Eraser Encyclopedia Article

Eraser

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Eraser

The first erasers, for wiping out lead pencil marks, were pieces of bread. The modern eraser made of rubber appeared in the eighteenth century. The first suggestion to use rubber--a vegetable gum from South America called *caoutchouc*--as an eraser was recorded in 1752, probably from a Frenchman named Jean de Magellan (1723-1790). In 1770 the English scientist Joseph Priestley (1733-1804) noted that he could use caoutchouc to rub out lead pencil marks in a manuscript. From this, caoutchouc got its familiar name of rubber, and in Great Britain erasers are still called rubbers. The idea for attaching a rubber eraser to the end of a pencil was patented in 1858 by both Hyman Lipman of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and Joseph Rechendorfer of New York City. The eraser with a hollowed-out end into which a pencil could be inserted was invented by J. B. Blair of Philadelphia in 1867; earlier versions also existed.Modern erasers are a mixture of rubber, vegetable oil, sulfur, and pumice.Erasableink is used on some pens. Plastic and synthetic rubber are also used to produce erasers.