



Zulily®'s 2021 Back-to-School Fashion Forecast

A New Back-to-School Trend Report & Mom Shopping Guide, Informed by Kids, Shows Kids Are Ready to Shop, Create, Celebrate and Get Retro

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Kids wield an incredible amount of power. Recent estimates show that the spending power of Gen Z (those aged 6 -24 years old) is close to \$140 billion¹.

With a large portion of that cohort still in school, some of that power is flexed through Mom and Dad, especially when it comes to back-to-school shopping.

According to a new nationwide survey conducted by OnePoll for Zulily, 99% of parents say it's at least somewhat important to involve their kids in purchasing decisions when it comes to back-to-school shopping.

What's more – kids may be more actively involved in the shopping process than ever before and seeing it through a new lens.

On the heels of a year that was anything but normal when it came not only to school schedules but school styles, Zulily surveyed 1,000 kids across the country and learned that they aren't just shopping with mom and dad, but they are taking a hands-on approach to styling and shopping – customizing outfits and pieces to help express their personalities and embolden them for the school year ahead.

- Sixty-six percent of kids say their friends “always” or “often” notice the clothes they wear at school
- Social media (70%), friends (61%) and movies or TV shows (51%) are where kids are turning for outfit inspiration
- Cool, fun and unique are the top three ways kids describe their clothing style

TREND 1: KIDS NOT EARNING, BUT SPENDING

While kids may be influencing purchasing decisions made by their parents, kids are making their own decisions, too. In fact, most kids (72%) use their own money to buy at least some of their clothes. Nearly as many (64%) kids aged 6 – 17 say this money comes from cash, checks or gift cards they receive as gifts² -- not an allowance, job or other source of income, according to a new report from Mintel.

This sense of ownership over money, regardless of how it's received, gives kids an even greater say in how and where that money is spent, and many are spending it on clothes. According to the same Mintel report, “clothes” rank as the third most common item kids spend their money on (following only “video games” and “supplies for my hobbies”)³.

Zulily's new research digs into what's shaping kids' decisions when it comes to clothing and shows that there may be more to this spending trend than a simple desire to look good.

¹ Mintel Report: GEN Z: ONLINE SHOPPING BEHAVIORS, US, APRIL 2021

² Lightspeed/Mintel survey of 1,500 internet users aged 6-17

³ Lightspeed/Mintel survey of 1,500 internet users aged 6-17

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TREND 2: MOVERS AND SHAKERS

Kids are using style to help them feel their best, and see style as a means to channel confidence and boost performance at school.

Personal style is a way to channel productivity and confidence

Ninety-two percent of kids agree that it is important for them to define their unique personal brand, and almost as many (90%) say that being able to express their personal style helps them feel more productive at school.

What's more – when it comes to how wearing new clothes makes kids feel, happy (79%), confident (57%) and strong (41%) are the top three moods kids expressed feeling, showing that the way kids express themselves on the outside, may have a direct impact on how they feel on the inside.

Shopping for success

School shopping isn't all about the clothes – and kids aren't shunning the more practical purchases. In fact, kids ranked new supplies (68%), shoes (59%) and backpacks (55%) are more essential to their success at school, with cool outfits ranking fourth (48%).

Zulily's new Back-to-School Shop features millions of unique outfit combinations for kids, and is complete with must-have brands like [adidas](#), [Crayola](#) and S'well plus backpacks, notebooks and desk organizers to help kids set themselves up for a successful year ahead.

TREND 3: GLUE GUNS AND GLITTER BOMBS

Because of the pandemic, kids were living, learning and doing all thing from home, holing up in sweats that made them feel comfortable and likely – comforted. As they prepare to get back to their routines with teachers, friends and after school activities, that's all poised to change drastically. Kids are ready to shed their leisurely layers and get creative with it comes to their clothing.

Self-expression through style

Kids see clothing as an extension of themselves and expression of their uniqueness. 90% of kids say the clothes they wear represents their personality and individuality, and 84% of kids say they show off their personality through their clothes, accessories and style – according to the survey.

Clothing as a creative outlet

Creating a sense of self through style involves more than just layering on the clothes. Seventy percent of kids say they add personal touches to articles of clothing that they purchase to make them feel more like themselves.

In fact – kids may be looking for more help when it comes to customizing and creating styles. Eighty-seven percent of kids say that if their school offered an art class to dye, sew or customize their own clothes, they would be excited to take it, while 86% of kids would want to design their own clothing if someone else could make it for them. Zulily's Craft & DIY Shop features [sewing](#), [tie-dye kits](#) from brands like Tulip, fabric paints and other DIY essentials to make it easy for kids to color and customize their way through the school halls.

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TREND 4: RETRO & REIMAGINED

This is not a drill. Retro styles are back (hello mom jeans!) and kids are turning to Mom and Dad for inspiration. While kids may be secretly rolling their eyes or scolding Mom and Dad for taking too many pictures at a school function – they are also raiding their closets and admiring old photos for style inspo.

Stealing inspiration from icons on the silver screen, small screen and at home While 84% of kids have seen characters from an older movie or TV show and thought they looked cool, nearly the same (75%) say the same about old photos of their moms and dads.

Some kids are taking the admiration and putting it into practice. Sixty-four percent (64%) of kids aged 9 – 18 agree that they love retro fashion and it inspires their daily school outfits, and 59% of kids in that same age group say they have raided their parents closet for clothing.

Nineties and the Aughts reign when it comes to retro Forty seven percent of kids say the 2010s had the best style, with the 2000s and 1990s both tied for second place. One of the most obvious styles making a comeback are mom jeans, which 67% of kids say they prefer to skinny jeans. Zulily has top denim styles for kids, teens and tweens to take advantage of this trend from brands beloved by all generations, like [Levi's](#).

Moms are taking note

While most parents (80%) have caught their child wearing clothes they wore as a teenager, but 51% of parents say they think their child's generation has a better fashion sense than their own.

Short shorts, baggy jeans and cropped jackets are the top styles parents have noticed are coming back.

To check out more style inspiration, visit Zulily's [Back-to-School Shop](#) through September 15, 2021.

Methodology

All data included in this report - unless otherwise noted - is based on survey conducted by OnePoll for Zulily with a sample of 1,000 U.S. parents and their children (ages 5 – 18) in June 2021.