8 Facts About The Rubber Eraser (Remember Them?)

Observed annually on April 15 is National Rubber Eraser Day. This day celebrates, recognizes and appreciates the invention of erasers.

Tablets of rubber (or wax) were used to erase lead or charcoal marks from paper before there were rubber erasers. Another option for the eraser was crustless bread. A Tokyo student said, “Bread erasers were used in place of rubber erasers, and so they would give them to us with no restriction on amount. So we thought nothing of taking these and eating a firm part to at least slightly satisfy our hunger.”

If pencils are one of the greatest inventions ever, erasers come in as a close second. Mistakes happen, after all. And the ability to make them go away, to start fresh, and express yourself in a whole new way never gets old!

So wipe out everything you thought you might know about erasers, and read on. Fun facts are followed by a quick tour of how erasers are really made.
April 15, 1770, Joseph Priestly founded a vegetable gum to remove pencil marks. He dubbed the substance “rubber.”

1770 Edward Nairne developed the first marketed rubber eraser.

1839 Charles Goodyear discovered vulcanization (a method that would cure rubber and make it a durable material). This method made rubber erasers standard.

1858 Hyman Lipman (Philadelphia, Pa.) patented the pencil with an eraser at the end. Even to this day, most pencils sold in Europe are eraser-less!

Pencil manufacturers make erasers, too, which makes sense since we tend to think that it’s a done deal – an eraser is a regular component of the everyday pencil. But that’s not always been the case....

An eraser by any other name? Originally, what we now call an eraser was referred to as a “rubber” because the tree resin it was made of “rubbed out” pencil marks. In Great Britain, they still use the original term.

An eraser isn’t called eraser by eraser manufacturers, either. Their name for the little erasers on pencil ends: “plugs”!

More and more of today’s erasers are made from something other than rubber! While some of the “pink” erasers you find on pencils are made from synthetic rubber blended with pumice (a grit that enhances its ability to erase), an increasing number of erasers are made from vinyl. Vinyl is a type of durable, flexible plastic.

Sources:

National Day Calendar

Pencils.com