



# mightier than the sword

Times have changed, and there is a whole new world of writing implements out there. **Vivien Wilson** looks at what's available now if you want to upgrade.



**y**ou may not have given it much thought, but if you are still taking notes, writing lists and playing noughts and crosses with a plain old ballpoint pen, you're living in the Stone Age.

These days there is a pen to meet every conceivable office need, whether that is functionality, style or just plain entertainment.

Let's take a look through the innovative writing options now out there so you can get yourself fixed up with something that will show your colleagues and your boss

that you are a suave, organised force to be reckoned with, rather than an old-fashioned, penny pinching office clerk.

At the simpler end of the scale, you can upgrade to a pencil that never needs sharpening. Leads can either be replenished by pushing the eraser into the pencil, or some models have an automatic advancing mechanism. Result: no more messy pencil sharpenings littering the floor under your desk.

If you're one of those people that has always found writing a struggle, try a triangular shaped pen or pencil. These offer a comfortable, effortless grip as they cannot

turn or slip while in use. This means the hand muscles can also remain relaxed, even if you do a lot of writing or drawing.

If you like to keep your notes organised and easy to read, you'd probably find a combined ballpoint pen and highlighter a huge bonus. All you have to do is twist the nib to change the tip, so it's convenient for those who are constantly on the go.

Traditionalists who prefer the classic features of a fountain pen no longer have to struggle with unscrewing the barrel to load new cartridges. There are now updated pens with side loading cartridges designed to be

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→ The market for environmentally friendly pens has exploded by 297% in the last year

quicker, easier and less messy. Or if you are not a fan of fountain pens but you want to create the impression of writing with one, you can even get refillable pens with the same innovative side opening system but with a roller nib.

You may want to jump on the ever-growing bandwagon and join the army of tree huggers demanding recycled products. The market for environmentally friendly pens has exploded by 297% in the last year. And why not, seeing as you can now get almost any pen you want in 100% recycled plastic (obviously you can't recycle the ink so that's as close as you're going to get to completely green). Perceptions about poorer quality of recycled products have been proved wrong in comparison tests held recently by manufacturers, and many green products are now retailing at the same price as regular ones.

Alex Sinclair, marketing manager for Pilot Pens, says: "There has definitely been an increase in demand for this type of product, particularly from the corporate end of the market, because every company is now looking into how they can save energy, save money and be greener and more ethically sound in their purchasing decisions."

If you really want to impress your clients, opt for a super sleek titanium or aluminium magnetic pen. They're not cheap, but they look really futuristic, and as there is no need for conventional loose parts and springs they are much less prone to breakage and should last you a lifetime.

If space is an issue, (perhaps you have small pockets) you could switch to a dual-size pen, which is a compact size for storage but extends to full size for use. Or if you are the kind of person who is constantly losing things you could try a pen suspended from a very fetching silver chain around your neck.

For something really different, you could try a Space Pen. Costing over £1m to develop, the pen can write in any position, as well as on wet paper or in outer space (incredibly useful on a day-to-day basis). Its secret lies in the unique design characteristics of the ink and the high precision manufacturing tolerances of the ballpoint and socket. The ink is fed to the ballpoint by gas pressure, and the closed design keeps it from drying out.

Or if you spend all day gritting your teeth and plotting the demise of your boss you could

find it more productive (and less illegal) to take out your frustrations with your pen. You can buy a miniature silicon person designed to be stabbed with your writing implements during those stressful moments while envisaging whatever you please. Just don't stick a name label on it.

For the child in you (or if your building regularly suffers from power cuts), perhaps an illuminated pen will do the trick, enabling you to write legibly in total darkness. Capable of glowing in seven different colours you can either select your favourite colour or set it to scroll through the spectrum. It will also mean you're unlikely to ever lose your pen.

And for all you gadget lovers out there, a levitating pen should keep you happy. Held vertically on a small base, seemingly by magic, it actually uses the power of a magnetic field to stay upright, making it nice and easy to grab quickly for those urgent memos.

So ditch your bog standard ballpoint and go in search of something that really reflects your workplace needs, personality or image. After all, small details can make a big difference! ●