

Dan Neil ponders the Audi A3, post-emissions scandals  
**D12**



# OFF DUTY



Is the idea of wearing belts with suits buckling under?  
**D3**

EATING | DRINKING | STYLE | FASHION | DESIGN | DECORATING | ADVENTURE | TRAVEL | GEAR | GADGETS

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## GEAR & GADGETS



### MY TECH ESSENTIALS

## ANDREA BEATY

The best-selling author of the children's book 'Ada Twist, Scientist' on how USB chargers can build communities and action figures can cure writer's block



Almost every children's writer I know has something I call a desk clan, a collection of action figures and weird things. My favorite of all is the Archie McPhee characters, like **Rosie the Riveter**. I don't know why, but they're just inspirational. When you're trying to figure out what you're writing next, you take 'em out' and goof around and pretty soon an idea comes along.

I travel with a **Photive 60 Watt 6 Port USB Desktop Rapid Charger**. It's this fantastic charger whose cord is long enough that it can actually reach wherever you need it to reach in a hotel room. At the airport if you have somebody hogging those rare outlets, you can say, "Hey, what if we plug this in and we share?" Usually people are like, *Whoa!* You become like a little community all your own.



I keep all my travel essentials—my chargers, my HDMI cables, a pair of slippers—packed in my **Briggs & Riley Large Shopping Tote** so I'm always ready. The bag is big enough to hold all my stuff, but it fits under the plane seat. Most important, the bottom will sit flat so the bag won't tip over.

My favorite app in the world is a stargazing app called **Sky Guide**. You hold up your iPad in any direction and it shows you what stars, planets and satellites are out there. It also links to NASA, so you can listen to radio signals from the stars.



I like composition notebooks, and I've discovered the **Decomposition Book** from this wonderful brand, Michael Roger. They make a lot of funky designs, so I'll use a different one for each book or project I'm working on.



I'm a writer because of PBS. I was raised in a town of 300 people. We would spend our days running around like wild hillbillies out in the fields with our dogs and no shoes on. But then on Sunday nights it was "Masterpiece Theater" time. Recently, I got rid of our cable, so now I get shows through PBS.org. I have an **Optoma ML1000P** projector that we hook up in the living room. It's kind of like having our own very, very low-tech family theater.

—Edited from an interview by Chris Kornelis