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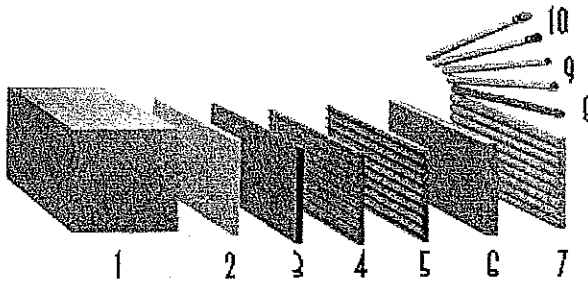
Pencil Making

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The Story of Pencils Lesson Plan: [Activity 3 - How are pencils made today?](#)

At a sawmill Incense-cedar¹ logs are first cut into lumber called "Pencil Stock" or "Pencil Squares"². This lumber product is dried to a uniform moisture content in a dry kiln and then shipped to the Slat³ factory.



1. At the Slat factory Pencil Stock is cut into "Pencil Blocks"¹ a bit longer than the normal length of a pencil. The small amount of extra length is called "trim allowance" that is important at the pencil factory later.

2. Pencil Blocks are cut into "Pencil Slats" using specially designed circular saws. These saws are very thin in order to reduce the amount of "waste" in the form of "sawdust". Due to the natural grain and defect characteristics of the wood the slats are sorted by width and grade for further processing. Slats without defects are called "full ply". Some slats are cut to smaller widths (called "narrow ply") or shorter lengths (called "memos") in order to eliminate the defects and to produce a variety of useable grades and plies of pencil slats.

3. Pencil Slats are treated with wax and stain in order to provide uniform color and improve the machining and sharpening characteristics of the wood for future processing. The slats pass through a final inspection process and then are packaged and shipped to "Pencil Factories" all over the world.

4. At the Pencil Factory a "Groover machine" cuts grooves into the slats to accept the writing core (or "lead").

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