

A Quick and Dirty Guide to WW2 Jerry Cans
Originally Presented at AMPS Fort York / IPMS Toronto January 9, 2017

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Jerry Can Recognition

Both jerry can and jerrycan are accepted spellings.

I have added Italian cans which were not covered at the meeting due to time restraints.

| | Early German | Later German British | US Army | US Marines | Italian |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|---|--|----------------------------------|---|
| Spout Type | Self-Contained Cam Toggle | Self-Contained Cam Toggle | Screw In Cap | Self-Contained Cam Toggle | Self-Contained Cam Toggle |
| Spout Location | Offset Left | Offset Left | Middle | Middle | Offset Left |
| Separate Parts Needed | - | - | See Notes | - | - |
| Embossing | X - Cross | Running Square / Headless Running Man | X - Cross | X - Cross | Square With Straight Arms |
| Bottom Edge | Rounded | Rounded | Square | Square | Rounded |
| Dates Produced | 1937 – 1939 or 1941 | G: 1939 – 1945 B: 1942 – 1990 | 1941 – 1960's | Exact dates unknown | 1941 - ? |
| Colours | Panzer Grey | German; See Notes British: Various shades of green | Olive Drab | Olive Drab | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sand • Green |
| Number of Manufacturers | G: At least 18 B: 21 | | US Located: 24 GB Located: 2 Belgium 1945¹: 2 or 3 | | 2 |
| Notes | 1, 2, 3 | 1, 2, 4, 5, 9, 10 | 1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 9, | 1, 2, 8, 10 | 1, 2 |

¹ These were German types; not American.

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|--|--|--|----|--|--|
| | | | 10 | | |
|--|--|--|----|--|--|

Searches of the Internet will show many pictures of jerry cans. E.g.

Early German Style http://www.mp44.nl/t/kan41_01.jpg

Later German Style (white cross for water)

http://www.surfacezero.com/g503/data/500/medium/German_Wasser_Can_001.jpg

British Style (painted for Water)

<https://s-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com/236x/a6/bc/fd/a6bcfdf41f62662731c379798d91a2fc.jpg>

American Style:

http://www.warrelics.eu/forum/attachments/attic-old-barn-finds/86126d1312774262t-ww2-u-s-willys-gas-can-img_1495.jpg; (with spout needed to pour):

<http://basdevoogd.nl/jerrycan4.jpg>

USMC Style: http://www.surfacezero.com/g503/data/500/medium/dcp_1282.jpg

Italian Style: <https://s1.scalemates.com/products/img/1/8/6/1001186-10244-93-pristine.jpg>

Jerry cans were originally developed to meet a 1935/36 German Army requirement:

- Pile cans side by side
- 20 litre capacity
- Single man can carry
 - 1 full in each hand: ~ 20 kgs. X 2
 - 4 empties
- 2 men can carry 1 container
- Hand over to next man
- Easy to manufacture

Notes

1. All nations had various embossed markings. I would not worry too much about this in 1/35 or smaller scales other than getting the nationality right. The kits generally have embossing.
2. Jerry Cans were used for water as well as POL (Petrol, Oil, Lubricants). These were indicated various ways:
 - German: Painted White Cross
 - British: White Painted embossed area on side; white painted under handles.
 - Italian: There was a white band on the spout side of the can, with ACQUA. See Leger, p. 109 or http://b2c.steelmodels.com/files/SteelModels_Files/Foto/64179.JPG
 - American: No common rule – see Leger, p. 41.

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- Some nations produced cans specifically for water. These had specific embossing on them but looked like the regular can. E.g. German - 'Wasser' embossed on side.
3. "Official" manufacture stopped in 1939 but these early style cans have been found with dates up to 1941 stamped on them.
 4. German colours included:
 - **Panzer Grey**
 - **Sand Yellows**
 - Greenish black and various greens
 - 3 Colour 'Normandy': Sand / Olive Green / Brown – Red, etc. (I cannot recall seeing a picture of one.)
 5. The British simply copied the German design but didn't produce until 1942 to replace the infamous 4 gallon 'Flimsies' and 2 gallon 'Shell's' despite having examples in 1940. In the interim, captured German ones and American ones were used. Units such as the LRDG (Long Range Desert Group) got priority. There is a famous picture of David Stirling, founder of the Special Air Service (SAS), in front of a group of SAS jeeps; the jeeps are carrying American jerry cans.
 6. The design of the American jerry cans was poorly thought out. All other designs were a self-contained one piece unit requiring no other parts. The American design needed, in addition to the jerry can itself:
 - Screw-in Cap. This was a standard design for 55 gallon drums.
 - Cap Securing Chain or Rod – to keep the cap from falling in the dirt or getting lost when it was taken out. Some cans were built with the cap attached to a swivel mounting, keeping it attached the cap attached to the can (Leger, pp. 59 – 63). The screw-in spout was still needed.
 - Cap Opening / Closing Tool: The cap could not be loosened or tightened by hand or ordinary tool – it needed a special tool.
 - Screw In Spout (or funnel): once the cap was out, the opening was not suitable for pouring into a fuel tank. A special screw in cap with a flexible pipe was needed. Alternatively the liquid could be poured into a funnel.

