



# A Crayon Is Born

## Nobody Takes Color More Seriously Than the Makers of Crayons

**W**hat if you had jungle green hair and atomic tangerine eyes? Hot magenta pants with a blizzard blue shirt?

You can! When you use crayons, you can color yourself any way you want.

Life wasn't always so colorful, though. A hundred years ago, all crayons were black. They were used in factories and shipyards to label crates and lumber. Kids couldn't use them because they were toxic.

### Vivid Variety

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Then a company called Binney & Smith had an idea. They decided to make Crayola crayons for kids and teachers to use in school. They figured out a formula that was safe, and they also decided to add color. The first box of eight Crayola crayons included black, brown, blue, red, purple, orange, yellow, and green. All of the crayons were labeled by hand. The box cost five cents. The crayons were a huge hit!

Today, many companies make crayons, but Crayola is still the biggest. They take crayons *very* seriously, especially when it comes to color.

For example, Crayola has a team of seven chemists and chemical engineers who do nothing all day but develop new crayon colors. Their laboratory holds the unique, secret formula to every crayon color. They blend different colors to come up with new shades. Once the engineers discover a new color they like, they test it on hundreds of kids and parents to make sure it's really useful. Only then is a crayon ready for the box.

### What's in a Name?

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Then comes the hard part—figuring out what to name a new color. In 1993, Crayola introduced 16 new colors for its “Big Box” of 96 crayons. More than two million kids and adults wrote in with color name suggestions. Some winners were tickle me pink (bright pink), timber wolf (gray), purple mountains majesty (purple), tropical rainforest (bright green), granny smith apple (light green), and mauvelous (light pink).

Over the years, Crayola has changed some of its color names. In 1962, Crayola changed the name of its crayon color *flesh* to *peach*. They recognized that not everyone's skin is the same color.

Despite all the work Crayola puts into developing new colors, kids' tastes haven't changed much. Around the globe, kids still say that red and blue are their favorite crayon colors.

What are your favorites?

By Lauren Tarshis, Editor, *Storyworks*  
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## Dear Parents

Tonight's homework is about a familiar object—crayons! We often take such common items for granted, never thinking about where they came from or how they're made. I hope you enjoy this entertaining and informative article that fills us in on some fascinating facts about crayons. Don't forget to have your child read it out loud!

### TIP OF THE WEEK

This article contains many facts about crayons, some of which are stated outright. Other information, however, must be inferred by the reader. To help your child answer the literal questions as well as those that require some figuring out, ask him or her to go back to the article and circle or underline relevant words and phrases.

## The Questions

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1. What colors were the first crayons? \_\_\_\_\_
2. What are the public's two favorite crayon colors? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Which company makes Crayola crayons? \_\_\_\_\_
4. How long ago was the "Big Box" of 96 crayons introduced? \_\_\_\_\_  
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5. Why were the first Crayola crayons so popular with kids? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. Is it easy to create new crayon colors? Why or why not? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
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We have completed this assignment together.

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Child's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent's Signature