

KATE SPADE DOESN'T DO E-MAIL—that's how committed she is to the (hand)written word. "Intimacy of contact is important to me," she says, although lengthy epistles aren't her style: "A spontaneous little FYI is fine." In the early days of Kate's design empire (founded with her husband, Andy, in 1993), when handbags first put them on the fashion map, she "made sure *everything* we sent out was handwritten, even invoices, because the handwritten envelope is the one you open."

Sounds like a good way to do business, but for Kate, paper is also a family affair: "My mother was always scribbling quick notes, and every year, my sisters and I got personalized stationery for Christmas." Paper was the second category her company went into, right after purses—so this year's launch is actually a relaunch (the original collection was done in-house; the new one is designed by Kate and her team and produced by Crane's). The line has Kate's trademark cocktail of tradition and hipness, with plenty of clear, bright color and dry wit: "It's low-key, not slapsticky ha-ha. It's Andy's sense of humor, really, and my Dad's," she says.

Kate isn't a total Luddite. She uses a cell phone and finally got an answering machine after her daughter, Frances Beatrix, was born last February. But she still prefers the less disposable technology of pen on paper: "I save all of Andy's cards, even notes on napkins."

Which reminds us that an excellent reason for writing a letter is the giddy pleasure of getting one back. ▶



Write, She Said

You probably think you're too busy to go beyond instant messaging. Kate Spade hopes people will use her new collection of cards to scribble briefly, frequently, spontaneously. **KATHERINE B. WEISSMAN** takes note.

Sincerely hers:
A shiny red
desk is where
Kate Spade—
who adores
color—regularly
gets inspired.

Full-Disclosure Desktop

Beautiful writing instruments add character to your workspace, so it makes sense to let them stay in an open tray (instead of burying them in a drawer like hotel ballpoints). Personal mementos in plain sight also give you something to stare at when you're stuck for the right word. (Kate, who likes intriguing "found" objects, keeps her correspondence organized

with a vintage toast rack; paper clips dwell in an old silver-topped glass jar.) 1. Josef Hoffmann silver pen tray, \$110, Neue Galerie. 2. Amber-scented orange ink, \$14, Kate's Paperie. 3. Orange resin fountain pen, \$325, World Lux. 4. Red rollerball, \$69, Caran d'Ache. 5. Yellow fountain pen, \$25, Lamy. 6. Coral fountain pen with silver top, \$300, Faber-Castell. 7. Marbleized orange

rollerball, \$275, Delta Design Team. 8. Why settle for flags? Upgrade an envelope with a literary or celebrity stamp, like this Katherine Anne Porter series, USPS; usps.com. 9. Droll personalized correspondence cards make anything you write instantly quotable; \$298 for 50, Kate Spade. 10. Diamond-pattern paperweight, \$225, Cursive at ABC Carpet & Home. >



Kate's Rules for Civilized Correspondence

- **DON'T STRESS ABOUT PERFECTION.** "There is something direct and real about a crossed-out or added word. It says you are confident and genuine," says Kate.
- **DASH AWAY.** Lousy penmanship shouldn't stop you—all it really has to be is legible. "Handwriting is emotionally revealing," she says. "E-mail is emotionally flat."
- **GIVE THANKS.** Your card should go out within three days—but send one even if it's

- late (and focus on your gratitude, not guilt).
- **WRITE SOMETHING ON HOLIDAY CARDS.** "If you just sign your name to a printed message, so what?"
- **INVEST IN BASICS.** The stationery equivalent of the little black dress is a plain card, single sheet, or fold-over, with your name or monogram in a color you love (for Kate, that's pink).
- **KEEP A CARD FILE.** Quirky notes with

- piquant one-liners or distinctive visuals are nice to have on hand for casual messages. Kate might use a floral to thank a neighbor for a favor, or a "How the devil are you?" card to contact a long-lost friend.
- **CARRY CALLING CARDS.** These list simply a name and phone or e-mail. "They save me from writing my number down all the time, and they're less formal than business cards."