This design was used right up until Vietnam. (It is one of 3 designs that I have seen used in Vietnam.)

7. American jerry cans often had extensive stencilling painted on.
8. The US Marines used the Army design as well, with Marine markings.
9. The Americans in Europe used a lot of German late style cans. See Leger, pp. 71 – 73, Photographic Appendix and inner back cover. Even though they made 19 or 30 million cans (depending on which source you read), they still did not have enough. They

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collected abandoned and captured German cans and offered rewards to civilians for turning them in (up to 1 million cans a month turned in). Special repair depots for German cans were set up – see Leger, pp. 140 and 141.

10. The US and Britain developed coloured metal tags that could be clipped onto the centre handle of jerry cans. These indicated what the contents of the can were. Embossing on the tags allowed them to be read by feel at night, eliminating the need for a light. See <http://g503.com/forums/viewtopic.php?f=37&t=193362> (just past halfway down the page) or Leger, Chapter IV. These can easily be replicated with paint for 1/35 and smaller.

American colour coding was:

Fuel

- Red: 80 Octane
- Orange: 72 Octane
- Black: Diesel

Oil

- Yellow: OE 10 HD
- Grey: OE 30 HD
- Brown: OE 50 HD

Transmission

- Light Blue: G O 80
- White: G O 90

British colour coding was

- Red: 80 Octane petrol
- Yellow: 72 Octane petrol
- Black: Diesel
- Green: Aviation petrol (100 octane+)
- Light Grey: Kerosene or paraffin for lamps and stoves

Germany did not have these coloured tags², so if you see a German jerry can with a tag, it is likely a German can being reused by the Allies. See note 10.

References Used

² Leger shows a few from German cans on p. 26. From France, Germany and Austria. Because there is no pictorial or written evidence from wartime, he speculates that this may be a postwar addition.

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Leger, Philippe (2008), **Jerrycan: 70 Ans at Toujours en Service / 70 Year-Old and Still in Service**; Bayeux: Heimdal (not Histoire et Collections as I said). 159 pages.
ISBN 10: 2840482444
ISBN 13: 9782840482444

This contains the original French plus English translation side by side. It was written for jerry can collectors by a collector and thus contains many details not feasible or necessary to reproduce in a model. It covers a bit of French, Swiss and post war as well.

It has many colour pictures. However, WW2 cans shown are 60 – 70 years old and either little paint remains in most cases or they have been repainted (hopefully accurately) so colour matching is problematical.

This was my principle reference. **Highly recommended if you want the details about jerry cans.**

Make sure you get the Bilingual edition. It appears to be still in print (http://www.editions-heimdal.fr/materiel_et_unites_047.htm) but hard to get hold of. At time of writing, 5 are listed on AbeBooks. RZM <http://www.rzm.com/books/eh/eh2444.cfm> also seem to still have some.

There is a later book on Wehrmacht jerry cans. This seems to be German only so don't confuse them.

Searches of the Internet turned up a great deal of information and pictures, not as complete as Leger. There were items on the Internet not found in Leger.

Plastic and Resin Models of Jerry Can

The following lists were derived from searching Scalemates <https://www.scalemates.com/> for

- Jerry Cans
- Fuel

The lists for the jerry cans show the model manufacturer and part number.

There is no guarantee that the kit is still in production or of its accuracy.

Scalemates is an extremely useful site. Explore it to find out its capabilities. It is very strong on aircraft and armour. There weaknesses in the automotive data base.

One caution: if you want to see the details of an item on the search results page, open it in another tab if possible. IF you just click on the item, when you return to the search results page, you usually lose all the filtering and have to reset them.

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1/35 Scale

| Kit Manufacturer | German | American | British³ | Italian | Hungarian |
|------------------------------|--|------------------------|---|----------------|------------------|
| Asuka | | | 35-L39 | 35-L30 | |
| Bronco | AB3576 | | AB3562 ⁴ | | AB3557 & Drums |
| Tamiya | 35026 & Drums MM126 & Drums 35186 & Drums 35315 (Early) | 35026 35229 & Drums | | | |
| Adler | 35003 | | | | |
| Armor Scale | R35-034 (early) R35-066 | R35-060 | | | |
| Hero | E35003 E35003 | E35003 | | | |
| Neo Models / Neograde | TA0004 | | | | |
| Great Wall | L3514 ⁵ | | | | |
| AFV Club | AF35257 ⁶ AF35266 ⁷ | | AF35258 ⁸ & 2 gallon "Shell" | | |
| Italeri | 402 ⁹ | 402 | | | |
| Tasca | 35-002 | Nr. 35-L14 | | | |

³ British and German are built alike so German ones can be used.

