

# Materials and their properties – Metals and Alloys

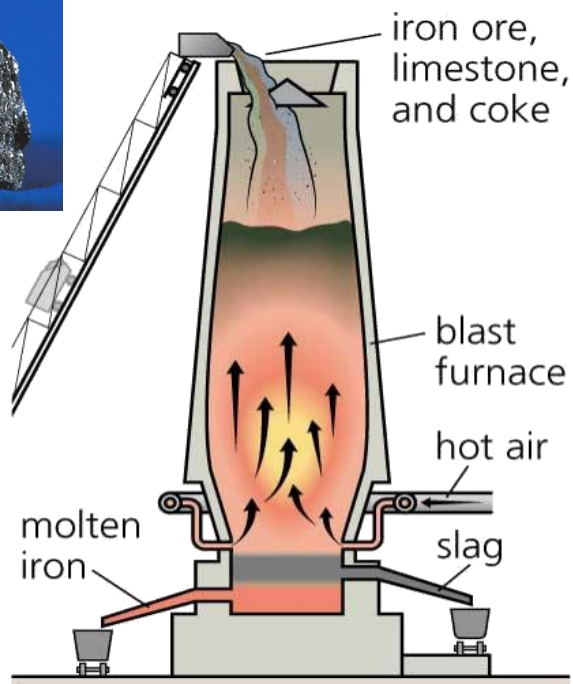
## What you need to know:

- Know the primary sources of materials for producing metals and alloys
- Be able to recognise and characterise different types of metals and alloys
- Understand how the physical working properties of a range of metals and alloys affect their performance

Metal bearing rocks are called ORES, these are mined or quarried from the earth's surface. Metals are obtained from raw ores by a process called smelting. Raw ore is mixed with charcoal and other chemicals, and air is blown into a furnace. The molten metal trickles from the bottom of the furnace and this can be cast or extruded into shapes.



Iron Ore



The more the reactive the metal the higher the temperature needed to extract it from its ore. Copper needs 1100°C but iron requires 1500°C. A metal like aluminium cannot be extracted by smelting. It is dissolved in a 'cryolite solution' and electrolysed (electricity is passed through) at a temperature of around 650°C.

A few metals can be mined from the earth as pure metals. These include gold and some small amounts of copper and silver

### Recycling Metals

Metal ores are either mined or quarried which has an environmental impact. Metal extraction from ore demands a lot of energy, a great deal of which is lost as heat to the surroundings. The high cost has meant that recycling is becoming more and more important. Today the scrap metal industry has a vital role in the provision of metals for the future. Automated disassembly lines for recycling of metal parts for cars are coming ever closer. At present vehicles are collected sorted and shredded, and then materials are collected from them.

It takes 95% less energy to recycle aluminium cans than it does to produce new cans from aluminium ore. It is possible that future cans will be made from recycled material. Stainless steel can be made from as much as 70% of recycled material. Recycled copper can be refined to be as pure as new. Copper and its alloys have a high scrap value as they are relatively easy to recycle.



## SECTIONS – Solids and tubes available

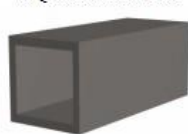
ROUND TUBE



HEXAGONAL TUBE



SQUARE TUBE



L-SECTION TUBE



## Ferrous Metals:

**FERROUS METALS** are those which are iron based. They contain Iron and carbon in varying amounts. As iron is extracted from its ore in a furnace it contains a relatively high amount of carbon. This makes the iron hard but brittle this is known as cast iron. It resists compression but may break if dropped, hit or stretched. It is used to make car brake drums, railings and manhole covers. Cast iron has 4% carbon content.



**High Carbon Steel** is often referred to as **Tool steel** contains 0.6 - 1.5% Carbon. It is very hard and is used to make tools such as metalwork files and saw blades.



**Mild Steel** is very tough, can be bent or twisted and can resist strong impacts without breaking. It is easy to weld. Mild steel is used to make washing machines, construction girders, nuts and bolts and nails. It contains between 0.15 – 0.35% carbon.



**Stainless Steel** Contains about 1% carbon. It also contains other metals, mainly **chromium**. There are over 200 different types of Stainless Steel. They contain a minimum of 11% chromium and also contain **nickel**. Manganese is another metal often included. Stainless steel is often used for medical instruments, kitchen surfaces and pots and pans as it resists scratching and biofouling.



**Wrought Iron** is the most pure iron, containing few imperfections. It is difficult to cast although it makes excellent material for forge work because it is tough. It has less than 0.1% carbon. It is used for gates and railings



## Non-Ferrous Metals:

**NON-FERROUS METALS** do not contain iron. There are many different metals that fall into this group.

**Aluminium** Pure aluminium is malleable and ductile but has a low tensile strength (aluminium foil). To improve strength it is usually alloyed with copper or magnesium. Because it resists corrosion it is used extensively outdoors in satellite dishes and window frames. Aluminium is very light metal and has a density a 1/3 that of copper and steel. It is a good conductor of heat and electricity. Aluminium alloys are used extensively in the aircraft industry and in motor cars. Approx 150,000 million aluminium cans are produced every year.



## Alloys:

An **ALLOY** is a material of a mixture of metals or a metal and a non metal intermixed. Metal alloys have advantages. The alloy may contain the properties of two or more metals or other elements.

**Brass** is an alloy of copper and Zinc. Copper is malleable, resists corrosion and is a good conductor of electricity. Zinc is hard but brittle. Brass is used in musical instruments, Valves and in electrical plugs and sockets.



Different combinations of tin, lead and other metals are used to create **solder**. The combinations used depend on the desired properties. The most popular combination is 60% tin, 39% lead, and 1% alloys. This combination is strong, has a low melting range, and melts and sets quickly.



**Lead** is a metal that was once in common use for plumbing, roof flashing and car batteries. It has been replaced by copper, plastics and alloys in many cases but is still used in car batteries. Lead is a soft malleable metal. It is also an accumulative poison.