

Keychain Pens: In Search of Excellence

**A consumer product review
of keychain writing instruments**

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1. Introduction

I was in search of a keychain pen and discovered these come in a vast variety of styles. After performing a significant amount of research, I thought I would go the extra mile by documenting this and sharing it with each manufacturer. I know how important customer feedback can be -- particularly the unsolicited type. Some manufacturers could not be easily determined so some of these are being shared with one of its known distributors or retailers.







In this study, I am providing the list of styles I found along with personal commentaries. Although I did purchase several, I'm including as well comments about those I did not purchase.

In the appendix, I'm including stock images of the non-key accessories I carry on my primary set of keys. These choices will provide additional insight into me as a consumer.







By submitting this product review to various business entities, am I trying to influence buying decisions? Even if I were, the opinion of a single consumer would likely have little impact as these are complex affairs. However, I am hopeful my comments will make interesting conversation pieces among the manufacturers as they ponder designs for the next generation of keyring accessories.

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2. **Picture Tour, Rankings, and Summary Comments**
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 - 2.7. Other keychain pen variations
 - 2.8. Novelty, Promotional, and Specialty Series
 - 2.9. Honorable Mention

Ranking	Product Name	Product Image	Comments
<p>1st Place - A</p> 	<p>PicoPen</p> <p>TEC Accessories, Inc.</p> 		<p>The PicoPen has a wonderfully sleek design. It has the smallest footprint (size and volume) among those studied (except for the Swiss Army Victorinox). The inventive magnetic coupling concept makes this a "one hand" operation for detachment. Made of stainless steel, it is rugged enough to take a lot of punishment.</p>
<p>1st Place - B</p> 	<p>Victorinox Model #53972</p> <p>Swiss Army Knife</p> 		<p>The makers of the Swiss Army Knife, and its seemingly infinite varieties, well deserve this placement. The primary criterion of this study, a pen, is included among its vast array of implements of certain models. The innovative ejector design renders the pen with a virtual zero footprint. The targeted model, with an LED light and cornucopia of blades, is deservedly among the best in class.</p>

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Ranking	Product Name	Product Image	Comments
<p style="text-align: center;">2nd Place</p> 	<p style="text-align: center;">Inka Pen</p>		<p>The Inka Pen (stainless steel version) has a simple utilitarian design. It is easily detached and reattached. The new age ink, which is pressurized, ensures delivery of its primary function at any angle (even under water) -- which can often compromise many other types of pens based on gravity-delivered ink. The stainless steel version is a good alternative to the "Space Pen" which apparently does not normally come in a keychain version (see Trekker Space Pen later).</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">3rd Place</p> 	<p style="text-align: center;">Pinko</p>		<p>The ultra-cheap Pinko pen deserves this high ranking because its benefit-to-cost ratio is virtually unmatched. Fully functional and made of durable hard plastic, it does the job. This company manufactures a variety of keychain pens (see exhibits). I actually carry this cheapo version deliberately as a give-away. At only \$0.20 each, these give-aways serve to evangelize the uninitiated into seeking out their own (presumably better) version of a keychain pen.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">DNF</p> 	<p style="text-align: center;">ION</p>		<p>"DNF" is a term used in horse racing; it means "did not finish." The ION has a flashy design, nifty pull-apart action, and window for ink level. But its ill-designed attachment clasp eventually caused the unit to detach somewhere during the test and was lost. This makes it a qualitative failure; too bad, so sad.</p>






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Group	Product Name	Product Image	Comments
Carabiner	Carabiner Pen		Shown with retractor and stand-alone.
Carabiner	Camouflage		Curious concept. I came across an eBay seller who was selling a large quantity of these customized with a drug promotion.
Carabiner	Carabiner Pen		Its size suggests that this is a clip-on type, e.g., belt loop.
Carabiner	Carabiner Pen		Plastic carabiner would be too weak for a keychain.
Carabiner	foldout carabiner pen		Bulky.
Carabiner	Carabiner Pen		Example of a clip-on style.





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Group	Company Name	Product Image	Comments
Keychain Pen	Arico Pen Industrial Ltd		One of several from www.globalsources.com
Keychain Pen	Tonglu Yaming Pen Co.,Ltd /www.globalsources.com		(same as above)
Keychain Pen	Xonex		Good size, simple design.
Keychain Pen	Fisher		Similar to the "Space Pen" but marketed differently.
Keychain Pen	S&S Worldwide		I haven't seen these types of "chains" since the last time I saw a Rabbit's Foot. Exactly what should the chain be connected to? Certainly not a keychain as this would easily break.



