

Primary aluminium factsheet

Aluminium explained

Aluminium is the second most widely used metal in the world today (iron is the first). It is used in all sorts of human-made objects, including aircraft, buildings, fridges, knives and forks, air conditioners, and cans.

Aluminium doesn't come out of the ground as a solid metal. It is found as bauxite. Bauxite needs to be processed to turn it into aluminium.

Aluminium is a finite resource, meaning that the aluminium in the ground will one day run out. This is why it is important to save aluminium when we can. What does this mean for you?

1. Can you use something else instead of aluminium? For example, can you use a plastic tub to wrap your sandwiches instead of foil?
2. Can you recycle the aluminium that you use?

Aluminium is pretty simple to recycle and can be recycled over and over again. Two out of three of the cans used in Australia are recycled, although there is still plenty of room for improvement with over 1 billion cans ending up in landfill each year.

Recycling aluminium also saves loads of energy when compared to making it from scratch. In fact each single can that is recycled saves enough electricity to run a TV for 3 hours!



So how should aluminium be recycled? Cans should be empty and foil should be free from food scraps before putting them in recycling bins (they don't need to be spotless). If you are out, remember to bring home your cans, foil or trays to recycle at home.



Is your school recycling its cans? To find out how to start a recycling program at your school, go to www.coolaustralia.org

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Aluminium recycling quick facts

- In 2005 over 2 billion cans were used in Australia.
- Used aluminium cans are pressed into bales. There are about 53,000 cans in a bale. A bale weighs 800kg.
- Two out of three cans are recycled.
- One can weighs 15g.
- 67 cans weigh 1kg.
- 20 times more energy is needed to make aluminium from bauxite than from recycled aluminium.
- It can take less than three months for an aluminium can to be used and recycled back into a can and placed back on a shop's shelf.



Glossary

Waste – any material that is no longer needed for its original purpose.

Recycle – materials that can be processed and made into something new.

Reuse – material that can be reused for a new purpose.

Composting material – material that comes from plants such as fruit and vegetables scraps, garden waste and paper that can be composted.

Rubbish – material that needs to go to landfill. It can't be recycled, reused or composted.

Litter – material that has escaped into the environment and might cause pollution.

These Planet Ark resources were developed by [Cool Australia](#) with funding from the Alcoa Foundation.

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