



Pencil



Function

In woodwork, a pencil is used to apply marks so that you know where to cut, drill, fix, etc.

Description

Typically, a pencil is made out of a thin stick of graphite set in the middle of a long thin cylinder of wood, making it comfortable to hold, whilst also protecting the graphite core.

In design work the pencil is used to draw and present your ideas; you can also use coloured pencils to render your drawing, making it more life-like and realistic. There is also a 'carpenter's pencil' available, which is a rectangle shape, in order to stop it rolling away when placed on a surface.



Pencils are graded to indicate how hard ('H') or how black ('B') the graphite core is. The grade system is shown below. HB is the most common grade and works well for the woodworker. F indicates that the pencil can be sharpened to a 'fine' point, but this is sometimes questionable, as grades are not universal between manufacturers.

9B		F	
8B		H	
7B		2H	
6B		3H	
5B		4H	
4B		5H	
3B		6H	
2B		7H	
B		8H	
HB		9H	

Keep a sharp point at all times. Many carpenters & joiners prides themselves in forming the sharp point using a chisel. Personally, I find it just as easy to use a pencil sharpener.

Keep your
pencil
sharp



History

Graphite was discovered around the mid 1500's in Cumbria, England, where local farmers used it for marking sheep. However, it was the Italians who were the first to encase the graphite rod in wood, which was then used by carpenters¹. The renowned pencil maker 'Staedtler' originated in 1662 with Friedrich Staedtler, who was officially registered as a 'lead pencil maker', in the Nuremberg records; his descendant, Johann Staedtler continues the family tradition to this day.²

Health & Safety

There are not many health and safety considerations when it comes to the 'humble' pencil. However, I once stabbed myself in the stomach with a sharp 2H pencil when bending over, it was sticking out of my tool belt, point up; it hurt and to this day I still have a scar to prove it! Moreover, a colleague once stabbed himself in the eye when trying to put the pencil behind his ear! He was OK, although he did feel a little silly!



¹ [BBC - A History of the World - Object : The Graphite Pencil](#)

² [History | STAEDTLER](#)