



Steel Recycling

Steel has been produced in various forms for 3,500 years.

Modern steel is manufactured from iron ore with ingredient such as coke, limestone, manganese, aluminium and nickel added, depending upon the alloy required. Iron needs to be superheated to approximately 1,700°C before it can be turned into steel. Steel is 100% recyclable and can be recycled an infinite amount of times, saving energy and raw materials each time it is re-processed. Most steel has around 20% recycled content.



Steel is easily and effectively recycled

Reducing Steel Waste

Minimising your use of any product or packaging reduces your impact on the environment by reducing the energy, water and raw materials that are consumed in their production and transportation. In order to minimise your steel use, consider buying fresh groceries rather than tinned and buy in bulk where appropriate. Buying a large tin rather than two small tins will reduce the amount of packaging, but only buy as much as you need in order to avoid wasting food.

Why Recycle Steel?

Making steel cans from recycled material uses 75% less energy than producing them from raw materials. Recycling 1kg of steel keeps 2kg of greenhouse gases out of the atmosphere. Recycling steel diverts these products from landfill, and enables the material to be reprocessed, thereby conserving raw materials. For every tonne of steel recycled 1131 kg of iron ore, 633 kg of coal and 54 kg of limestone are saved.

How to Recycle Steel

All types of steel can be recycled, including food tins, bottle tops, paint cans, aerosols and scrap metal. Place cans in your recycling bin following the directions below:

- **Aerosol cans** - Make sure the can is empty. Remove the large plastic top and nozzle where possible before recycling.
- **Food cans** – Empty contents and remove lid. Scrape out the can to remove food residue. It is not necessary to rinse the cans however if you prefer to do so, use the dishwasher rather than fresh water. Place the lid and any steel bottle tops inside the can and squash the sides to close. You don't need to remove the labels, but the paper ones are recyclable if you wish to remove them to recycle with your paper.
- **Paint tins** - Brush any leftover paint onto newspaper and place the newspaper in the bin. Allow the paint left within the tin to dry thoroughly before recycling.

- **Chemical tins** – Empty tins may be recycled. Tins with chemicals remaining are considered hazardous waste so cannot be disposed of in the garbage or through recycling. Check with your council or state government for hazardous waste collections.

94% of Australian residents have access to council kerbside collections for steel recycling services. Scrap steel that is too large for kerbside collections, can often be recycled through your local Waste Management Centre (i.e. tip), or through a scrap metal merchant. To check a metal for steel content, test it with a magnet. Metal that sticks to the magnet has a high content of steel and can be recycled. For more information on council services and drop-off locations in your local area visit RecyclingNearYou.com.au or call the National Recycling Hotline (1300 733 712).

What Happens to Steel?

After collection, steel scrap metal and steel cans are taken to a steel refinery, where they are assessed for their alloy makeup. Tin is removed from steel cans through reverse electroplating, before the cans are melted down to liquid metallic iron and are used in new steel production.

Take Action

Recycling steel is simple:

1. Find out, through RecyclingNearYou.com.au or your council's website, whether your council collects steel (most do).
2. Make sure steel food packaging is clean of food scraps and oil.
3. Make sure steel aerosol cans are empty before putting them in the recycling bin.
4. For businesses, search BusinessRecycling.com.au for steel recycling options.



Don't forget to recycle your bathroom aerosols

More Information

[NSW EPA Steel Factsheet for Businesses](#)

[BlueScope Steel](#)

[Can Smart](#)