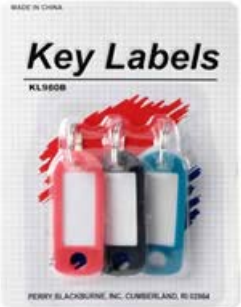

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Group	Company Name	Product Image	Comments
Keychain Pen	S-Z Wholesale		May have been interested with the item on the right but these were available only in large quantities.
Keychain Pen	Sport Shorty		Designed for promotional purposes.
Keychain Pen	Pentel		For kids?
Keychain Pen	Pentel		Looks similar to the Pinko unit.
Novelty	Yafa		<p>Interesting concept. Its flat design makes for a small footprint.</p> <p>Italian, refillable ball pen with keychain. Turns 180 degrees to reveal pen. Pen clicks into place. Product Dimensions: 3-1/2" x 3/4", \$1.30, www.yafa.com</p>

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Group	Company Name	Product Image	Comments
Novelty	4physics.com		Very cute concept but obviously a temporary promotional gimmick.
Specialty	Keychain Pen		Nice design but has a single loop. The problem with single loops like this is that the pen can swivel in only one direction. This could put stress in the wrong way inside of a pocket.
Specialty	Hand-turned wood		By Eclipse Creations. Handmade products certainly reflect craftsmanship. This one, made of wood, may be of interest to those who work with wood.
Honorable Mention	Wallet Pen		By walletgear.com Another interesting concept. I've never seen a wallet look this good except out of the box new. The bending and contorting for which a wallet is subject may compromise this unit.

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Group	Company Name	Product Image	Comments
Honorable Mention	Xonex		<p>Wallet Pen. Curious that they didn't show this pen "inside" an actual wallet.</p>
Honorable Mention	PicoNote		<p>This is designed to be the size of a business card and fits in wallet. The pen is so small that they had to add flaps so that it could be held reasonably well. It is smaller than most pen refills. The handy sticky notes are a brow raiser, however. (Now that I carry a "real" keyring pen, I can just put a few of these kinds of notes in my wallet.)</p>
Honorable Mention	Various Key Labels		<p>This is just one of many types of key ID tags. Don't pass these up. They're the cheapest insurance available for lost keys.</p>
Honorable Mention	Sharpie		<p>Made by the Sanford Company, this puppy is ubiquitous - being available on countertops everywhere. However, this is a marker; not a pen. I would think that, since the inexpensive foundation has already been engineered, replacing its innards with a real pen should be easy (and potentially profitable).</p>

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3. Objectives

- 3.1. Pen must be able to write with ink
- 3.2. Pen must attach to a keychain
- 3.3. Prefer a small size
- 3.4. Comfortable when in a pocket
- 3.5. Convenient to detach and reattach
- 3.6. Durable

4. Requirements

4.1. Cost

There's a standard rule concerning tools: "If you use a tool only once in a while, most anything will do. If you use it every day, then get the best."

In this regard, a pen accessory is a tool. And while it may not qualify as being something used every day, the fact that "keys" are used many times a day indirectly implicates the need for high quality for any device that is attached to those keys.

On the low end, the Pinko pens were by far the cheapest -- costing roughly \$0.20 per unit. On the high end was the titanium version of the Inka Pen running a whopping \$90 per unit. Even if I were in Special Ops, I doubt that this version would add any significant utilitarian use. At that price level, it would have to deliver added functionality, like maybe a flash drive. I can see spending \$450 for a SureFire 10x Dominator flashlight, but dropping a C-note for a keychain pen is absurd.

(Speaking of flash drives, the Swiss Army folks have already thought of that. Their model #59591 has a blade, nail file/screwdriver, scissors, retractable ballpoint pen, laser pointer, and a 1 GB flash drive for a \$105. Now that's delivering functionality. With the Titanium Inka and V#59591, side by side at that price level, there's no comparison.)

4.2. Size

Size matters. A set of keys can become bulky very quickly. It's become such a problem that people often own different sets of keys. So when it comes to one's "primary" set of keys, these often represent a scaled-down version that is deliberately abbreviated for sanity purposes. Generally, I preferred a model being no longer than 3" and no wider than 3/8" in width (or diameter).

The nearly invisible pen, inside of a Swiss Army Knife, helped earn it a top ranking -- along side the PicoPen as well. Let this be a lesson to the manufacturers who think that bigger is better.

4.3. Compatibility

In this regard, compatibility primarily refers to how a given unit "blends" with all other items on the keychain. A keychain pen should not be the dominant item in terms of size or weight. Its presence on the keychain should not impede with the functionality of any other item when it is being used.

4.4. Utility

A pen must be able to write. I know this may sound like an excerpt from some stupid government handbook, but this is the primary focus.

