: The print cover does not close completely, or its sensor does not detect that it is closed. Open the printer, remove whatever is in the way, close the cover; if the error persists, check the state of the sensor in the driver's advanced settings.

LIKELY CAUSE

The Zebra knowledge base cites three causes: an object is preventing the cover from closing completely, the sensor contact is missing from the print cover, or the cover open sensor is faulty.

WHAT TO DO

1. Open the printer and look for whatever is preventing the cover from closing completely.
2. Check that the sensor contact is present on the print cover; if it is missing, Zebra asks you to find it and put it back in place.
3. Close the cover until it locks.
4. In the driver, check the state of the print cover sensor: the sensors tab of the advanced settings (Sensors) shows the state of the feeder, print engine and options sensors.

Sources: ZC Print Engine Troubleshooting – Zebra knowledge base (ZC100, ZC300, ZC350) (link removed on 21 October 2026: the page is no longer available at its former address) · [ZC100/300 Series User Guide \(PDF\)](#) › Troubleshooting › Clearing a Card Jam [↗](#) · [ZC100/300 Series Card Printer – Windows Driver User Guide](#) [↗](#) – Zebra ZC100/ZC300 Windows driver guide (P1101331-003) (official documentation).

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What should I do when my Zebra ZC300 shows “Printhead motion blocked” (error 7010)?

Message: 7010 Printhead motion blocked · Lights: —

Short answer: The printhead movement is blocked, either by an obstruction in the printer or by a fault in the printhead cam motor. Remove the obstruction; if the error comes back, Zebra provides for testing the cam movement in the diagnostics window.

LIKELY CAUSE

Zebra cites two causes: an obstruction in the printer, or a faulty printhead cam motor.

Caution: The Zebra driver guide reserves the password-protected diagnostic functions for trained personnel, and warns that operating the card feed motor while there are cards in the input hopper can cause serious damage.

WHAT TO DO

1. Open the top cover and remove the obstruction that is hindering the printhead movement.
2. Close the cover and restart printing.
3. If the error persists, the Zebra knowledge base says to test the printhead cam movement in the driver's diagnostics window (Advanced Settings, Advanced Features, Diagnostics).

When to call a technician: if the error comes back after the obstruction has been removed: the cam test is done in the driver's diagnostic functions, which Zebra reserves for trained personnel.

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Sources: ZC Print Engine Troubleshooting – Zebra knowledge base (ZC100, ZC300, ZC350) (link removed on 21 October 2026: the page is no longer available at its former address) · [ZC100/300 Series User Guide \(PDF\)](#) › Troubleshooting › Clearing a Card Jam [↗](#) · [ZC100/300 Series Card Printer – Windows Driver User Guide](#) [↗](#) – Zebra ZC100/ZC300 Windows driver guide (P1101331-003) (official documentation).

What does the “Check printhead cable” message (error 7003) mean on a Zebra ZC300?

Message: 7003 Check printhead cable · Lights: —

Short answer: The printhead cable is disconnected, not fully inserted or damaged. Zebra asks you to check the connection between this cable and the printhead.

LIKELY CAUSE

According to the Zebra knowledge base, the printhead cable is disconnected, not fully inserted or damaged.

WHAT TO DO

1. Open the top cover to access the printhead.
2. Check that the cable connector is fully inserted on the printhead and that the cable is not damaged.
3. If the printhead has been removed, refit it as described in the Zebra guide: reconnect the cable, put the stabilising ball back in its housing in the top cover, then push the printhead upwards and swivel it into its hooks.
4. Close the cover and start a print again.

The complete printhead removal and fitting procedure is given in the [printhead replacement](#) entry.

Sources: ZC Print Engine Troubleshooting – Zebra knowledge base (ZC100, ZC300, ZC350) (link removed on 21 October 2026: the page is no longer available at its former address) · [ZC100/300 Series User Guide \(PDF\)](#) › Troubleshooting › Clearing a Card Jam [↗](#) · [ZC100/300 Series User Guide](#) [↗](#) – Zebra ZC100/ZC300 user guide (P1094920-001), Replacing the Printhead section (official documentation).

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Ribbon calibration: my Zebra ZC300 shows “Out of ribbon” or “Ribbon color detection failed”

Zebra states that an uncalibrated ribbon sensor can cause errors 5001 and 5007.

Calibration is done from the Windows driver.

How do I calibrate the ribbon sensor on a Zebra ZC300 (errors 5001 and 5007)?

Messages: 5001 Out of ribbon , 5007 Ribbon color detection failed · Lights: —

Short answer: Zebra states that an uncalibrated ribbon sensor can cause errors 5001 and 5007. Start calibration from the Windows driver (Printing Preferences, Advanced tab, Sensors and Calibration, Calibration, select Ribbon then Calibrate), removing the ribbon when the driver asks you to.

LIKELY CAUSE

For error 5007, the Zebra knowledge base cites four causes: colour detection sensor needing calibration, authentication chip that does not match the ribbon, dirty sensor reflector at the printhead, or faulty colour detection sensor.

OFFICIAL RIBBON CALIBRATION PROCEDURE

1. Check that the Zebra driver for the ZC100 or ZC300 is installed on the PC: over USB, Windows Update can load it automatically; otherwise, download it from the Zebra website.
2. Open Devices and Printers (or Printers & scanners), right-click the printer and choose Printing Preferences.
3. Open the Advanced tab, expand the Sensors and Calibration section and click Calibration.
4. In the list in the Calibration section, select Ribbon, then click Calibrate.
5. A dialog box asks you to remove the ribbon from the printer: follow its instructions.

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6. Once calibration is complete, put the ribbon back in place.
7. If the error persists, Zebra advises updating the firmware ([firmware entry](#)) and applying the other leads in the [Out of ribbon](#) entry.

Calibration requires a Windows PC with the Zebra driver: Zebra specifies that the driver cannot be installed on a mobile device. The driver guide lists the ribbon detection sensor (Ribbon Detect Sensor) as a sensor that can be calibrated.

Sources: Calibrating Ribbon Errors on ZC100 and ZC300 Series Card Printers – Zebra knowledge base (ZC100, ZC300) (link removed on 21 October 2026: the page is no longer available at its former address) · [ZC100/300 Series Windows Driver User Guide \(PDF\)](#) › [Advanced Settings](#) › [Sensors and Calibration](#) › [Calibration](#)  · ZC Series Ribbons Troubleshooting – Zebra knowledge base (ZC100, ZC300, ZC350) (link removed on 21 October 2026: the page is no longer available at its former address) · [ZC100/300 Series User Guide \(PDF\)](#) › [Troubleshooting](#) › [LED Warnings and Errors](#)  · [ZC100/300 Series Card Printer – Windows Driver User Guide](#)  – Zebra ZC100/ZC300 Windows driver guide (P1101331-003) (official documentation).

