Life Cycle of a Pencil

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1. Research and Product Development – A large graphite deposit was discovered in the 1500’s in England. Graphite was easily sawn into sticks and wrapped in string or sheepskin for stability. These formed the first recorded pencils. In the 1560’s the first wooden pencil was designed by an Italian couple by hollowing out a piece of wood. Soon after, a new technique was discovered. They could carve two wooden halves, insert a graphite stick, and then glue the wood together. This design is still used to this day. In the late 1700’s, a new technique was made for creating the graphite rods out of powdered graphite and clay.

2. Marketing – One way that pencils are marketed is through advertising on the television and internet. Pencils are used in everyone’s everyday lives. “A #2 pencil and a dream can take you anywhere” – Joyce A. Myers.

3. Manufacturing – The “lead” of today’s pencils consist of a mix of powdered graphite and clay powders. The two substances are first cleaned, then mixed together using water. The amount of clay determines the pencil hardness. The mixture is then molded into long strings and dried. The strings are then dipped in oil or hot wax which allows smooth writing. The graphite mixture is then glued in between two pieces of wood and cut into individual pencils. Usually, the pencils are then painted and have an eraser put on the top.
4. Packaging – Pencils are packaged in cardboard boxes usually containing between 10-20 pencils.

5. Sales, Distribution, and Transportation – The average price for a pencil is about 11 cents each or about $1.39 for a dozen. Pencils are then distributed from factories to different companies such as office supply stores and super centers.

6. Consumer Use – Pencils are used to write things by all people. The pencils are continually used until they are sharpened down to the eraser.

7. Final Disposition – Once a pencil is sharpened down to the eraser, the pencil is thrown away. People also often lose pencils before they are sharpened to the eraser because of how plentiful and cheap they are.