Most of the pens studied had a standard gravity ink dispenser, of a ballpoint or roller ball design. One of the other types involved the "Space Pen" concept which uses a specially designed ink that is basically solid but is "scraped" by a rolling ballpoint that, by this action, turns into a liquid. Another type has an ink dispenser that is pressurized. The former or gravity types can fall prey to air gaps -- depending upon its orientation (point up or down). The later "Space Pen" or pressurized types are vastly superior in this regard.

At some point, being small can actually deter from a person's ability to actually write with it. Case in point, the makers of the PicoPad includes a pen designed for the wallet. It has miniature Sticky Notes together with an extremely thin pen. It is so thin that it comes equipped with "flaps" so that it is easier to hold (see exhibits).

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4.5. Attachment

A given keychain is subject to a variety of harsh treatments. Therefore, the manner in which a writing instrument is attached to the keychain has important implications for its utility and durability.

Nearly all the pen accessories studied must attach to a standard keychain -- which is usually a steel ring. However, they varied in terms of whether the attachment was direct or indirect, as well as the manner in which the pen was detachable (or not).

In this context, "direct" refers to a device that has a single loop that attaches (or clips) to the existing keychain ring. In these cases, like the Camouflage model, there is a disadvantage in that the "loop" can break under sufficient stress.

The term "indirect" refers to the use of a second auxiliary ring. This allows a given accessory to have nearly omnidirectional pivot flexibility. Because keys are subject to constant stress and compression, this kind of flexibility is vital. For those units that have a single loop attachment, the use of an auxiliary ring would resolve its apparent weakness in this regard.

4.6. Detachment

In order for a pen accessory to be useful, it should be detachable. This is distinguished from "extendable" types that are attached to a clip that can extend by way of a retractable cord. While being a useful concept, this is outside the parameters of this study. The reason for this is that while some people may wear their key chains "outside" of their pockets, most do not.

The detachment varieties consisted of (1) carabiner type in which the entire unit can be uncoupled from a keychain, (2) clasp that allows a pen to be snapped in/out of a separately attached clasp, (3) twist, in which the pen is detached from its clasp by a twisting action, and (4) magnetic, in which the pen is held in its clasp with a magnet. Some required two hands to achieve detachment; others only one hand.

4.7. Durability

Anything on a keychain must be able to last a long time. Moreover, keys are subject to a variety of stress.

One of the keychain accessories I've owned for years now is the "Original Pill Fob™." It's made of stainless steel. This has been through everything I can possibly think of -- yet it still looks new. Because the PicoPen is also made with stainless steel, I expect equivalent performance.

The use of plastic is somewhat suspect. Have you ever seen plastic keys? Certainly a key must be very strong because of what it must accomplish. However, it makes sense that if a chain is as strong as its weakest link ... I think you get the picture. Everything on a keychain must be roughly equivalent in durability.

4.8. Maintenance

Maintenance primarily involves refills. Because keychain pens are so small, it is unlikely that standard pen refills would fit. Most of those studied offered specially sized refills. Refills were not apparent for some of the novelty or promotional designs.

4.9. Availability

Best availability refers to those offered in mass market venues. Only the ION was so available (office supply). The others tested were purchased from various Internet sources.

4.10. Customization

Only one of those tested had customization options. I've listed this as a criterion because it is, in fact, available for the mostly promotional series of keychain pens. This option, however, is only cost effective in large quantities.

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5. Limitations and Exclusions

- 5.1. A “stand-alone” pen was preferred.
- 5.2. Auxiliary functions or features were optional.
- 5.3. Extendable types (spring-back cord) were excluded.
- 5.4. Disposables (i.e., ink refills not available) were excluded.
- 5.5. Fancy designs that cannot take harsh treatment were excluded.
- 5.6. Clip-on’s designed to be worn “outside” (e.g., belt loop) were excluded.

6. Selections

Using the aforementioned criteria, I researched the Internet for anything related to keychain pens. Certain retail stores, such as office supply and specialty stores, were also visited. The top five that appeared to meet the criteria were purchased and tested.

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7. Trial by Fire

7.1 Overview

Each of the choices was installed and taken through a variety of tests. The writing portion of the test was quick and easy. All of those tested performed well. The “real” test was for comfort and durability. I purposely handled my keychain with insulting brutality. This is the nature of the beast. Keys are subject to a lot of stress. This includes pulling, crunching, stretching, twisting, dropping, compressing, and even getting wet.

Perhaps the toughest test involved handling a keychain while being placed “in and out” of a pocket – especially a pair of tight-fitting Levi’s.

