

Be as Sharp as Your Sharpened Pencil

How to Sharpen a Standard Pencil with a Handheld Pencil Sharpener

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Introduction

A pencil is a tool used to write or draw with. It is made of a long, narrow, solid graphite core (usually grey or black in color called **the lead**) that is inside a round, wooden **casing** (usually tan or brown with a rough texture), which covers and protects the lead so that it doesn't break or smear on the user's hands. The caveat is that this same casing prevents the user from using the pencil efficiently. To write properly with a pencil, the lead needs to be both exposed (able to touch the paper) and pointy or sharp enough to carefully trace out the characters needed. This instruction manual will teach you how to properly sharpen your round, wooden pencil with a handheld sharpener so you can write and draw with extreme accuracy. Then, you can be as sharp as your sharpened pencil!

Supplies

-A standard round, wooden pencil

-A handheld pencil sharpener

**Note: This is not the guide for an electric or mechanical pencil sharpener!*

-A trash can

Optional:

-Scrap paper

Procedure

- **Does Your Pencil Need to Be Sharpened?**

1. You want to make sure you're not over-sharpening your pencil or else it will just break and you need to start all over. Here are some ways you can know if your pencil needs to be sharpened:
 - i. If it is new and the end where the lead is supposed to be exposed is still flat, you need to sharpen the pencil.
 - ii. If the casing on the writing end is higher than the lead – something it looks hollow when you peer in to that end. This is usually because of breaking the pencil in the lead.
 - iii. If it is dull. One way to find out if it is too dull is using scrap paper. Draw some lines and if it is not accurate enough to your liking or if you feel the lines are too thick, you can sharpen it.

- **Pre-sharpening Sharpener Checks**

1. Sometimes, there can be broken pieces of lead stuck in the blades of certain handheld sharpeners from previous users. To find out if your blade is clean:
 - i. Locate the hole in which you will be using to sharpen your pencil. This is usually easily spotted, but if your sharpener has a lid or cap, lift it up to see if the hole is hiding under there.
 - ii. Locate the blade – it is usually directly perpendicular to the hole. If your sharpener has a container that holds the shavings, open the cap and find the blade there.
 - iii. If the blade is clean, you're good to go! If not, use something sharp to poke the lead out from the bottom of the blade out through to the hole and into the trash can.
2. Empty your sharpener if it is too full. If your sharpener does not hold shavings, you do not need to worry about this step. Simply open the lid or cap and pour all the shavings into the trash can. Close it and let's start!
3. *Note: If you do not have a small container to hold your shavings make sure to sharpen your pencil over a trash can as the shavings can get messy.*

- **Sharpening the Pencil**

1. Hold the sharpener in your less dominant hand, making sure the hole is facing up.
 - a. **WARNING:** *Be careful not to clutch onto the blade if your pencil sharpener does not have a container! Hold it on the sides comfortably in a way where you can still easily access the hole.*
2. Holding the pencil near the middle in your dominant hand, insert the pencil writing end first, into the hole of the sharpener, gently pushing it all the way down.
 - a. *Note: If your sharpener has more than one hole, usually the smaller one is the fit for a standard pencil size. If you know you have a jumbo size pencil, use the bigger one.*
3. Still gripping onto the pencil, push it down with force and turn it clockwise while still in the hole until your hand cannot turn any further (due to normal human joints, we can only do about a 180 degree turn).
 - a. *You should hear the crisp sound of pencil sharpening.*
4. Let go of the pencil, letting it still rest in the hole, and grab onto the pencil again in a way that will allow you to turn it again. Turn it clock wise to sharpen it again.
5. To check if it is sharpened enough, lift the pencil up every so often and examine the pencil. You can test it out on scrap paper again to see if you are satisfied with the point.
6. Continue turning and checking until you are happy with the result.

- **Broke the Pencil While Sharpening?**

1. If the pencil breaks in the middle of sharpening, no worries. This is an easy fix.
 - a. Lift the pencil up to check where the lead had broken off
 - i. If it's still in the pencil, take the broken lead from there by pinching it with your index and thumb finger slightly and pulling it off. Throw that in the trash.
 - ii. If it's in the sharpener blade, do the same procedure as you would when checking the sharpener in the beginning.
 - b. Resume sharpening as normal until you are satisfied.

- **Congratulations - You have a Sharpened Pencil!**

1. You now have a perfectly sharpened pencil and can officially say that you are as sharp as your pencil!
 - a. **WARNING:** *Be careful with a sharpened pencil – it can be a very dangerous weapon!*