
Inside the Crayola Factory

Step into the Crayola factory in Easton, Pennsylvania. Here, humming machines and bustling workers crank out about 180 crayons a minute. In a year, the Crayola company produces nearly 3 billion of the colorful wax sticks. They're used by people in more than 80 countries. "There's a great demand for crayons," Crayola engineer Elizabeth Rieland told TIME for Kids. It's her job to help the company produce a steady—and growing—supply for customers around the world.

Creating Crayons Crayola produces its crayons in large, single-color batches. The process begins when hot wax and powdered pigment are poured into a giant vat and mixed together, then piped into molds. The crayons harden as they cool. Then they are ejected from the molds and picked up by a robotic arm. A conveyor belt moves them to a labeling machine, which double-wraps a label around each crayon.

SERIOUS SORTING

A worker grabs crayons to stack them into the collator behind her. The machine puts them into boxes.

CRAYOLA

Next, a worker carefully inspects each crayon, setting aside those that are broken or chipped. Defective crayons will be melted into another batch. But good crayons are scooped up by a worker who hand-sorts them into a collator. This machine puts one crayon of each color into boxes. Now the crayons are ready to be shipped to stores. Rieland and her team are always looking for creative ways to increase production. "We want the machines to go a little bit faster," she says. "If they can't go faster, we want them to make a little bit more." A World of Color Crayola produced its first box of crayons 115 years ago, in 1903. The set had eight colors and sold for just 5¢.

Today, Crayola crayons come in more than 150 hues. The biggest box contains 152. "The world is made up of so many different colors," Rieland says. "We want kids to have whatever colors they are looking for." Last year, Crayola introduced a new color based on a vibrant blue pigment discovered by scientists at Oregon State University. Crayola held an online contest to pick a name. The winning name was Bluetiful. "It's a fun time to be in the crayon business," Rieland says. Does she have a favorite Crayola color? Of course. It's called Purple Mountains' Majesty.