7.2 Extrusion Test, Random Pull

The apparent acid test was, what I’m calling, the extrusion test. This involved pulling a set of keys out of a pocket – by grabbing a “single” randomly selected attachment. This would test its ability to NOT get caught or otherwise be compromised in the process. Because the PicoPen was so slender and smooth, it rarely caught onto anything while being pulled out. The only unit that seemed to have trouble in this regard was the ION. This was likely due to its excessive size and weight, together with its weak attachment concept. The other three units tested, Victorinox, Inka, and Pinko, fared quite well.

As it turned out, during the week of testing of the ION, it apparently came loose while being handled – either while being put into, or taken out of, my pocket. I didn’t notice it until I was about to hang up my keys for the day. Actually, I had to re-attach the unit several times prior to this so, in a way, it doesn’t come as a surprise. The choice of a plastic clasp was obviously fatal. Its strength does not match the bulky size and weight of the unit nor the real life stress that keys undergo.

7.3 Extrusion Test, Pen First

The “pen first” variation of the extrusion test was particularly harsh for my top pick PicoPen. This was understandable since the magnetic clasp was not designed to be handled in that manner. By the same token, my bottom pick, the ION, also failed this test. The other three units tested, Victorinox, Inka, and Pinko, fared quite well.

If you think about it, pulling out a set of keys by grabbing a single item is not necessarily typical per se. Usually one will grab multiple items. Because of this, I am discounting the relative significance. However, I still cannot excuse the ION. The reason is that, because of its size, it categorically qualifies as the “dominant” item on the keychain. If the dominant item cannot pass the single item extrusion test, then that is a qualitative failure.

7.4 Drop Test

To test a given pen’s attachment strength, keys were dropped onto concrete from a height of five feet, for ten consecutive times. While most fared well, again, the ION suffered somewhat by getting its chrome finish scratched.

7.5 Safety

Since a keychain is carried in a pocket, it is important that no keychain accessory pose a risk in that location. Case in point, if you put a standard pen in your pocket, you could stab yourself when bending down or sitting. This is why the normal sized pens with a carabiner clip were excluded. None of the units tested posed such a risk.

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7.6 The Results

Below is a Consumer Reports-like table that reflects this author's perception of performance of the keychain pens tested.

UNIT	Cost	Size	Compa-tibility	Conven-ience	Util-ity	Attach-/Detach	Dura-bility	Maint.	Avail-ability	Custom-ization
PicoPen	\$19.95	⑤	⑤	⑤	④	⑤	⑤	④	③	n/a
Victorinox	\$50.00	⑤	⑤	⑤	④	③	④	④	⑤	n/a
Inka	\$25.00	④	④	④	⑤	④	⑤	④	③	⑤
Pinko	\$0.20	③	③	③	④	②	④	②	②	n/a
ION	\$22.25	②	②	②	④	②	②	④	④	n/a

Legend:

⑤ - Innovative

④ - Excellent

③ - Acceptable

② - Poor

② - Dismal

Availability

⑤ - mass market venue

④ - major retailer/website, e.g., Amazon

③ - company website only

② - wholesaler, quantity purchase, or eBay

② - Dismal

7.7 Selected comments on ratings

PicoPen

The only low rating was for availability because it could be purchased only via the company's website.

Victorinox

The Victorinox's pen is imbedded within the unit. Therefore, it is not detachable by itself. The entire unit, however, could be easily detached – depending upon the type of auxiliary keyrings used. While the price is high, one must take into consideration the other functionality of this unit. In this light, it is well worth the price and I still chose to carry this as well.

Inka

The Inka was the only one that offered customized printing. The titanium version costs \$90 and is the material that the storage tube is made of. The pen portion itself is the same in both models. Its size is nearly ideal for this application.

Pinko

The Pinko did not rate very high but I still chose to carry it as a give-away. You'd be surprised at how thankful recipients can be for such an inexpensive item. I bought a pack of 5 of these (\$1.00 plus shipping) on eBay and I may have to make another order soon.

ION

Admittedly, I criticized this pen rather harshly. It's unfortunate because its futuristic design is primarily why I chose to buy it. But, in this regard, I would ask you to consider the way I would buy a guitar, for example. For this, I don't care what its name is, what it looks like, or even cost. I care only about its sound quality and the feel of the fret. Design, therefore, is for the eyes and unless it is integral to the primary utility, then the added cost for a unique design is questionable.

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8.0. Extended Commentaries

In the following commentaries, I extend the brief descriptions for additional personal experiences with those tested. This includes my rationale for their relative rankings. For the items not tested, I am providing comments about why they were excluded from my study.

8.1. PicoPen

The PicoPen was a fantastic find. I found its magnetic coupling uniquely appealing. It comes packaged with an optional stylus and three types of rings. One of the rings has a wire gate which I initially used. Somehow, the pen worked itself out of this ring. But I didn't lose the pen – I found it magnetically attached to one of the keys!