Ribbon and card feeding problems on the Zebra ZC100 and ZC300

Empty or open hopper, cards that do not feed in, jams, ribbon used up, broken or not recognised: the 4001, 70xx and 50xx codes published by Zebra and their solutions.

Why does my Zebra ZC300 show “Out of cards” (error 4001) when there are cards in the hopper?

Message: **4001 Out of cards** · Lights: Card solid red (out of cards).

Short answer: Either the input hopper is empty, or its card presence sensor is not working. Reload the cards; if the message remains, check in the driver that the sensor shows “Present” when cards are loaded.



LIKELY CAUSE

Zebra cites two causes: no cards in the input hopper, or a faulty hopper card detection sensor.

WHAT TO DO

1. Load cards into the input hopper (100 cards of 30 mil maximum according to the Zebra guide).
2. Observe the orientation: blank cards either way round, magnetic stripe cards with the stripe underneath and on the right, contact smart cards with the chip on top and towards the front.
3. In the driver's advanced settings (sensors section), check that the hopper card sensor shows "Present".
4. Lower the sensor flap by hand, then check its state again.

The guide states that the ZC100 and ZC300 accept PVC or composite PVC cards in CR70 and CR80 formats, from 10 to 40 mil thick.

Sources: ZC Feeder Module Troubleshooting – Zebra knowledge base (ZC100, ZC300, ZC350) (link removed on 21 October 2026: the page is no longer available at its former address) · [ZC100/300 Series User Guide \(PDF\)](#) › Troubleshooting › LED Warnings and Errors; [Clearing a Card Jam](#) · [ZC100/300 Series, user guide](#) · [Zebra ZC100/ZC300 user guide in French \(P1094920-021\)](#), "Chargement des cartes" (loading cards) section · [ZC100/300 Series User Guide](#) · [Zebra ZC100/ZC300 user guide \(P1094920-001\)](#) (official documentation).

What should I do if my Zebra ZC300 shows "Input hopper open" (7028) or "Pusher plate jam" (7045)?

Messages: 7028 Input hopper open , 7045 Pusher plate jam · Lights: —

Short answer: These two errors concern the input hopper: its cover is open or not properly detected (7028), or its pusher plate does not reach the top position (7045). Close the cover after removing any obstruction, then check the sensors in the driver.

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LIKELY CAUSE

For 7028, Zebra cites an open input hopper cover or a faulty cover sensor. For 7045, an obstruction in the hopper is preventing the pusher plate from rising, or its lift mechanism is faulty.

WHAT TO DO

1. Remove any obstruction from the input hopper.
2. Close the input hopper cover (the door) completely.
3. In the driver's advanced settings, check the state of the hopper cover sensor ("Feeder Cover"): Zebra states that the pusher plate's rise depends on this sensor.

In the event of error 7045, Zebra specifies that the printer can still be used with manual feed (see the [manual feed](#) entry).

Sources: ZC Feeder Module Troubleshooting – Zebra knowledge base (ZC100, ZC300, ZC350) (link removed on 21 October 2026: the page is no longer available at its former address) · [ZC100/300 Series User Guide \(PDF\)](#) > Troubleshooting > LED Warnings and Errors; [Clearing a Card Jam](#)  (official documentation).

Why does my Zebra ZC300 not feed the cards (errors “Card feeding failed” 7001 and “Card entrance jam” 7038)?

Messages: 7001 Card feeding failed , 7038 Card entrance jam · Lights: —

Short answer: The cards are sticking together in the hopper, or the feed roller cannot pick them up (dirty roller, back too smooth, card out of specification). Separate and reload the cards, clean the printer and the feed roller, then check the cleaning roller of the ribbon cartridge.

LIKELY CAUSE

For 7001, Zebra cites cards stuck together, a back that is too smooth for the feed roller (pick roller), a dirty feed roller, a dirty input/output module or a card out of specification. For 7038, the same causes, except for the back being too smooth.



WHAT TO DO

1. Remove the cards, separate them and reload them.
2. Check that the cards meet the printer's specifications: PVC or composite PVC CR70 or CR80 cards, from 10 to 40 mil thick according to the Zebra guide.
3. Run a cleaning cycle with a cleaning card (see the [cleaning](#) entry).
4. Clean the feed roller with a swab moistened with alcohol.
5. Check the cleaning roller of the ribbon cartridge (cleaning core).

Sources: ZC Feeder Module Troubleshooting – Zebra knowledge base (ZC100, ZC300, ZC350) (link removed on 21 October 2026: the page is no longer available at its former address) · [ZC100/300 Series User Guide](#) (PDF) › Troubleshooting › LED Warnings and Errors; Clearing a Card Jam [↗](#) · [ZC100/300 Series User Guide](#) [↗](#) – Zebra ZC100/ZC300 user guide (P1094920-001) (official documentation).

How do I clear a card stuck in a Zebra ZC300 (error 7036 “Card jam in printer”)?

Message: 7036 Card jam in printer · Lights: Card flashing red (card jam).

Short answer: Open the cover, remove the ribbon cartridge and turn the manual advance knob towards the front of the printer until the card comes out. Do not use any tools: according to Zebra, this voids the warranty and can damage the printer.

LIKELY CAUSE

Zebra cites five causes: an obstruction in the card path, ribbon stuck to the card, a card slipping on the feed rollers, a card out of specification, or a rear module (rear deck) incorrectly installed.

Caution: Do not use tools to remove a stuck card: Zebra specifies that this voids the product warranty and can damage the printer.

OFFICIAL JAM CLEARING PROCEDURE

1. Open the printer cover.

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2. Remove the ribbon cartridge.
3. Turn the manual advance knob towards the front of the printer until the card comes out.
4. If ribbon is stuck to the card, remove it, then close the cover.
5. Run a cleaning cycle ([cleaning entry](#)) and check that the cards meet the printer's specifications.
6. If the printer is fitted with a rear options module, check that it is correctly installed.

On the ZC300, the Help menu on the display offers a “Clearing card jam” animation.