Natural Surroundings

Organic-looking tools and philosophical cards are a breath of fresh air for the desk-bound. The same unaffected attitude should also shape your letters: "Do not be tempted by a 20-dollar word when there is a ten-center handy, ready, and able," says the classic writing manual *The Elements of Style*. 1. "The grass is always greener" correspondence, \$20 for ten, Kate Spade. 2. Pernambuco wood ballpoint, \$225, Faber-Castell. 3. Silver "branch" ballpoint, \$314, Austin Creations. 4. Porcelain and pewter horse-chestnut paperweight, \$336, Cursive at ABC Carpet & Home. 5. Pewter ivy leaf, \$65, Tamara Hensick Designs.

"It's uplifting to get a letter—like an 'ooh!' in your mailbox," says Kate.

It's a Keeper

For storage, chic, fresh-colored containers are a step up from shoeboxes (also great for not-yet-used stationery). 1. Library letter box, \$12, the Container Store. 2. Leather stationery box with envelope-style closure, \$355, Smythson of Bond Street. 3. Sleek silver-plate letter opener, \$25, Aero. 4. Small square cards with frame border, \$373 for 50, Kate Spade. 5. Floral-engraved

correspondence cards with gold-stripe-lined envelopes, \$323 for 50, Kate Spade. 6. Monogrammed correspondence cards with black-and-white-stripe-lined envelopes, \$352 for 50, Kate Spade. 7. Bamboo fine-point pen, \$2, Paradise Clothing. 8. Decoupage "good luck" paperweight, \$30, John Derian. 9. Zebra-monogrammed correspondence cards, \$352 for 50, Kate Spade. ▶



High-End Pens—What's the Point?

Top-notch fountain pens take the pressure out of writing, literally—the ink just flows across the page. Your penmanship also becomes more expressive, says Jim Mamoulides, editor of the collectors' magazine *The Pennant*. Then there's the allure of elaborate handpainted or engraved

cases. And although nib quality doesn't count for ballpoints and rollerballs (which use inexpensive, uniform ink refills), it's crucial for fountain pens. The best nibs are smooth, not scratchy. Surprisingly, while gold looks awfully good, it isn't any more effective than stainless steel. But

the ballpoint still rules for writing on planes (atmospheric pressure can make fountain pens leak at high altitudes), filling out forms with multiple copies, and lending: "People are *not* going to borrow my fountain pen," says collector Dave Marcus. —Research by Polly Brewster

Think Ink

Kate isn't fussy about what she writes with ("No quill pens!"): she likes the fine-point Uni-ball: "I used to love ballpoints, but now they don't move fast enough for me." Despite her pithy card—"Watch less; write more"—she isn't anti-TV; she has her shows, "but nothing current... I'm still catching up on *Law & Order* and *Seinfeld*." 1. Scrolled silver mini-ballpoint on chain, \$100, Fisher Space Pen Company. 2. Faceted silver-plated rollerball with crosshatch texture, \$110, Caran d'Ache. 3. Ridged sterling fountain pen with gold trim, \$750, Montblanc. 4. Enzo Mari stainless steel letter opener, \$35, the Shop at Cooper-Hewitt. 5. Mechanical pencil with chrome-plated metal cap and trim, \$45, Faber-Castell. 6. Silver-trim black and pink rollerball, \$40, Monteverde Design Studio. 7. Fine-point rollerball, \$2, Uni-ball. 8. & 9. Pencil with cap, \$40 (set includes two extra pencils), Faber-Castell. 10. Maple wood twist pen with ballpoint and pencil functions, \$45, Faber-Castell. 11. Brown and purple banded rollerball, \$40, Monteverde Design Studio. 12. Enzo Mari aluminum and maple wood mini-rollerball, \$15, the Shop at Cooper-Hewitt. 13. TV-motif notecards, \$20 for ten, Kate Spade. 14. Green notecards with white border, \$20 for ten, Kate Spade. For stationery see katespade.com. For all other product details, see Shop Guide.