It has great sex appeal, to guys, that is. Every guy I've shown this to had that sparkle in his eyes like a kid opening Christmas gifts. Not be sexist, women see utility much differently than guys. Women have the advantage of carrying purses which can ~~easily~~ usually carry standard-sized pens, among many other things.

8.2. Victorinox

Invented June 12, 1897 by Carl Elsener, the Swiss Army knives are likely the earliest innovations of multi-function keychain technologies. They may own the largest market share for pocket knives in the world.

There were two reasons for not giving the SAK a "stand-alone" first place. First, carrying it makes for an inconvenience in the light of airport security. When restrictions were ramped up in this venue, literally tons of knives and pricey Leatherman tools, among other things like lipstick, were confiscated. In order to avoid losing it, one would have to check it along with one's baggage. This would invalidate the primary convenience -- albeit a temporary and therefore tolerable one. Secondly, this particular model contains electronics. This may be a concern in situations involving water. Also, I found the red LED was a bit wimpy which is why I chose to carry a separate, more powerful LED unit.

8.3. Inka Pen

The Inka Pen (stainless steel version) has a simple utilitarian design. It is easily detached and reattached from its tube-like storage compartment. The pen is held within it by a rubber O-ring. As for its ultra-pricey titanium version, well, would be difficult to justify at \$90.

The Inka has several parts. It can be configured into a full-size pen by screwing together the needed parts. In addition to the pen, one of the parts doubles as a stylus which is useful with PDAs, for example. However, when configured for a full-size pen, one of the parts is loose. This could present a problem of getting lost.

8.4. Pinko Pen

The ultra-cheap Pinko pen deserves this high ranking because its benefit-to-cost ratio is virtually unmatched. Fully functional and made of durable hard plastic, it does the job. This company manufactures a variety of keychain pens (see exhibits). I actually carry this cheapo version deliberately as a give-away. At only \$0.20 each, these give-aways serve to evangelize the uninitiated into seeking out their own (presumably better) version of a keychain pen.

As an afterthought, the Pinko (Chinese) and Pentel (American) pens look suspiciously alike. If nearly identical, my question would be which is the original and which is the knock-off?

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8.5. ION Pen

The A. T. Cross Company, founded by Richard Cross in 1846, is a major international manufacturer of fine writing instruments, timepieces, and personal accessories. The futuristic design of the ION is striking and its feel, as a writing instrument, is regal.

However, its major flaws include excessive size and weight. These go well over what would be considered necessary. Like a mink coat that is lined with chinchilla, that overage (and cost) is not compensated by any significant increase in primary or other functionality. Perhaps its most fatal flaw is the attachment clasp. It uses a hard plastic clasp which clings to a thin, circular ridge around the writing tip of the pen. Although the pen snaps into the clasp, its hold is relatively weak. The one I owned frequently came off -- either while in my pocket or while being handled along with the rest of my keys. The pen portion had to be re-attached many times because of this. In one instance it came off and I didn't realize it. Hence, it was lost. Sadly, this was a \$24 mistake.

8.6. Carabiner Series

The carabiner pen comes in a great variety of styles. The loop design is primarily for mountain climbing equipment. Once this crossed over to being a general purpose hook/tool, the permutations of use went through the roof. Although these are sharp-looking units, personally I'm not that moved by them -- insofar as a pen is concerned. Most have too large a footprint. The Camouflage unit use a "single" loop attachment which, when not coupled with a second auxiliary ring, will tend to break from constant stress. The one named "carabiner keychain pen" hangs down too far. The exposed point can be a hazard in one's pocket. By and large, those with a regular-sized pen are for wearing "outside" such as a belt loop.

8.7. Other keychain pen variations

These and similar styles, are characterized by being attached to a large ring. The attachment is via a large hole that is only slightly larger than the width of the ring. This allows only limited movement perpendicular to the ring. Because of this, one would have to install a second auxiliary ring so as to allow near omni-directional flexibility. Unlike the pressurized or "Space Pen" types, these are simply scaled-down versions of standard pens that use a gravity delivery ink dispenser. Though obviously functional, I found these to be rather boring compared to more innovatively designed models. The only advantage of these variations is that some can actually use off-the-shelf refills.

8.8. Novelty, Promotional, and Specialty Pens

Several of these were quite innovative in their design. However, because refills were not apparent with some, these are designed to be entirely replaced when they run out of ink, i.e., disposable. The upside of these is their catchy designs are attractive and lend themselves well to promotional purposes. Unless these can be equally easy to replace, i.e., Wal-Mart, then replacement can be a hassle.

