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>stationery

From throwback MTV designs to royal writing utensils, stationery is back and it's more fashionable and glamorous than ever.

Clear Backpacks Mean More Fashionable Stationery **59**
By *Lenise Willis*

>on the cover



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Cover Image: Santa Barbara
Design Studio.
sb-designstudio.cb-gift.com
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> stationery

Consumers are constantly looking for ways to express themselves. And it doesn't stop at fashion. In today's world, especially, stationery items are becoming even more fashionably expressive now that many schools (and even stadiums) are making clear backpacks a requirement in response for increased safety.

"Color is in," said Kelly Bristol, show director of the National Stationery Show. "With more students required to use clear backpacks, the benefits of expressing individuality with what's inside it are evident. Students love all the colors and designs available to them."

Both kids and adults, now more than ever, are looking for pens, pencils, notebooks and calendars that make a fashion statement.

Here's What's Trending

The most popular back-to-school stationery items are writing instruments, followed by calendars and journals, according to the 2017 *Gifts and Decorative Accessories' Gift Book*.

It seems throwback patterns, especially those of the '90s, are resurging. These designs, like Kikkerland's New Wave Notebooks, Plum and Punch's bold journals and stationery sets and Retro 51's fun throwback pens, are

popular with kids looking to stand out and above "today's trends," as well as adults who enjoy the nostalgia. After all, shopping is emotional.

"Nostalgia is definitely a huge selling point in the current market," said Alice Lieu, of ilootpaperie. "Many of our friends are now becoming new parents and finding fun ways to incorporate a little bit of their childhood experiences when raising their children."

Bold colors and bold statements are also trending.

"(Kids) are being more forward about what they carry and how it reflects who they are," said Annie Bates, creative director for Hallmark Home & Gifts.

"We love the latest trends, including fun and smart editorial, bold colors and patterns and a little bit of glam." Cotton Colors' line of bold and inspirational journals and folders and Santa Barbara Design Studio's royal pens and mechanical pencils are great examples of the glam factor.

"We want our products to stand out and be that brightness you instantly fall in love with," said Courtney Clithero, of SB Design Studio. "Customers are gravitating toward the more designer-looking pens and pencils because it brings newness and excitement into the stationery world."

The continued trend of enamel pins and patches (which are also reminiscent of past decades) are another fun way for kids to represent their interests and facets of their identity. "They can help kids form opinions and connect with one another over shared passions such as science or reading," said Lieu.

Veronica Cox, director of marketing for OOLY, added that they've noticed kids and parents alike "looking to incorporate fun into their lives" through stationery. "We've created a Unique Unicorn Merchandising Vignette into one SKU that specially focuses on back to school and desk accessories the OOLY way," she said. "It's an easy way to create a bright and attractive in-store merchandising concept." Remember, according to NPD, more than 70 percent of last year's back-to-school purchases were made in stores.



These rollerball pens are inspired by the old-fashioned speakeasy. Part of the Tornado Speakeasy series, the pens come in three styles: Pilsner Beer, Red Wine and Absinthe (a favorite of writers and artists in the days of Prohibition). Retro 51. Retro51.com

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Not Just for Kids

The back-to-school category has no age limit; the shopping season crosses multiple generations, from school-aged kids and college kids to continuing-education adults and even parents. For the workforce, the nostalgia of back-to-school shopping drives them to buy new office supplies, which can include desk or wall calendars, notebooks, daily or weekly planners, and writing instruments.

"There's something about writing pen to paper that just feels so good," said Sacha Hilpich, sales manager for Gartner Studios. "Nothing compares to the feel of opening up a new notebook and the possibilities it holds. I just blazed my way through four notebooks from Rifle Paper Co."

The Kit and Kaboodle

According to NPD, 65 percent of U.S. consumers who had the option to buy a pre-packaged school supply kit from their child's school or PTA did so at least once—meaning they love convenience. Capitalize on this mindset and package together your favorite school supplies or care-package items.

Curious how other retailers are merchandising for back to school? Check out this month's Retailers Respond. •



Encourage parents to stock up on school-related or inspirational cards to use for lunchbox notes or college care packages throughout the year. ilootpaperie. patternbyetsy.com

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