

Ballpoint pens

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Ballpoint pens are probably the most common and wide-spread pens in the world. They are modern, they are safe, they are cheap, they are convenient, they are reliable. As a result, ballpoint pens have replaced all other types of pens, including the fountain pen, in everyday use.

The construction of a ballpoint pen is very simple: it has a chamber inside that is filled with a viscid ink. The use of the small metal ball (that's where the title comes from), usually 0.7 mm to 1.2 mm in diameter, makes the ink dispensed at the tip. When the ink is on paper it dries almost immediately. All in all there are two main kinds of ballpoint pens: disposable (chiefly made of plastic throughout and discarded when the ink is consumed) and refillable (made of metal or plastic, tend to be higher in quality and price, the reservoir can be either replaced or refilled with ink). Ballpoint pens can have a cap that covers the tip when it is not used, or a special mechanism for retracting the tip (most often you just need to press the button and start writing).

The ink flow in ballpoint pens increases with pressure. Naturally, it requires greater tension in the hand during writing. But people who got used to ballpoint pens don't find it inconvenient. The strongest ink flow is when the pen is hold perpendicular to the paper. And on the contrary, at some angle the line width is reduced to zero and the pen stops writing. More than that, if the ballpoint pen is not hold sufficiently vertically it will scratch the paper.

There are other types of pens that can write at greater angles, for example, the fountain pen or the so called space pen. But notwithstanding all disadvantages, the affordable and reliable ballpoint pen is still ubiquitous.

The leading manufacturers are: BIC, Montblanc, Parker and Cross.