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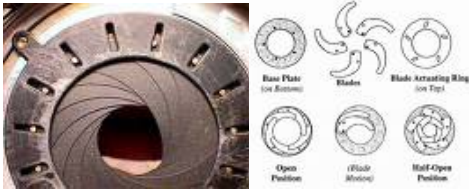
9.0. Appendix

For perspective, I'm including below a suggestion for a new keychain pen, and a brief "picture tour" of my non-key accessories. These are stock photos from various Internet sources.

9.1. Author's concept of the Next Generation Keyring Pen: **The Scimitar** [SIM-i-ter]

My old I/T (information technology) mentor once told me "Never come to me with a problem unless you can offer at least one solution." So here goes. The name **scimitar** was just made up for reference purposes.

After studying these pens, and taking note of apparent strengths and weaknesses, I've come up with my own idea for a next generation keyring pen. Since it has not yet been invented, I am providing below a set of images of various products which have features I would borrow and combine.






ITEM	IMAGE	TARGET FEATURE
Bison Designs Hook Capsule PS. This is also my 2 nd choice for a pill fob.		I would begin with a foundation based on the Bison Hook Capsule. This is a mountain climber's version of the pill fob. It features an all-aluminum, uni-body construction with a wire gate carabiner attachment. This is a smart and very tough design.
Wallet Pen		The size of the wallet pen is just about right. So for size, I would target somewhere in-between this and that above.
Fisher Space Pen refill		The innovative pressurized thixotropic ink allows writing on demand at any angle.
Box cutter		Similar to the pen of the Victorinox, the business end of this prototype Scimitar pen would pop out with a spring-assisted ejector mechanism triggered by a locking ridged tab.
Iris tip		In a single reflex camera, there is an iris for controlling light exposure. It has a series of fan-like blades that open like the iris in our eyes. For the tip of the Scimitar , a similar concept would be used except that the blades would be semi-cone-shaped. (Admittedly, this iris would be a difficult and expensive engineering challenge.)

Note: I know what you're thinking. If I think this is such a good idea, why don't I pursue it? Well, I entertained that idea briefly. Unbeknownst to many, securing a patent is an extremely expensive and time-consuming process. Moreover, the market in this venue is ridiculously oversaturated; much too risky for my taste. [The working name **scimitar** is a Middle Eastern reference to a variety of curved swords. It was also used as the name of the Roman Warbird starship in the movie *Star Trek: Nemesis*.]

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9.2. Inventory of author's non-key accessories

- 9.2. Carabiner Loop
- 9.3. PicoPen
- 9.4. Victorinox #53972
- 9.5. Swiss+ Tech ScrewzAll
- 9.6. Swiss+ Tech Key Blade
- 9.7. Swiss+ Tech LED Flashlight
- 9.8. Original Pill Fob
- 9.9. Flexible Key ID Tag

ITEM	IMAGE	COMMENTS
Carabiner Loop		This is a standard 2 1/4" model. Strong, lightweight, and convenient. \$3.
PicoPen	(previously shown)	(previously described)
Victorinox #53972	(previously shown)	(previously described)
Swiss+ Tech ScrewzAll		Handy item with two types of regular and Phillips screwdrivers, both in two sizes. \$13.
Swiss+ Tech Key Blade		Its size and shape is just like any key. \$16.
Swiss+ Tech LED Flashlight		The ultra small size and superior brightness has proven very useful. \$6.
<p>Original Pill Fob™, By Wrack Works</p> <p>[The Wrack Works company folded a while back due to the invasion of cheap Asian imports. Due to popular demand, it has re-emerged and is back in production.]</p>		Used for carrying various pills, airtight, waterproof, and indestructible. Even after years of use, mine still looks new. There are many variations but this "original" is the best available. \$20.

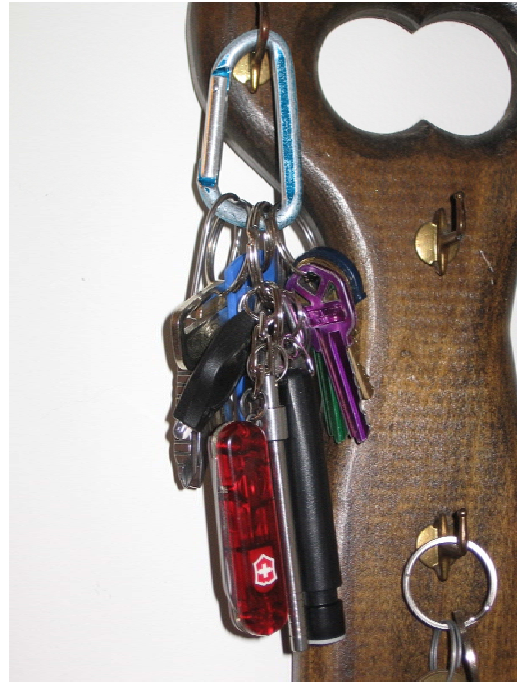
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ITEM	IMAGE	COMMENTS
<p>Flexible Key ID Tag, Various manufacturers, e.g., Blackburne. These come in a large number of styles and manufacturers.</p>	 A photograph of a purple, flexible, rectangular key ID tag with a silver metal ring attached to one end. The tag is shown against a plain, light-colored background.	<p>If my keys are lost, this tag has printed on it: "Reward for return" along with my cell phone number. At a mere \$0.25, it's the cheapest insurance available. After all, you do tag your luggage, don't you?</p> <p>P.S. Don't put your home address on this one!</p>

