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with them, architects draw their plans with them? What are they? Graphite lead pencils, of course! It's time to learn more about them?

1. Lead or graphite lead?

Lead Pencil and lead are terms often used to designate graphite lead pencils. This dates back to a mistake from when graphite was discovered, in the Sixteenth Century, because at first glance this metal looks just like a variety of lead. It was not until 1779 that a Swedish chemist, Karl Wilhelm Scheele, refuted the earlier hypothesis: the metal was then called graphite, in reference to its use in writing.

Did you know: 1550: first graphite lead pencils are manufactured and their use for drawing spreads rapidly throughout Europe.

2. Ball clay: the secret of hardness

Originally, unprocessed graphite was used in making pencils. Problem: it adhered very poorly to paper, and the drawing disappeared over time. As a remedy, manufacturers decided to mix ball clay into the powdered metal. After a cooking stage, the hardened mixture is molded into the typical cylindrical form of pencil lead.

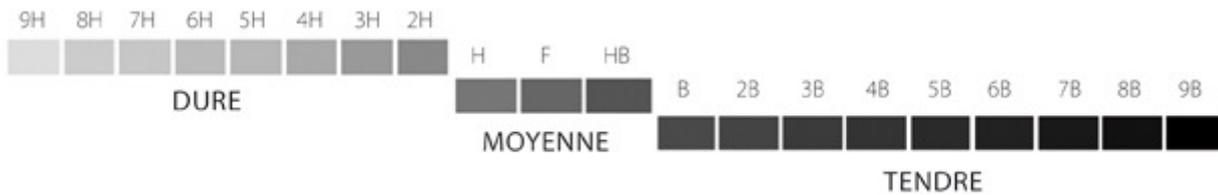
Ceramic clay allows manufacturers to vary the hardness of the lead. Here's why!

- The greater the proportion of ceramic clay, the harder the lead. This yields a very fine line pencil with a light tonality.
- Conversely, the less ceramic clay the lead contains, the softer it is, for thicker darker lines.

Nowadays, manufacturers offer a wide range of leads. To tell them apart, check the grade printed on the pencil casing.

- The letter H designates pencils with hard leads.
- The letter B designates pencils with soft leads.
- The accompanying number (2H, 4B): this is the degree of hardness or, on the contrary,

of softness.



Did you know... Cedar wood

The perfect wood for a good pencil! Neither too hard or too soft, cedar wood is malleable enough to be sharpened. It is nice to hold and hard to break.

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