Sources: [ZC100/300 Series User Guide](#) [↗](#) – Zebra ZC100/ZC300 user guide (P1094920-001), Clearing a Card Jam section · ZC Print Engine Troubleshooting – Zebra knowledge base (ZC100, ZC300, ZC350) (link removed on 21 October 2026; the page is no longer available at its former address) · [ZC100/300 Series User Guide \(PDF\)](#) > Troubleshooting > [Clearing a Card Jam](#) [↗](#) · ZC Feeder Module Troubleshooting – Zebra knowledge base (ZC100, ZC300, ZC350) (link removed on 21 October 2026; the page is no longer available at its former address) · [ZC100/300 Series User Guide \(PDF\)](#) > Troubleshooting > [LED Warnings and Errors; Clearing a Card Jam](#) [↗](#) (official documentation).

Why does my Zebra ZC300 show “Manual feed failed” (error 7032)?

Message: 7032 Manual feed failed · Lights: —

Short answer: A card was inserted in the manual feed slot when the printer was not expecting one. Zebra asks you to open the input hopper, remove the stuck card and close the hopper.

LIKELY CAUSE

According to Zebra, a card was inserted in the manual feed slot without the printer expecting it.

WHAT TO DO

1. Open the input hopper, remove the stuck card and close the hopper.
2. To print a single card, select manual feed in the driver.

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3. Wait for the manual feed slot, located at the front below the input hopper, to light up green.
4. Insert the card in the same orientation as the cards in the input hopper; the printed card comes out into the output hopper.

The Zebra guide also states that a solid red Manual Feed light indicates a card insertion error.

Sources: ZC Feeder Module Troubleshooting – Zebra knowledge base (ZC100, ZC300, ZC350) (link removed on 21 October 2026: the page is no longer available at its former address) · [ZC100/300 Series User Guide \(PDF\)](#) › Troubleshooting › LED Warnings and Errors; Clearing a Card Jam [↗](#) · [ZC100/300 Series User Guide](#) [↗](#) – Zebra ZC100/ZC300 user guide (P1094920-001), Manual Feed section (official documentation).

Where do I retrieve a rejected card on a Zebra ZC300?

Short answer: A card rejected because of a print error goes into the output hopper, on top of the stack. If the printer is fitted with the card flipper module (double-sided), it goes into the reject area located above this module: open the top cover to remove it.

WHAT TO DO

1. Without a card flipper module: take the card from the top of the stack in the output hopper.
2. With a card flipper module: open the top cover and remove the card from the reject area, above the card flipper module.

The Zebra guide states that a solid red Cleaning light can indicate a full reject bin (see the [cleaning](#) entry).

Sources: [ZC100/300 Series User Guide](#) [↗](#) – Zebra ZC100/ZC300 user guide (P1094920-001), Retrieving a Rejected Card section · [ZC100/300 Series, user guide](#) [↗](#) – Zebra ZC100/ZC300 user guide in French (P1094920-021) (official documentation).

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Why does my Zebra ZC300 show “Out of ribbon” (error 5001) when the ribbon has not run out?

Message: 5001 Out of ribbon · Lights: Ribbon flashing red (out of ribbon, jam or torn ribbon).

Short answer: The ribbon is broken, the ribbon authentication chip has no panel sets left, or this chip is faulty. Repair or replace the ribbon, check the ribbon type in the driver, then calibrate the ribbon sensor if the error persists.

LIKELY CAUSE

The Zebra knowledge base cites three causes: broken ribbon, no panel sets left recorded on the ribbon authentication chip, or faulty chip. Another Zebra article adds that an uncalibrated ribbon sensor can also cause this error.

WHAT TO DO

1. Open the top cover and check that the ribbon is not broken; Zebra says to repair the ribbon in that case.
2. Check the ribbon type detected in the driver.
3. If the ribbon has run out, replace the cartridge: open the top cover, remove the protective packaging from the cleaning roller, insert the cartridge in the direction shown (it only fits one way, do not force it), then close the cover.
4. If the error persists with a ribbon in good condition, calibrate the ribbon sensor ([calibration](#) entry).

The driver guide states that the Ribbon Low warning (Ribbon light solid orange) appears when there are 10 panel sets left on the cartridge; printing continues.

Sources: ZC Series Ribbons Troubleshooting – Zebra knowledge base (ZC100, ZC300, ZC350) (link removed on 21 October 2026: the page is no longer available at its former address) · [ZC100/300 Series User Guide \(PDF\)](#) > [Troubleshooting](#) > [LED Warnings and Errors](#) [↗](#) · [Calibrating Ribbon Errors on ZC100 and ZC300 Series Card Printers](#) – Zebra knowledge base (ZC100, ZC300) (link removed on 21 October 2026: the page is no longer available at its former address) · [ZC100/300 Series Windows Driver User Guide \(PDF\)](#) > [Advanced Settings](#) > [Sensors and Calibration](#) > [Calibration](#) [↗](#) · [ZC100/300 Series, user guide](#) [↗](#) – Zebra

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ZC100/ZC300 user guide in French (P1094920-021), “Chargement du ruban” (loading the ribbon) section · [ZC100/300 Series Card Printer – Windows Driver User Guide](#)  – Zebra ZC100/ZC300 Windows driver guide (P1101331-003) (official documentation).

Why does my Zebra ZC300 not recognise the ribbon (“Incompatible ribbon” or “Ribbon authentication failed”)?

Messages: 5002 Incompatible ribbon , 5008 Ribbon authentication failed · Lights: Ribbon solid red (incorrect ribbon).

Short answer: ZC ribbon cartridges carry identification features that allow the printer to recognise the type of ribbon and to reject non-Zebra cartridges. Error 5002 indicates a ribbon that is incompatible with the model; error 5008, a dirty, damaged or incorrectly programmed authentication chip, damaged contacts in the printer, or a ribbon that is not genuine Zebra.

LIKELY CAUSE

For 5002, Zebra states that the ribbon is not compatible with the printer model. For 5008, Zebra cites a dirty, damaged or incorrectly programmed authentication chip, damaged chip contacts in the printer, or a ribbon that is not a genuine Zebra ribbon.

WHAT TO DO

1. Error 5002: replace the cartridge with a ribbon compatible with your ZC100 or ZC300; for a custom OEM ribbon, check its part number.
2. Error 5008: clean the authentication chip on the cartridge.
3. Check the chip contacts in the printer.
4. If the chip is missing from the cartridge, replace the ribbon.

Sources: ZC Series Ribbons Troubleshooting – Zebra knowledge base (ZC100, ZC300, ZC350) (link removed on 21 October 2026: the page is no longer available at its former address) · [ZC100/300 Series User Guide](#) (PDF) > Troubleshooting > LED Warnings and Errors  · [ZC100/300 Series User Guide](#)  – Zebra ZC100/ZC300 user guide (P1094920-001), Loading Ribbon section (official documentation).