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9.3. Meet the author and his keys

I thought the story would not be complete with seeing both me as well as my set of keys. Below is a photo of me and one of my personal set of keys. Briefly, I'll share with you a little about myself.



I work for a large grocery chain company. As a Service Level Administrator, I police the quality and timeliness of the computer-based services provided to us by our outsourcer. Like a Devil's Advocate, I use my statistical prowess to ensure we're getting our money's worth. I've got an Asian tan, and though originally from L.A. (and I don't mean Lower Alabama), I now live in the Deep South married to a Southern Belle, have a daughter and three granddaughters, four cats, a dog, a Honda, and a Toyota. On the side, I provide some infrequent consulting for a marketing firm that develops names and taglines for new products and services.

9.4. Epilog

In retrospect, this was a fun project. "Boys and toys" is a wedding made in heaven. Although I like gadgets, I love innovative utility. I must quote again the standing rule for tools: *"If used occasionally, then most anything will do. If used every day, then get the best."* Since keys are used multiple times a day, not only is the best mandatory, but cost is not that important.

One's keys, like one's wallet, are exclusive high-rent districts. There's only enough room for the "best in class" and that's why I carry a PicoPen™.

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9.5. Distribution

This product review was sent primarily to the manufacturers of the keychain pens included in this study. In cases where the original manufacturer could not be determined, a distributor or retailer was selected. Since I visited various retail stores as part of my research, as well as Internet sources, a selection of these was included, along with a variety of media entities who might be interested with keychain pens.

<p>4Physics.com Swivel Keychain Pen 3627 Green Street Harrisburg, PA 17110-1539 Web: www.4physics.com Email: thestore@4physics.com</p>	<p>Ace Hardware Corporation Attn: Merchandising Help Desk 2200 Kensington Ct. Oak Brook, IL 60523-2100 Web: www.acehardware.com Email: affiliates@acehardware.com</p>	<p>Bass Pro Shops 2500 E. Kearney Springfield, MO 65898 Attn: New Products Committee Web: www.basspro.com Email: via website</p>
<p>Brookstone One Innovation Way Merrimack, NH 03054 Attn: New Products Committee Web: www.brookstone.com Email: customerservice@brookstone.com</p>	<p>Consumer Reports 101 Truman Avenue Yonkers, NY 10703-1057 Web: www.consumerreports.com Email: n/a</p>	<p>Eclipse Creations Hand Turned Pens P.O. Box 969 Yonkers, NY 10703-0969 Web: www.eclipse-creations.com Email: Sales@Eclipse-Creations.com</p>
<p>Esquire 300 West 57th Street 21st Floor New York, NY 10019 Web: www.esquire.com Email: editor@esquire.com</p>	<p>Everyday Innovations PicoPad P.O. Box 390207 Mountain View, CA 94039 Web: www.everydayinnovations.com Email: info@everydayinnovations.com</p>	<p>Fisher Trekker Pen 711 Yucca Street Boulder City, NV 89005 Web: www.spacepen.com Email: info@spacepen.com</p>
<p>Gadget King Office 2/27 Izett St Prahran VIC 3181 AUSTRALIA Web: www.gadgetking.com.au Email: info@gadgetking.com.au</p>	<p>Gadget Universe 12621 Encinitas Ave. Sylmar, CA 91342 Web: www.gadgetuniverse.com Email: InfoCenter@eGADGETS.com, hyeung@aroamarketing.com</p>	<p>GQ c/o CondéNet 6300 Wilshire Blvd. Los Angeles, CA 90048 Web: mens.style.com/gq Email: rice@condenet.com</p>
<p>Halfmoon Outfitters 1437 King St. Charleston, SC 29403 Web: www.halfmoonoutfitters.com Email: polly@halfmoonoutfitters.com, customerservice@halfmoonoutfitters.com</p>	<p>Hammacher Schlemmer 147 E. 57th St NEW YORK, NY 10022 Web: www.hammacherschlemmer.com Email: customerservice@hammacher.com</p>	<p>Home Depot Atlanta Store Support Center 2455 Pace Ferry Road Atlanta, GA 30339 Web: www.homedepot.com Email: via website</p>
<p>Inka Corporation Inka Pen c/o Nite Ize, Inc. 5660 Central Ave. Boulder, CO 80301 USA Web: www.inkacorp.com Email: info@writeanywhere.com</p>	<p>ION Pen Cross Corporation One Albion Road Lincoln, Rhode Island 02865 Web: www.cross.com Email: consumer@cross.com</p>	<p>Lowe's Companies, Inc. Lowe's Merchandising Office 1000 Lowe's Boulevard Mooresville, NC 28117 Web: www.lowes.com Email: via website</p>
<p>Mori Luggage & Gifts 3595 McCall Place Atlanta, GA 30340 ATTN: NEW PRODUCTS COMMITTEE Web: www.moriluggage.com Email: travel@moriluggage.com</p>	<p>Office Depot Corporate Support Center 2200 Old Germantown Road Delray Beach, FL 33445 Web: www.officedepot.com Email: segmentmarketing@officedepot.com</p>	<p>Office Max OMX, Inc. 263 Shuman Blvd. Naperville, IL 605 Web: www.officemax.com Email: via website</p>

