



Schreibmaschine, Hermes Baby, 1935  
Entwurf: Giuseppe Prezioso  
Produktion: Ernest Paillard & Cie. S. A. Yverdon, CH  
Material/Technik: Eisenblech (Chassis),  
Aluminiumblech schrumpflackiert (Koffer); Kunststoff  
(Tastatur); Leder (Griff)  
7 × 28 × 28 cm  
Eigentum: Museum für Gestaltung Zürich / ZHdK

The *Hermes Baby* was the first mini typewriter with a four-row keyboard. It was so flat and light in weight that it could easily be carried in a briefcase. Ernest Hemingway (1899–1961) or Max Frisch (1911–1991) utilized this masterpiece of engineering during their travels like an analog laptop.

Introduced in 1924, the Hermes typewriter, named after the messenger god and protector of travelers in Greek mythology, allowed Ernest Paillard & Cie. S.A. to build up an entirely new industry, making Switzerland the world's third largest exporter of typewriters. In 1939, the business specializing in mechanical precision parts employed 1,100 workers from the defunct watchmaking industry in the canton of Vaud. The patented portable typewriter model was the primary reason for this economic success. The *Hermes Baby* also achieved great popularity with writers, including Ernest Hemingway, John Steinbeck, and Max Frisch. At a height of only six centimeters, it was the world's slimmest mini typewriter; it weighed in at only 3.6 kilograms, was comparatively inexpensive, and fit inside a briefcase. Some 42,000 units of this mechanical precursor to the laptop had been exported by 1938. The *Hermes Baby*, often

referred to as a “people’s typewriter,” is an excellent example of the judicious application of the advantages of industrial production (*Werkgerechtigkeit*), with a reduced number of parts (1,700 in the 1931 *Hermes*) and individual elements performing multiple functions in order to keep the weight and cost to a minimum. The chassis frame, for example, which is made of three punched iron sheets, is screwed directly onto the bottom of the case, giving it extra stability; the four screws used for this purpose serve the additional function of locking the lid. The economic example set by Fordist mass production was not the only seminal aspect of the *Hermes Baby*; its looks also self-confidently proclaim the beauty of precision engineering. (Renate Menzi)

<https://www.eguide.ch/en/objekt/hermes-baby/>