



Water is classified to:

- Establish how **suitable** it is for the various domestic uses, namely drinking, food preparation, bathing and for washing clothes.
- Make it easy to **communicate** water quality information to the public and other role players.
- Aid in **decision-making** regarding the management of the quality of domestic water supplies.

What are the advantages of this classifying system?

There are many different grades of water between ideal and dangerous water. Ideal water does not change abruptly from good to bad. The change takes place gradually and the advantage of this classification system allows for this gradual change.

What effects are dealt with in the classification system?

The classification system uses different substances which are important for domestic users and is based on increasing concentrations of these substances (See fact sheets on: "Substances which are generally indicators of water quality" – Fact Sheets WU1 to WU4). The classification system allows for classifying the following effects:

- Health and aesthetic aspects of water used for **drinking**.
- Health and aesthetic effects of water used for **food preparation**.
- Health and aesthetic effects of water used for **bathing**.
- Health and aesthetic effects of water used for **washing clothes**.

What aspect is the most important?

Water used for drinking is the most important aspect when considering the quality of water for domestic purposes as it directly affects the health of the consumer. Therefore there is a distinct difference between health and aesthetic effects of substances in water used for drinking purposes.

Blue	(Class 0)	Ideal water quality Suitable for lifetime use
Green	(Class I)	Good water quality Suitable for use, rare instances of negative effects
Yellow	(Class II)	Marginal water quality Conditionally acceptable. Negative effects may occur in some sensitive groups
Red	(Class III)	Poor water quality Unsuitable for use without treatment. Chronic effects may occur.
Purple	(Class IV)	Dangerous water quality Totally unsuitable for use. Acute effects may occur.

References:

DWAF (1998). Quality of domestic water supplies. Vol. 1: Assessment Guide. WRC No. TT 101/98, pp. 21.