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<p>Penn State Industries Mini Keychain Pen 9900 Global Road Philadelphia, PA 19115 Web: www.pennstateind.com Email: psind@pennstateind.com</p>	<p>Pentel of America, Ltd. Corporate Headquarters Zebra Penpod Mini Keychain Pen 2805 Columbia St. Torrance, CA 90509 Web: www.pentel.com Email: custserv@pentel.com</p>	<p>Perry Blackburne, Inc. Flexible Key ID Tags 33 Meeting Street Cumberland, RI 02864 Web: www.perryblackburne.com Email: info@perryblackburne.com</p>
<p>Pinko Lifestyles Corporation LTD Pinko Pen c/o Media Data Systems Pte Ltd Raffles City PO Box 0203 Singapore 911707 Web: www.globalsources.com Email: service@globalsources.com</p>	<p>Popular Science Letters 2 Park Ave., 9th Floor New York, NY 10016 Web: www.popsci.com Email: letters@popsci.com</p>	<p>REI PO Box 1938 Sumner, WA 98390-0800 Web: www.rei.com Email: via website</p>
<p>Sanford Company A Newell Rubbermaid Company Sharpie 2707 Butterfield Road Oakbrook, IL 60523 Web: www.sharpie.com Email: via website</p>	<p>S&S® Worldwide PO Box 513 75 Mill Street Colchester, CT 06415 Web: www.ssw.com Email: cservice@ssw.com</p>	<p>Sharper Image 350 The Embarcadero, Sixth Floor San Francisco, CA 94105-1218 ATTN: NEW PRODUCTS COMMITTEE Web: www.sharperimage.com Email: care@web.sharperimage.com</p>
<p>SkyMall, Inc. 1520 East Pima Street Phoenix, Arizona 85034 Web: www.skymall.com Email: via website</p>	<p>Staples, Inc. 500 Staples Drive Framingham, MA 01702 Web: www.staples.com Email: via website</p>	<p>S-Z Wholesale.com Room 601, Friendship Base Bld, West of Xixiang Road, Baoan District, Shenzhen China Web: www.sz-wholesale.com Email: Gafucn@hotmail.com, Maserholz@scand.inet.fi</p>
<p>TEC Accessories, Inc. PicoPen 2260 Oakland Avenue Pleasanton, CA 94588 Web: www.tecaccessories.com Email: inquiries@tecaccessories.com</p>	<p>True Value Company World Headquarters 8600 W. Bryn Mawr Avenue Chicago, IL 60631-3505 Web: www.truevalue.com Email: via website</p>	<p>Victorinox, Swiss Army Knife 7 Victoria Drive Monroe, CT Web: www.swissarmy.com Email: "Swiss.Inquiries" Swiss.Inquiries@swissarmy.com</p>
<p>Wallet Pen 919 Debden Dr. Island Lake, IL 60042 Web: www.walletgear.com Email: walletgear@walletgear.com</p>	<p>Xonex c/o Colorado Pen Direct 9100 West Jewell Avenue, Suite 200 Lakewood, CO 80232-6443 Web: www.coloradopen.com Email: cpdirect@coloradopen.com, csr@xonexintl.com</p>	<p>Yafa Ballpen with keychain 21306 Gault Street Canoga Park, California 91303 Web: www.yafa.com Email: yafa@yafa.com</p>