

## Schooled: Hornblende and six other resources you've used, know nothing about, and small caps love



Picture: Getty Images

We've all heard of gold, silver, zinc, copper and the like, but have you ever come across "hornblende"?

Neither had we until last week.

So *Stockhead* decided to pull together this little explainer on some of the quirkiest, lesser known minerals, starting with hornblende.

Hornblende is a mineral used in the industrial abrasives industry. It is typically used for abrasive blast cleaning.

It is not recognised as a mineral in its own right, but it is a major part of the Earth and is extremely common.

Its dark colour earned it the name hornblende, which is derived from the German words "horn" and "blenden".

Soon-to-be ASX debutante **Australian Industrial Minerals** emerged in February last year and is now [undertaking an IPO to raise \\$5m](#) to fund the development of its Harts Range mine, which hosts garnet and hornblende.

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### Osmium

*Stockhead* has covered this one before, though there are actually no small cap companies looking for osmium.

>> [READ: This is the 'last precious metal' – and you've probably never heard of it](#)

Osmium is the eighth and "last" precious metal according to the Osmium-Institute Germany, which in October last year announced the global market launch of the new precious metal.



An osmium gecko

It is said to be the least abundant element in the Earth's crust. There is just 9 cubic metres of osmium on Earth.

In 10,000 tons of platinum ore, equivalent to 250 truckloads, only 28 grams of osmium is found on average during mining.

Yes, it is extremely expensive.

Osmium is one of the platinum group metals and is blue-grey in colour.

The special position of osmium, which has the chemical symbol Os, in the periodic table and on the market imply some extraordinary properties, according to the Osmium-Institute.

It is the rarest precious metal with the highest density, and its compression and abrasion resistance even exceed that of diamonds.

Why do we need it?

When cooled down, osmium becomes a superconductor which can transport electricity without loss.

Osmium in its raw form is a poisonous and unspectacular grey powder, but when crystallised in a manner similar to carbon when making diamonds, osmium changes its crystal structure.

In crystalline form, osmium is harmless.