



**Australian Government**

**Department of Immigration  
and Border Protection**

# The Meaning of Household and Domestic

The Department of Immigration and Border  
Protection's Tariff Classification Guide on the meaning  
of 'household' and 'domestic' when classifying goods

**NOTICE:**

This publication is intended to provide guidance and information to the trade community. It reflects the position on, or interpretation of, the applicable laws or regulations by the Department of Immigration and Border Protection as of the date of publication, which is shown on the front cover. It does not in any way replace or supersede those laws or regulations. Only the latest official version of the laws or regulations is authoritative.

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# Introduction

## What goods are covered by this guide?

A number of classifications in Schedule 3 (the Tariff) of the *Customs Tariff Act 1995* use the terms 'household' or 'domestic' as either modifiers, i.e. "household articles" or in specifying the scope of a good's use, i.e. "for household purposes". For example, heading 3924 is for "Tableware, kitchenware, other household articles and hygienic or toilet articles, of plastics" and heading 8419 *excludes* goods "of a kind used for domestic purposes".

Some confusion has existed over what is the meaning of household in this context. This guide is intended to clarify how the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service views this term.

## What is the meaning of household or domestic

### Dictionary Definitions

The Macquarie Dictionary relevantly defines household as:

- noun* 1. the people of a house collectively; in previous times, a family, including servants, etc.; a domestic establishment.
- adjective* 2. of or relating to a household; domestic: *household furniture*.
3. used for maintaining and keeping a house.

The Oxford Dictionary of English defines household as:

- noun* a house and its occupants regarded as a unit: *the whole household was asleep* | [*as modifier*]: *household bills*.

The Macquarie Dictionary relevantly defines domestic as:

- adjective* 1. of or relating to the home, the household, or household affairs.

The Oxford Dictionary of English defines domestic as:

- adjective* 1. relating to the running of a home or to family relations: *domestic chores* | *domestic violence*.
- of or for use in the home rather than in an industrial or office environment: *domestic water supplies*.

## How is a good determined to be household or domestic in nature?

### For use in a domestic setting

Goods can often be broadly categorised by where, how and by whom they are intended to be used. Capacity, output, build quality, ease of use and other features of a good may enable the determination of design intent in relation to domestic/non-domestic.

*The types of goods referred to as 'household' or 'domestic' are goods designed specifically for the use in domestic settings – they are designed for use by the individuals or family of a household in*

the context of their personal daily activities in running a house. *These goods do not operate at a level in excess of household requirements.*

Household or domestic goods do not include goods designed specifically for commercial, industrial or institutional use.

## Domestic use

That a good may be *in* a domestic setting is not sufficient on its own to make the goods 'household goods'.

For example, plastic statuettes are often found in domestic settings, but are not goods for the running of a household. Hence they are classified to subheading 3926.40.00 as 'Statuettes and other ornamental articles' rather than in household articles.

Likewise tools that might be used in the garage for maintaining a car, while in a domestic setting, are not for the running of a household. They would be classified to the heading appropriate for the tool.

## Determination of 'design use' based on objective characteristics

To support a claim that a good is or is not a domestic or household appliance, the design features that make this determination possible should be clearly stated.

For example, a standard 1.7 litre electric jug, which takes about five minutes to boil, would be considered a domestic or household appliance. Its capacity and speed render it suitable for people wanting to boil water for a pot of tea at home, but would not be suitable for normal commercial production of beverages.



In comparison a 40 litre capacity urn rated for producing 175-200 cups per hour would be considered non-domestic as its capacity and capabilities are compatible with commercial or institutional use.

## Actual use may vary

The features of a good may show it is designed solely or principally for a particular purpose; however the actual use may be broader.

The 1.7 litre jug from above would also be used by people in offices, shops or other environments. This does not change the objective characteristics of the good. It remains a good primarily designed for domestic use.

Likewise someone may choose to buy the 40 litre urn for domestic use, but this would not change its identity as a commercial appliance.

Clearly if a good is solely or principally used in either a domestic or non-domestic environment, this fact needs to be taken into account as an important factor. But simply being able to use a domestic appliance outside of a domestic setting or being able to purchase a commercial good for domestic use does not affect the characterisation of the goods.

This was previously addressed in Precedent 19928500 which specified that:

3924 covers articles for the preparation, serving or consumption of food and beverages in domestic situations as well as the types of goods typically used in or around the home. These goods remain here even when they may be used in other settings. For example picnic sets, take-away plastic cutlery, lunch boxes, furniture

slip covers etc. remain classified here although they may be used outside of the home or in commercial settings.

## Household/domestic does not cover secondary use

Some goods have a commercial or industrial use with a secondary potential use as household goods. The most common example of this is goods for the conveyance or packaging of other goods that are tins, boxes, jars or other articles that can be used, after being emptied, for domestic purposes. Such a secondary use does not change the nature of the goods as being designed for the conveyance or packaging of goods.

## Domestic settings are wider than a physical house

‘Domestic’ clearly relates to goods used within a home for the normal non-commercial, daily activities. It also relates to goods used around the home in outdoor areas attached to or belonging to the house. Hence outdoor furniture, letter-boxes, planters and other goods can be domestic or household in nature if designed for use in these settings.

Household or domestic articles will generally remain household or domestic articles even if they may be used by the members of the household outside of the physical household and its attached areas. For example, heading 7418 covers household articles of copper. It covers copper spirit stoves, being small heating appliances used when travelling or camping for heating water or cooking food. These are of a capacity that is only sufficient for domestic use and are used by a member or members of a household to undertake a domestic function outside of the house and its immediate area.

## Goods broadly suited for both domestic and non-domestic uses

Some goods are very broad in use and are suited for both domestic and non-domestic uses. Provided that they are commonly used as household or domestic goods, then headings which refer to the goods in such terms are open for consideration. The legal requirement to use the Interpretive Rules as laid out in Schedule 2 to the Customs Tariff Act 1995 in determining the actual classification applies as always.

For example, wire coat-hangers are equally suited for use in the house, in retail outlets, hotels or dry cleaning facilities. Heading 7323 - ‘Table, kitchen or other household articles and parts thereof, of iron or steel’ would be a potential heading.

## Goods primarily for non-domestic uses

Where goods are primarily non-domestic, they remain non-domestic even if there is some use in domestic settings.

For example, a coffee machine which is designed to continuously produce up to six cups of espresso coffee or cappuccino at the same time is clearly designed for a busy commercial establishment. Even if imported by an individual for use in their own home, it remains a commercial machine and is not classifiable as a domestic appliance.

## Change record

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