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Why does the ribbon on my Zebra ZC300 break or stick to the card (error 5003 “Ribbon jam”)?

Message: 5003 Ribbon jam · Lights: Ribbon flashing red (out of ribbon, jam or torn ribbon).

Short answer: The ribbon is broken or stuck to the card, or the ribbon supply encoder sensor is faulty or displaced. According to Zebra, the ribbon breaks mainly when printing goes too close to the edge of the card, with incompatible cards or with cards that already have an overlay.

LIKELY CAUSE

For error 5003, Zebra cites a ribbon that is broken or stuck to the card, or a faulty or incorrectly positioned ribbon supply encoder sensor. For a ribbon that breaks, Zebra cites printing too close to the edge of the card, incompatible card material and cards already covered with an overlay.

WHAT TO DO

1. Open the cover, remove the cartridge and free the ribbon stuck to the card.
2. Repair the ribbon or replace the cartridge.
3. Check the cards: they must be compatible with the printer and have no overlay.
4. If the ribbon breaks at the edge of the card, adjust the X offset and the image fill in the driver.
5. Check that the cartridge's cleaning roller (cleaning core) is correctly installed.
6. If the error persists, Zebra asks you to check the position of the ribbon supply encoder.

On the ZC300, the Help menu on the display offers a “Clearing ribbon jam” animation.

Sources: ZC Series Ribbons Troubleshooting – Zebra knowledge base (ZC100, ZC300, ZC350) (link removed on 21 October 2026: the page is no longer available at its former address) · [ZC100/300 Series User Guide \(PDF\)](#) > [Troubleshooting > LED Warnings and Errors](#) [↗](#) · [ZC100/300 Series User Guide](#) [↗](#) – Zebra ZC100/ZC300 user guide (P1094920-001), Help menu (official documentation).

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Card print quality on the Zebra ZC300: colours, streaks, faded edge

The Zebra guide classifies print defects by symptom; most are corrected in the driver settings, some require the intervention of Zebra support.

How do I print a test card on a Zebra ZC300 to check the print quality?

Short answer: From the ZC300 display: right key to open the Tools menu, choose “Print sample cards” with the centre key, then select the card and start printing with the right key. From the driver, the graphics test card is used to check the print quality.

WHAT TO DO

1. Check that the printer is switched on and on the Printer Ready screen.
2. Press the right soft key to open the Tools menu.
3. With the centre key, select “Print sample cards”, then confirm with the right key.
4. Choose the card or cards with the centre key and start printing with the right key.
5. From the driver, the configuration card (Configuration Test Card) also prints the printer information.

Sources: [ZC100/300 Series User Guide](#)  – Zebra ZC100/ZC300 user guide (P1094920-001), Printing a Sample Card section · [ZC100/300 Series Card Printer – Windows Driver User Guide](#)  – Zebra ZC100/ZC300 Windows driver guide (P1101331-003) (official documentation).

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Why does my Zebra ZC300 print faintly along the long edge of the card or make a clicking noise?

Symptoms: light print along the long edge of the card, clicking during printing.

Short answer: Zebra links these two symptoms to the side fill panels: if incorrectly installed, they produce light print along the long edge of the card; if missing, they cause clicking during printing. Open the printer, remove the ribbon and correctly install the panel on the side concerned.

LIKELY CAUSE

According to the Zebra knowledge base, light print along the long edge comes from an incorrectly installed side fill panel, and a clicking noise during printing from missing side panels.

WHAT TO DO

1. Open the printer.
2. Remove the ribbon.
3. Correctly install the side fill panel on the side where the print is faded, or install the panels if they are missing.
4. Put the ribbon back, close the printer and print a test card.

Sources: ZC Print Engine Troubleshooting – Zebra knowledge base (ZC100, ZC300, ZC350) (link removed on 21 October 2026: the page is no longer available at its former address) · [ZC100/300 Series User Guide \(PDF\)](#) › Troubleshooting › [Clearing a Card Jam](#)  (official documentation).

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How do I fix wrong colours, smearing or dull black on a Zebra ZC300?

Symptoms: colours different from the original image, smearing at the transition from dark to light, black text not sharp.

Short answer: These defects are corrected in the driver. For wrong colours, adjust the colour optimisation (Color Optimization) or apply a Windows ICC profile; for smearing, reduce the preheat; for dull black, adjust the black extraction (K Extraction) on the front or back.

LIKELY CAUSE

The Zebra guide explains smearing as a transition from dark to light when the printhead has not cooled enough. It classifies dull, unsharp black text or images as black extraction defects.

WHAT TO DO

1. Colours: adjust Color Optimization in the driver, or create and apply a Windows ICC profile (colour management in the printer properties).
2. Smearing: reduce the Preheat value in the driver's Color Optimization settings.
3. Black: adjust Front K Extraction or Back K Extraction. According to Zebra, RGB colours up to 25,25,25 can be printed in black with these sliders; beyond that, the image has to be modified.
4. Print a test card after each adjustment ([test card](#) entry).

If the colours still do not match, the Zebra guide suggests contacting Zebra for a custom lookup table.

Sources: [ZC100/300 Series User Guide](#)  – Zebra ZC100/ZC300 user guide (P1094920-001), Identifying Print Quality Issues section · [ZC100/300 Series Card Printer – Windows Driver User Guide](#)  – Zebra ZC100/ZC300 Windows driver guide (P1101331-003) (official documentation).

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How do I re-centre an offset image on the cards printed by a Zebra ZC300?

Symptoms: the printed image appears offset on the card.

Short answer: For an offset image, the Zebra guide says to use the driver's print position setting (Print Position). Adjust it, then print a check card.

LIKELY CAUSE

The Zebra guide classifies this defect under image placement: the printed image appears offset.

WHAT TO DO

1. Open the Zebra driver's printing preferences.
2. In the print optimisation and adjustment settings, adjust the print position.
3. Print a test card and repeat the adjustment if necessary.

Zebra points out that printing too close to the edge of the card can make the ribbon break ([Ribbon jam](#) entry).

Sources: [ZC100/300 Series User Guide](#)  – Zebra ZC100/ZC300 user guide (P1094920-001), Identifying Print Quality Issues section · ZC Series Ribbons Troubleshooting – Zebra knowledge base (ZC100, ZC300, ZC350) (link removed on 21 October 2026: the page is no longer available at its former address) · [ZC100/300 Series User Guide \(PDF\)](#) > Troubleshooting > LED Warnings and Errors  (official documentation).