⁴ Listed in 1/35Fuel Drums and Can Reviews.

⁵ Listed in 1/35Fuel Drums and Can Reviews.

⁶ Listed in 1/35Fuel Drums and Can Reviews.

⁷ Listed in 1/35Fuel Drums and Can Reviews. No 20 litre jerry cans but triangular 20 litre pre-jerry cans and drums (with pumps).

⁸ Listed in 1/35Fuel Drums and Can Reviews

⁹ Listed in 1/35Fuel Drums and Can Reviews

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| | | | | | |
|---|---|--|----------------------------------|---------------------|--|
| Resicast | | | 35.2326 35.2343 “Flimsies” | | |
| Verlinden | 2579 (Stacks & in Racks) | | | | |
| Panzer Art | RE35-301 ¹⁰ | | | | |
| LZ | | | | 35445 ¹¹ | |
| Vision | | | | VA9004 & Drums | |
| Armand P. Bayardi | M35147A (crushed) M35147B (dented) | M35107 M35103A (crushed) M35103B (dented) | | | |
| Mig | MP 35-299 Burnt Out | | | | |
| Plus | Nr. 417 Burnt Out | Nr. 415 Burnt Out | | | |
| Tiger Model Designs¹² | 35-5014 (Fuel) 35-5015 (Water) 35-5016 (Early or Late?) ¹³ 35-5017 (SS) | 35-1009 + Holders & Straps 35-1011 (early with chains) 35-1012 (Early) + Open Caps & PE Chains 35-1013 (Late) | | | |

1/16 Scale

In this scale, you have to worry about the embossed details.

Classy Hobby – German & Fuel Drums

Sol Model – German; American

Verlinden – German

¹⁰ Listed in 1/35Fuel Drums and Can Reviews

¹¹ Listed in 1/35Fuel Drums and Can Reviews

¹² The kit numbers are taken from the TMD website. The numbers on Scalemates are in the 100xx range.

¹³ These claim to be ‘late’. However, they have the simple cross of the early design.

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1/48 Scale

Sol Models – German

Tamiya – German, includes Drums

Tarmac – German; US

Hauler – American

Tank Workshop - Allied, includes Drums;

Brengun Oil and Fuel Set – Initial and Regular German, includes oil drums and triangular cans

1/72 -76 Scale

Armtec - American

Value Gear – German; American

Hobby Master– German

CMK – German

Silesian – German

Wee Friends – German

Postwar

Hero – American

Real Model - Modern US fuel & water cans set

Perfect Scale Modellbau - American

Armand P. Bayardi – American Vietnam (intact; crushed; dented)

AEF – IDF

Add On – IDF

Accurate Armour – Israeli; British Post 1964 (single and bulk);

Tank Workshop - Israeli

Pro Art – “Modern Vehicles”

J’s Work – “Modern Military Equipment”

Also Available

Photoetch details – can holders, straps, etc.

Resin can holders, etc.

Masks for Crosses

Echelon Fine Details – Decals for Modern

3D Printed Models of Jerry Can

This is a site I discovered vary recently. They specialize in 3D printed items.

<https://www.shapeways.com/search?q=jerrycans&type=>

I will not try to list the various manufacturers (see website) but here are the scales and

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nationalities available. Some of these have accuracy issues. You will have to look at them to see if they meet your needs.

| Scale | German | American | Italian | Other |
|--------|--------|-------------|---------|--|
| 1/9 | X | | | |
| 1/10.5 | | X | | French |
| 1/15 | | | | Flimsies |
| 1/16 | X | X | | French Brackets IDF Brackets Undefined |
| 1/18 | X | | | Flimsies |
| 1/20 | | X | | |
| 1/24 | X | X Modern | | Flimsies |
| 1/30 | | X | | |
| 1/35 | | | X | Undefined |
| 1/43 | | X Modern | | |
| 1/45 | | | | |
| 1/48 | | X Modern | | |
| 1/50 | | | | |
| 1/56 | | X Modern | | |
| 1/64 | | X Modern | | |
| 1/72 | | Modern | | Allied w. Flimsies and Shell's |
| 1/87 | | Modern | | |
| 1/100 | X | | | |
| 1/144 | X | X | | |
| 1/200 | X | X | | |
| 1/285 | X | X | | |

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