

Oxygen (O₂)

Colour: None
Smell: None

Oxygen is essential to all life on earth - we need it to survive.

Percentage of atmosphere: 21%

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Nitrogen (N)

Colour: None

Smell: None

All living things contain nitrogen – including us.

Percentage of atmosphere: 79%

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Argon (Ar)

Colour: None
Smell: None

Argon is a good insulator – it's even used to keep deep sea divers warm!

Percentage of atmosphere: 0.97%

Carbon Dioxide (CO₂)

Colour: None
Smell: None

Carbon dioxide is very important to us – we breathe it out from our lungs and plants absorb it via the photosynthesis process

Percentage of atmosphere: 0.03%

Carbon Monoxide (CO)

Colour: None
Smell: None
Source: Vehicle exhausts, burning firewood, cigarettes

Sulphur Dioxide (SO₂)

Colour: None
Smell: Like burnt matches
Source: Volcanic eruptions, industrial processes, burning fossil fuels

Ammonia (NH₃)

Colour: None
Smell: Strong and suffocating
Source: Cleaning products, industrial processes

Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂)

Colour: Reddish brown
Smell: Pungent and acrid
Source: Vehicle exhausts, cigarette smoke

Methane (CH₄)

Colour: None
Smell: None
Source: Natural gas, release from melting permafrost, farming practices (cows!)

Carbon Dioxide (CO₂)

Colour: None
Smell: None
Source: Natural gas, burning of fossil fuels and wood

Fine Particulate Matter (PM₁₀)

Colour: Varies
Smell: Varies
Source: Soot (black carbon) from vehicle exhausts, burning fossil fuels, dust, pollen

Ultrafine Particulate Matter (PM_{2.5})

Colour: Varies
Smell: Varies
Source: Soot (black carbon) from vehicle exhausts, burning fossil fuels, dust, pollen