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Why do colour streaks or a halo appear on the cards from my Zebra ZC300?

Symptoms: colour streak not present in the original image, image blurred or surrounded by a coloured halo.

Short answer: A colour streak not present in the original image, often linked to the edges of the card or to dark images, corresponds according to Zebra to ribbon wrinkling. A coloured halo or a blurred image comes from poor alignment of the Y, M, C or K panels. In both cases, the guide refers you to Zebra technical support.

LIKELY CAUSE

The Zebra guide describes two defects: ribbon wrinkling (ribbon wrinkle), which leaves a colour streak, and mis-registration of the Y, M, C or K panels, which makes the image blurred or surrounded by a halo.

WHAT TO DO

1. Print a test card to confirm the defect ([test card](#) entry).
2. Contact Zebra technical support, as the guide provides for these two defects.

When to call a technician: for ribbon wrinkling or poor alignment of the colour panels, the Zebra guide asks you to contact Zebra technical support.

Source: [ZC100/300 Series User Guide](#)  – Zebra ZC100/ZC300 user guide (P1094920-001), Identifying Print Quality Issues section (official documentation).

Zebra ZC300 printhead: cleaning and replacement

The printhead cleaning procedure with a swab and the printhead replacement procedure, as described in the Zebra user guide.

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How do I clean the printhead on a Zebra ZC300 when print defects persist?

Symptoms: print defects that persist after a card cleaning cycle.

Short answer: Zebra states that cleaning cards are generally sufficient. If defects persist, switch off the printer, open the top cover, wipe an alcohol-moistened foam swab from side to side across the printhead elements, then let it dry for two to three minutes before switching back on.

LIKELY CAUSE

According to the Zebra guide, stubborn deposits can remain on the printhead despite card cleaning; a separate cleaning with a swab removes them.

Caution: Never use a sharp object to scrape deposits off the printhead: according to Zebra, the printhead would be permanently damaged.

OFFICIAL PRINTHEAD CLEANING PROCEDURE

1. Switch the printer off.
2. Open the top cover.
3. Wipe the tip of an alcohol-moistened swab from side to side across the printhead elements. Use only foam-tipped swabs, so as not to leave deposits.
4. Let the printhead dry for two to three minutes before switching the printer back on.

Cleaning cards, foam-tipped swabs and alcohol can be ordered from the product support page, according to the Zebra guide.

Sources: [ZC100/300 Series User Guide](#)  – Zebra ZC100/ZC300 user guide (P1094920-001), Cleaning the Printhead and Cleaning Supplies sections · [ZC100/300 Series, user guide](#)  – Zebra ZC100/ZC300 user guide in French (P1094920-021) (official documentation).

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How do I replace the printhead on a Zebra ZC300?

Short answer: Open the top cover, push the printhead upwards and swivel it to release it from its hooks, then disconnect its cable. After fitting the new printhead, enter its serial number and its resistance value in the driver.

OFFICIAL REPLACEMENT PROCEDURE

1. Removal: open the top cover.
2. Push the printhead upwards, then swivel it to release it from the hooks.
3. Disconnect the cable connector.
4. Fitting: connect the cable to the new printhead and note its serial number and its resistance value.
5. Insert the stabilising ball into its housing in the top cover.
6. Push the printhead upwards and swivel it into the hooks.
7. In the driver, open the Advanced tab, then Diagnostics and Calibration, Commands & Calibration, and enter the serial number and the resistance of the new printhead in the Printhead section.

The driver guide states that the Printhead section shows the serial number and the resistance of the installed printhead, and is used to enter the values of a new printhead.

Sources: [ZC100/300 Series User Guide](#) – Zebra ZC100/ZC300 user guide (P1094920-001), Replacing the Printhead section · [ZC100/300 Series Card Printer – Windows Driver User Guide](#) – Zebra ZC100/ZC300 Windows driver guide (P1101331-003) (official documentation).

Zebra ZC300 network connection: Ethernet and Wi-Fi

Ethernet port lights, fixed IP address and configuration of the Wi-Fi option from the driver, based on the Zebra guides.

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Why is my Zebra ZC300 not detected on the Ethernet network?

Lights: orange (speed) and green (activity) Ethernet port lights off.

Short answer: If both Ethernet port lights are off, the printer does not detect a network cable. Check that the cable is suitable (RJ-45 connector), reconnect it until it clicks at both ends, then try a network that is known to work.

LIKELY CAUSE

According to the Zebra guide, the orange light indicates the link speed (one flash: 10Base, two flashes: 100Base) and the green light the activity (on: link established, flashing: traffic). Both off means that no cable is detected.

WHAT TO DO

1. Check that the cable is suitable and that it has an RJ-45 connector.
2. Disconnect the cable from the printer and reconnect it until it clicks; do the same at the other end.
3. Connect the printer to a network that is known to work.
4. On the ZC300, the Ethernet icon at the top of the display shows whether the cable is detected and whether the printer has obtained an IP address.
5. For a fixed IP address, connect the printer via USB and open the driver's advanced settings (Connectivity, wired connection): disable DHCP; the IPv4 address, subnet mask, gateway and DNS can only be changed with DHCP disabled.
6. Then install the network driver: run the Windows driver installation program, choose Modify then "Install Ethernet printer drivers", and enter the IP address if the printer is on another subnet.

When to call a technician: if the printer still does not detect the cable once connected to a network that works, the Zebra guide asks you to contact technical support.

The driver guide specifies that disabling SNMP prevents the printer from being discovered on the network.

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Sources: [ZC100/300 Series User Guide](#) – Zebra ZC100/ZC300 user guide (P1094920-001), Ethernet section · [ZC100/300 Series Card Printer – Windows Driver User Guide](#) – Zebra ZC100/ZC300 Windows driver guide (P1101331-003), Connectivity section (official documentation).

How do I connect a Zebra ZC300 via Wi-Fi and improve the signal quality?

Symptoms: Wi-Fi icon on the display showing “no connection” or “weak connection”.

Short answer: Wi-Fi is a factory-fitted option that is configured from the driver, with the printer connected via USB or Ethernet. If the connection is weak, Zebra advises moving the printer closer to the access point, with no wall or metal furniture between the antennas, and away from 2.4 GHz devices.

LIKELY CAUSE

According to the Zebra guide, signal quality depends on the distance to the access point, obstacles (walls, metal cabinets, large metal objects) and interference from 2.4 GHz devices such as microwave ovens, cordless phones, baby monitors or Bluetooth devices.

