

# Writing at school: Yesterday and today

## Pencils & co.

Nowadays, needs-based writing tools such as pencils, fountain pens etc. have a fixed place in the pencil cases of millions of pupils. Joined in 1955: the Noris pencil with its iconic yellow-and-black stripes. In 2021, the Noris brand is celebrating its 120<sup>th</sup> birthday.



(Picture 1)

### With pencil and paper

Hemp paper was being produced in China as early as 180 to 50 BC. From China, paper production spread to Japan and Korea from the 7<sup>th</sup> century. By the way, the pencil is the most widespread pencil for daily school work among Chinese primary school pupils.

### Access to education

According to UNESCO's 2020 World Education Report, more than 250 million children and young people around the world do not have access to education. In order to improve their educational opportunities, UNESCO and non-governmental organisations are using targeted projects. As part of the World Kids Colouring Day, STAEDTLER has already been able to support projects of Plan International Germany in Rwanda and Malawi with over 60,000 euros.

### Red as a warning colour

Today, the red pen is associated with teachers' corrections. In ancient Rome, this striking colour was used for complaints, election advertising or announcements.

### Pencil trends

Students in South Africa usually write with pencil until the 4<sup>th</sup> grade. In Japan, it is used for an even longer time at school: Students there only switch to ink writing instruments at the age of around 18. There are also different writing habits around the world when it comes to the hardness levels of pencils. For example, hardness grade HB is preferred in most parts of Europe. In contrast, the softer 2B pencils are predominantly used in schools in Asia.

(Picture 1)  
For creative time:  
A sheet metal case from STAEDTLER from 1965 with writing and drawing pencils. Many Noris brand products bear the silhouette of their home city, Nuremberg, on the packaging.

(Picture 2)  
Writing variety in everyday school life: Product packaging from STAEDTLER from the 1970s.



(Picture 2)

### History as a school brand

Since the Noris brand was registered in 1901, its offering has continued to evolve. It established itself early on as a school brand and is still aimed at children of all ages. Special pens such as the Noris junior range or the Noris digital jumbo testify to the innovative power of the brand. They are the modern advancement of the Noris 120 pencil classic and have been specially developed for the smallest children's hands.

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## Writing instruments through the ages

It was a long way from the quill to the digital stylus, and many developments took place in parallel. Highlights on the most important school writing utensils.

### Quill

The quill stood up to other writing instruments for several centuries and also found its way into schools. The goose quill was the most common.

### Slate boards and slate pencil

The slate board and slate pencil were very popular in schools for a long time. In Germany, they returned to schools during and after the two world wars. The raw materials were cheap and the boards were easy to clean and reuse. The picture on the right shows a metal case with six coloured pencils for a slate board from 1958.



### Pencil

Lead, silver and copper pencils are regarded as predecessors of the classic wood-cased pencil. The "lead", which actually means graphite, is set into a wooden cladding and has become a popular writing instrument worldwide. The association of pencils with yellow-and-black strips can be traced back to the Noris 120. It got its internationally renowned look in 1955.

### Fountain pen

The fountain pen is a further development of the steel quill. Since the ink is inside the pen, an external ink container is no longer needed to be a constant companion when writing.



### Ballpoint pen

A pen that is not lubricated and does not dry out: We owe the principle of ballpoint pen to Hungary's László József Bíró. In many parts of the world, pens are still called "Bíró".



Popular worldwide: Noris pencils in the iconic striped look, in yellow and black since 1955.

### Digital pens

Tablets and the like are now part of school lessons – and are becoming ever more common. Manufacturers develop special pens for handwritten expression. An example: Noris digital. It is similar to its analogue pencil counterpart, but writes on digital devices.

This competition from 1957 can be found in the STAEDTLER company archive. The prizes available to win included a typewriter.