

Chemistry Knowledge Organiser

C14 - The Earth's resources

LCAs

Life cycle assessments (LCAs) are carried out to assess the environmental impact of products in each of these stages of a products life:

1. extracting and processing raw materials
2. manufacturing and packaging
3. use and operation during its lifetime
4. disposal at the end of its useful life, including transport and distribution at each stage.

Some things for example the energy required to make the product are easy to measure. However some things like how much pollution it releases are hard to measure and therefore difficult to give a value to.

Example of an LCA

	Plastic Bag	Paper Bag
Raw Material	Crude Oil	Timber
Manufacturing and Packaging	Made from crude oil by fractional distillation, then cracking and polymerisation, high energy process. Little waste as other fractions are used for other things	Made by pulping timber. Lots of waste, high energy process
Use of product	Has multiple uses, can be reused.	Usually only used once.
Disposal	Can be recycled but are not biodegradable	Can be recycled and are biodegradable

Key Terms	Definitions
LCA	An evaluation of the environmental impact a product had over its lifetime

Recycling

Many of the Earth's resources are finite: for example, metals and crude oil. It is therefore vital we recycle resources. The processes for extracting these materials are often high energy and damaging to the environment.

Metals can be recycled by melting and **recasting or reforming** into different products.

Some products, such as glass bottles, can be reused. Glass bottles can be **crushed and melted** to make different glass products. Other products cannot be reused and so are recycled for a different use.