WHAT TO DO

1. Connect the printer to the PC via USB or Ethernet and open the driver's advanced settings, Wireless sub-tab.
2. Enable the wireless radio, then set the band preference, DHCP and SNMP.
3. Select the network (SSID) in the list, or add it with the Add button, entering the SSID, the security type and the password (WPA-PSK) or the EAP settings.
4. Click Apply, then Apply again in the wireless configuration window.
5. When the Connected status is displayed, note the printer's IP address.
6. Run the driver installation program again, choose Modify then “Install Ethernet printer drivers”, and enter the IP address if the printer is on another subnet.
7. If the signal is weak, move the printer closer to the access point, clear the line of sight between the antennas and move it away from 2.4 GHz devices and metal objects.

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Sources: [ZC100/300 Series Card Printer – Windows Driver User Guide](#) [↗](#) – Zebra ZC100/ZC300 Windows driver guide (P1101331-003), Configuring Wireless section · [ZC100/300 Series User Guide](#) [↗](#) – Zebra ZC100/ZC300 user guide (P1094920-001), Wi-Fi section (official documentation).

Updating the firmware on a Zebra ZC100 or ZC300

The firmware is updated from the Windows driver; Zebra recommends it in particular when a ribbon error persists after calibration.

How do I update the firmware on a Zebra ZC100 or ZC300?

Short answer: Download the latest firmware from the Zebra support page for your model, then install it from the Windows driver: Printing Preferences, Advanced Settings, Firmware and Settings. Never cut the power during the update; the printer restarts by itself at the end.

LIKELY CAUSE

Zebra recommends updating to enable certain functions, correct hardware or software problems and avoid faults already corrected in recent versions.

Caution: Do not switch off the printer during the firmware update: Zebra warns that the printer could be seriously damaged.

OFFICIAL UPDATE PROCEDURE

1. On the Zebra support page for your model, open the Downloads section and download the latest firmware.
2. Open the printer's printing preferences (Windows 10: Settings, Devices, Printers & scanners, Manage; Windows 11: Bluetooth & devices, Printers & scanners).

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3. Click Advanced Settings, then Firmware and Settings: the installed version is displayed.
4. Click the browse icon (File Browser), select the downloaded file, click Open, then start the update.
5. Confirm with OK on the confirmation screens.
6. Wait for the update to finish without switching off the printer; it restarts automatically.
7. Check in Firmware and Settings that the new version is displayed.

The same screen lets you save and restore the printer and driver settings (Save/Restore Settings). For macOS and Linux, Zebra offers dedicated drivers on the model's support page.

Sources: ZC100, ZC300, and ZC350 Firmware Upgrade – Zebra knowledge base (ZC100, ZC300, ZC350) (link removed on 21 October 2026: the page is no longer available at its former address) · [ZC100/300 Series Windows Driver User Guide \(PDF\)](#) › [Advanced Settings](#) › [Configuration](#) › [Firmware and Settings](#)  · [ZC100/300 Series Card Printer – Windows Driver User Guide](#)  – Zebra ZC100/ZC300 Windows driver guide (P1101331-003), Firmware and Settings section (official documentation).

Magnetic encoding and smart card errors on the Zebra ZC300

The encoders (magnetic stripe, contact or contactless smart cards) are housed in the rear options module. Zebra documents five error codes specific to this module.



Why does magnetic encoding fail on my Zebra ZC300 (“Magnetic encoding failed” or “Magnetic read failed”)?

Messages: 9001 Magnetic read failed , 9002 Magnetic encoding failed · Lights: —

Short answer: Zebra cites a damaged card, the wrong coercivity selected, a dirty magnetic encoder, or an options module that is incorrectly installed or faulty. Inspect the card, check the coercivity, clean the printer and the encoder, and check that the module is properly locked on both sides.

LIKELY CAUSE

The Zebra knowledge base cites five causes: damaged card, options module incorrectly installed, faulty options module, wrong magnetic coercivity selected, dirty magnetic encoder.

WHAT TO DO

1. Inspect the card: it must not be damaged.
2. Check the coercivity setting in the driver: the encoder reads and writes ISO 7811 tracks on high (HiCo) or low (LoCo) coercivity stripes.
3. Run a card cleaning cycle ([cleaning](#) entry).
4. Clean the magnetic encoder: switch off the printer, open the top cover, wipe an alcohol-moistened swab from side to side across the encoder element, then let it dry for two to three minutes before switching back on.
5. Check that the options module is properly in place, with the locking tabs engaged on both sides.

According to the Zebra guide, the encoder handles up to three tracks: track 1 at 210 BPI (alphanumeric), track 2 at 75 BPI (numeric), track 3 at 210 BPI (numeric). Magnetic cards are loaded with the stripe underneath and on the right.

Sources: ZC Rear Deck (Options Module) Troubleshooting – Zebra knowledge base (ZC100, ZC300, ZC350) (link removed on 21 October 2026: the page is no longer available at its former address) · [ZC100/300 Series User Guide](#)  – Zebra ZC100/ZC300 user guide (P1094920-001), Mag Encoder and Cleaning the

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Mag Encoder sections (official documentation).

What does “No magnetic stripe” (error 9004) mean on a Zebra ZC300?

Message: 9004 No magnetic stripe · Lights: —

Short answer: The printer cannot find a magnetic stripe: the card does not have one, or it is loaded the wrong way round. According to the Zebra guide, magnetic stripe cards are loaded with the stripe underneath and on the right.

LIKELY CAUSE

Zebra cites two causes: the card has no magnetic stripe, or it was inserted in the wrong orientation.

WHAT TO DO

1. Check that the cards loaded do have a magnetic stripe.
2. Reload the cards with the magnetic stripe underneath and on the right.

Sources: ZC Rear Deck (Options Module) Troubleshooting – Zebra knowledge base (ZC100, ZC300, ZC350) (link removed on 21 October 2026: the page is no longer available at its former address) · [ZC100/300 Series, user guide](#)  – Zebra ZC100/ZC300 user guide in French (P1094920-021), “Chargement des cartes” (loading cards) section (official documentation).

How do I resolve the “Card jam in encoder” (7035) and “Encoding cam blocked” (7023) errors on a Zebra ZC300?

Messages: 7035 Card jam in encoder , 7023 Encoding cam blocked · Lights: —

Short answer: These two errors concern the rear options module (rear deck), which holds the encoders. Remove the obstruction (card, or wires hindering the cam), then check that the module is properly in place, with the locking tabs engaged on both sides.

