



All About

COUNTERS



Counters

Along with dice, counters are the most common manipulatives in mathematics. Counters come in different sizes (16 to 38 mm).

I prefer 19 mm counters as they are an ideal size for playing board games and placing on number boards. Most grids are 20 mm x 20 mm so the 19 mm fits perfectly onto the grid.

Shapes

While you can buy dinosaur counters, animal counters, stackable counters, square counters (tiles) and more, the most versatile counters will be standard circular ones.

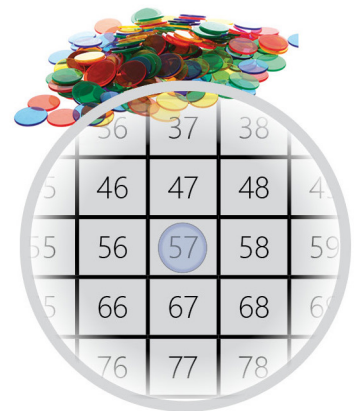


Colours

Typically counters will come in 10 colours, but for most game situations 4 colours would be sufficient. A pack of 100 counters, 25 red, blue, green and yellow counters will suit a single student to a group of 4.

Transparent

Transparent counters allow the student to see what is underneath the counter, which makes them perfect when playing games and using number grids where you want to see the number underneath.



Opaque

Opaque counters can be written on and are ideal to use as number tiles in puzzles such as Number line ups and Ken Ken.

Two-colour counters

The counter will have one solid colour on one side and second colour on the reverse. The colour pairings can vary but I prefer the red/yellow configuration. These counters are 25 mm in diameter. They are ideal for playing games like **Shake and Spill** and **LULU**, where dots are written on the yellow side of the counter.



Did you know?

19 mm counters will use 100 mm² less plastic than a similar 22 mm counter.



Where to start

When I visit school storerooms the counters I often spot different jars, even margarine containers with out lids containing a mix of sizes and types of counters (transparent and opaque). I have even found tokens from Monopoly sets. There is nothing more irritating than dropping the lidless margarine container while hurrying to the classroom.

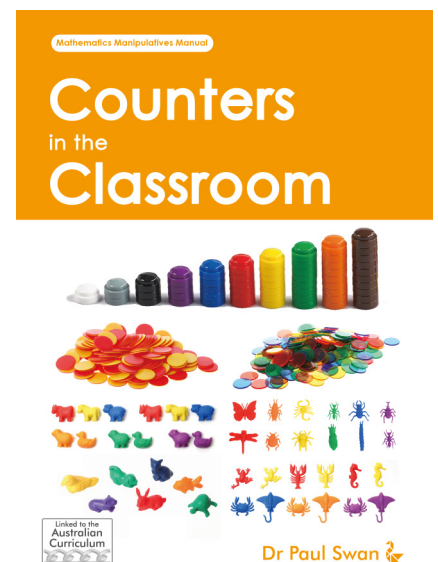
I suggest schools buy enough counters of a consistent type to be able to top up half-filled containers. I prefer containers with attached lids.



Here is what I recommend

Buy:

- thousands of 19 mm transparent counters – each classroom needs 2000. Buy extras for top up purposes.
- thousands of 19 mm opaque counters that can be written on. (These will be consumed in puzzles so 2000 would be ideal)
- bags of 100 transparent counters containing 25 of each of the four colours red, blue, green and yellow. These are idea for short games, warm-ups etc. These should match the 19 mm transparent counters in the bulk set so they can be topped up at the end of a term. (See management below)
- 400 (2 packs of 200) two colour counters red/yellow counters.
- specialty counters such as bear or fruit or dinosaur according to need and preference
- a book explaining how to get the most from this simple but versatile resource.



Classroom Management

When giving instructions such as when playing ***Shake and Spill*** it is much simpler if you only have to refer to one side as red and the other yellow. In terms of classroom management a consistent, colour and size of counter will help avoid unnecessary interruptions to the lesson. For example, when using the same 4 colours in a game, teachers can allocate colours to players, e.g. you are the red player and students can be start playing without arguing over which player will use what colour.

Teacher Tip

At the end of a term get the year 4 students to weigh your packs of 100 counters to see which packs are missing counters. Pass these bags to the Year 1 or 2 students who should be able to count to 25. They can replenish the bags of 100 from the 'spare box'