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LIKELY CAUSE

For 7035, Zebra cites an obstruction in the options module, an incorrectly installed module or a faulty module. For 7023, an obstruction in the encoding module, or wires inside the module blocking the movement of the cam.

WHAT TO DO

1. Error 7035: remove the options module, insert a card by hand and look for what is blocking it.
2. Error 7023: remove the obstruction, in particular any wires hindering the encoding cam.
3. Put the module back in place and check that the locking tabs are engaged on both sides.

Source: ZC Rear Deck (Options Module) Troubleshooting – Zebra knowledge base (ZC100, ZC300, ZC350) (link removed on 21 October 2026: the page is no longer available at its former address) (official documentation).

What should I do when a Zebra ZC300 shows “Options PCBA failed” (error 21017)?

Message: 21017 Options PCBA failed · Lights: —

Short answer: This is a communication error between the main circuit board and the options module board. Zebra asks you to switch the printer off and on again and to check that the module is correctly installed, with the locking tabs engaged on both sides.

LIKELY CAUSE

According to Zebra, the main circuit board (PCBA) and the options module board are no longer communicating.



WHAT TO DO

1. Switch the printer off and on again.
2. Check that the options module is correctly installed, with the locking tabs engaged on both sides.

Source: ZC Rear Deck (Options Module) Troubleshooting – Zebra knowledge base (ZC100, ZC300, ZC350) (link removed on 21 October 2026: the page is no longer available at its former address) (official documentation).

How do I load contact or contactless smart cards into a Zebra ZC300 to encode them?

Short answer: Contact smart cards are loaded into the input hopper with the gold contact on the top side; contactless cards are loaded normally. Encoding is controlled by the application software, with no operator action; avoid printing over the chip area.

WHAT TO DO

1. Contact smart cards: place them in the input hopper, chip on top and towards the front according to the French guide, and check that they are properly in place.
2. Contactless cards: load them like ordinary cards; the printer brings the card in front of the antenna to encode or read it.
3. In the layout, do not print over the contacts (front and back) or over the contactless chip area.
4. In the driver, the Smartcard Offsets section lets you change the offsets specific to each type of smart card.

The Zebra guide also describes a contact station: the card is connected there to the female DB-9 connector at the rear of the printer, which allows the chip to be programmed with an external programmer.

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Sources: [ZC100/300 Series User Guide](#)  – Zebra ZC100/ZC300 user guide (P1094920-001), Smart Card Encoder section · [ZC100/300 Series, user guide](#)  – Zebra ZC100/ZC300 user guide in French (P1094920-021), “Chargement des cartes” (loading cards) section · [ZC100/300 Series Card Printer – Windows Driver User Guide](#)  – Zebra ZC100/ZC300 Windows driver guide (P1101331-003) (official documentation).

Cleaning the Zebra ZC100 and ZC300: Cleaning light and cleaning card

The cleaning cycle with a card, started from the display or the driver, maintains the printhead, the feed rollers and the magnetic encoder.

How do I clean a Zebra ZC300 when the Cleaning light comes on orange?

Lights: Cleaning orange (cleaning-related warning); Cleaning solid red (cleaning error or reject bin full).

Short answer: The orange Cleaning light indicates that the printer needs cleaning. Start the cycle from the display (Tools menu, Clean printer) or from the driver (Help & Support tab, Clean Now), then insert the cleaning card into the manual feed slot when the printer asks for it.

LIKELY CAUSE

The driver triggers a cleaning alert according to an interval expressed in printed cards. The card cycle cleans the printhead, the transport rollers and, if installed, the magnetic encoder.

Caution: The Zebra driver guide advises against using a high-pressure compressed air blower and against loosening or adjusting any internal part: this can void the warranty.

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OFFICIAL CLEANING PROCEDURE

1. From the display (ZC300): on the Printer Ready screen, press the right key to open the Tools menu, select Clean printer with the centre key and confirm with the right key.
2. Start cleaning with the right key (the left key cancels and returns to the previous menu).
3. From the driver: open the printing preferences, Help & Support tab, and click Clean Now in the Cleaning section.
4. Remove the ribbon and the cards when the printer asks you to.
5. Insert the cleaning card into the manual feed slot when the printer asks for it; cleaning starts (Cleaning light flashing green).
6. Remove the cleaning card once it has been ejected, then put the ribbon and the cards back. The Cleaning light stays solid green for 30 seconds at the end of the cycle.

By default, the driver sets the cleaning interval to 1,000 cards (5,000 maximum; Zebra advises against exceeding the default value) and gives a warning 20 cards before it is due. The Clean Printer Error Mode setting (Allow Printing by default, or Stop Printing) determines whether printing stops when cleaning is due. For spots or stains on the cards, the Zebra guide provides for replacing the cleaning rollers and cleaning the printer; on the ZC Series, the card cleaning roller is built into the ribbon cartridge.

Sources: [ZC100/300 Series User Guide](#)  – Zebra ZC100/ZC300 user guide (P1094920-001), Cleaning the Printer and Identifying Print Quality Issues sections · [ZC100/300 Series, user guide](#)  – Zebra ZC100/ZC300 user guide in French (P1094920-021) · [ZC100/300 Series Card Printer – Windows Driver User Guide](#)  – Zebra ZC100/ZC300 Windows driver guide (P1101331-003), Cleaning section (official documentation).

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When should you call a technician for a Zebra ZC100 or ZC300?

The entries above first suggest reloading, cleaning, calibrating or adjusting the driver. In the following cases, the Zebra documentation refers you to technical support or to trained personnel:

- **Persistent critical error (Power light red):** generate a configuration request (Config Request) for Zebra technical support, or request a repair from the driver's Help & Support tab.
- **Persistent “Printhead motion blocked” (7010):** the printhead cam test is done in the driver's diagnostic functions, which Zebra reserves for trained personnel.
- **Colour streaks or halo on the cards:** ribbon wrinkling or poor alignment of the colour panels: the guide asks you to contact Zebra technical support.
- **Ethernet cable still not detected:** if the printer does not detect the cable on a network that works, contact technical support.

Avoiding recurring faults on the Zebra ZC100 or ZC300: preventive maintenance

Several entries in this guide point to a printhead or rollers that need cleaning, a ribbon or cards loaded incorrectly, or unsuitable settings. 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 ZC100 or ZC300 fleet:

Fewer breakdowns, less downtime

Fewer interruptions caused by card printers.

Worn parts detected in time

Printhead, rollers and sensors: spotted before they cause a breakdown.

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Regular cleaning and checks

Printhead, rollers and card path cleaned and checked at every visit.

Longer service life

A well-maintained, properly adjusted printer lasts longer.

Print quality maintained

Sharp, legible cards, with settings suited to your ribbons and cards.

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.

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 ZC100 or ZC300 troubleshooting: frequently asked questions

How do I clear a card stuck in a Zebra ZC300?

Open the cover, remove the ribbon cartridge and turn the manual advance knob towards the front of the printer until the card comes out. Do not use any tools: according to Zebra, this voids the warranty and can damage the printer. Then run a cleaning cycle and check that your cards meet the specifications. [See the detailed entry.](#)

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How do I calibrate the ribbon on a Zebra ZC300?

Calibration is started from the Windows driver: Printing Preferences, Advanced tab, Sensors and Calibration, Calibration, select Ribbon then Calibrate. Remove the ribbon when the driver asks you to, then put it back at the end. Zebra states that an uncalibrated ribbon sensor can cause errors 5001 and 5007. [See the detailed entry.](#)

How do I clean a Zebra ZC300 printer?

Start the cycle from the display (Tools menu, Clean printer) or from the driver (Clean Now button in the Cleaning section). Remove the ribbon and the cards, then insert the cleaning card into the manual feed slot when the printer asks for it. By default, the driver asks for cleaning every 1,000 cards. [See the detailed entry.](#)

Why does my Zebra ZC300 not recognise the ribbon?

ZC cartridges carry identification features that allow the printer to reject non-Zebra ribbons. Error 5002 indicates a ribbon that is incompatible with the model; error 5008, a dirty, damaged or incorrectly programmed authentication chip, damaged contacts or a non-Zebra ribbon. Clean the chip, check the contacts or replace the ribbon. [See the detailed entry.](#)

What does error 4001 mean on a Zebra ZC300?

Error 4001 “Out of cards” means that the input hopper is empty or that its card presence sensor is not working. Reload the cards; if the message remains, check in the driver that the sensor shows “Present” when cards are loaded. [See the detailed entry.](#)

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Why does the ribbon on my Zebra ZC300 break?

According to Zebra, the ribbon breaks mainly when printing goes too close to the edge of the card, with incompatible cards or with cards that already have an overlay. Adjust the X offset and the image fill in the driver, and check your cards and the installation of the cartridge's cleaning roller. [See the detailed entry.](#)

How do I clean the printhead on a Zebra ZC300?

Switch off the printer, open the top cover and wipe an alcohol-moistened foam swab from side to side across the printhead elements. Let it dry for two to three minutes before switching back on. Never use a sharp object: the printhead would be permanently damaged. [See the detailed entry.](#)

How do I update the firmware on a Zebra ZC300?

Download the latest firmware from the Zebra support page, then install it from the driver: Printing Preferences, Advanced Settings, Firmware and Settings. Never cut the power during the update; the printer restarts by itself at the end. [See the detailed entry.](#)

Sources consulted

All the causes, procedures, messages and light states in this guide come from the pages below of the official Zebra documentation, consulted on 20 October 2026.

- [ZC100/300 Series User Guide](#)  – Zebra ZC100/ZC300 user guide (P1094920-001) **official**
- [ZC100/300 Series, user guide](#)  – Zebra ZC100/ZC300 user guide in French (P1094920-021) **official**
- [ZC100/300 Series Card Printer – Windows Driver User Guide](#)  – Zebra ZC100/ZC300 Windows driver guide (P1101331-003) **official**

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- ZC Print Engine Troubleshooting – Zebra knowledge base (ZC100, ZC300, ZC350) (link removed on 21 October 2026: the page is no longer available at its former address) **official**
- [ZC100/300 Series User Guide \(PDF\) › Troubleshooting › Clearing a Card Jam](#)  **official**
- ZC Feeder Module Troubleshooting – Zebra knowledge base (ZC100, ZC300, ZC350) (link removed on 21 October 2026: the page is no longer available at its former address) **official**
- [ZC100/300 Series User Guide \(PDF\) › Troubleshooting › LED Warnings and Errors; Clearing a Card Jam](#)  **official**
- ZC Series Ribbons Troubleshooting – Zebra knowledge base (ZC100, ZC300, ZC350) (link removed on 21 October 2026: the page is no longer available at its former address) **official**
- [ZC100/300 Series User Guide \(PDF\) › Troubleshooting › LED Warnings and Errors](#)  **official**
- ZC Rear Deck (Options Module) Troubleshooting – Zebra knowledge base (ZC100, ZC300, ZC350) (link removed on 21 October 2026: the page is no longer available at its former address) **official**
- Calibrating Ribbon Errors on ZC100 and ZC300 Series Card Printers – Zebra knowledge base (ZC100, ZC300) (link removed on 21 October 2026: the page is no longer available at its former address) **official**
- [ZC100/300 Series Windows Driver User Guide \(PDF\) › Advanced Settings › Sensors and Calibration › Calibration](#)  **official**
- ZC100, ZC300, and ZC350 Firmware Upgrade – Zebra knowledge base (ZC100, ZC300, ZC350) (link removed on 21 October 2026: the page is no longer available at its former address) **official**
- [ZC100/300 Series Windows Driver User Guide \(PDF\) › Advanced Settings › Configuration › Firmware and Settings](#)  **official**

An HTML version of the ZC100/ZC300 guide on docs.zebra.com and the Zebra article “Setting IP Address on Zebra Value Class and Performance Class Card Printers” were not consulted for this guide: no information was taken from them. If the fault falls under these documents, refer to the manufacturer's documentation or ask the TIMCOD technicians.

See also

- Product page on timcod.fr (in French): [Zebra ZC100 and ZC300](#)
- All Zebra printer troubleshooting guides ([ZT230](#), [ZT410](#), [ZT421](#), [ZT420](#), [ZT411](#), [S4M](#), [GK420](#), [ZD421](#), [GX420](#), [QLn420](#), [ZQ630](#), [ZQ511](#), [ZQ610 Plus](#), [ZQ510](#), [ZD410](#), [ZD411](#), [ZD420](#), [ZD500R](#), [ZD510-HC](#), [ZD611](#), [ZD620](#), [ZD621](#), [ZQ310 Plus](#), [ZQ320 Plus](#), [ZQ620 Plus](#), [ZT231](#), [ZT510](#), [ZT610](#) and [ZT620](#), [ZXP](#)

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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)
- [Plastic card and badge printers](#) (in French)
- [Printer cleaning kits](#) (in French)

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PDF version of the page <https://www.timcod.fr/reparation/en/prINTER-troubleshooting/zebra/zc100-zc300>, updated on 21 October 2026.

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