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# What Type of Tokens Should I Use?

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How to choose the  
right tokens for your  
car wash

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Van Brook

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## ***What type of tokens should I use for my car wash?***

There are over 60 different token types on the market and no "right" way to pick one. By law they can't be the same size as circulating coins. Here are some questions to help you get started:

What size token works in my equipment (changers, counters, coin doors)? Most coin equipment handles a specific size range. Refer to *Converting from Quarters to Tokens*.

Is there a color preference? Carwash tokens are available in brass, copper plate, nickel plate, or 2-tone bimetallic. While your coin acceptors and counters can tell tokens from coins, some operators like a visual difference. US quarters are easy to spot in a bucket of copper color tokens.

What value will my tokens sell for? With today's higher vend prices, coin boxes fill so fast with quarters they have to be emptied almost daily. Many operators have moved to coins with higher face values, \$1, \$5 even \$14! Security tokens are strongly recommended for higher token prices.

Am I willing to accept an occasional token from another business? If tokens are valued at just \$0.25, it might be cost effective to use a lower cost standard token and not worry about cross acceptance. Standard red brass tokens are a cost effective solution for \$0.25 value, but for \$1 value, there's always the fear that someone down the street will eventually start selling the same tokens at a lower price. For \$1 dollar token values, consider Controlled Value tokens.

With those thoughts in mind, the first step in the selection process is to visit other businesses in your area that use tokens. Buy a few from each (don't forget arcades and mini golf) and have the tokens available for rejection testing when you begin your selection process.

Pick your preferred style of tokens, then using the manufacturer's directions, program the acceptor in use for the sample tokens. Once programmed, they should accept 100% of the time. Then drop tokens from the businesses nearby to make sure they are rejected. If consistently accepting a competitor's token, switch to a different style and repeat. It takes some time but will avoid cross acceptance problems later. With the largest range of products on the market, you're sure to find a winner from Van Brook's 60 different combinations of size and metal.

### **Standard Tokens:**

The lowest cost and most commonly used tokens are made from brass or copper plated zinc. With a typical coin value of just 25 cents, accepting a few of your competitors' tokens is just a nuisance, not a costly problem. For a few cents more, red brass tokens have a unique electronic signature for coin

acceptors, giving operators greater selectivity over the tokens they accept. Coin acceptors set for red brass reject standard brass and copper plated arcade tokens, reducing unwanted cross-acceptance.

### **High Security Tokens:**

**Controlled Value:** With this model, every user sells them for the same price - \$1. We call these TimeSaver Tokens™, because at a \$1 face value, it takes fewer tokens to wash in a self service bay. Customers save time since they only have to use insert 1 or 2 tokens to start washing their car instead of 4 - 8 quarters. And car wash operators save time because they don't have to fill and empty change machines or coin boxes as often.

TimeSaver Tokens are only available to the trade - and not on the internet. In fact, every buyer agrees in writing to only sell them at a \$1 price. There's no benefit to buy tokens at one location and use at another so you'll see very little cross-acceptance. Plus, every TimeSaver Token is marked with the operators contact information for easy identification. They are struck from a secure metal not seen in circulating coins or tokens. They're an economical alternative if you price in \$1 increments and you don't want to accept video or other low value tokens.

**Controlled Distribution:** These tokens are sold exclusively to an individual carwash location. They are for operators wanting a token that no one else has in their area. Know as CT or CTX tokens, you get an "exclusive use" agreement within a 75 mile radius for as long as you continue to order tokens. Ultra-high security CT Tokens™ are the most sophisticated tokens and are needed for high-value applications. Hardest to counterfeit, we make them by combining two different metals to produce a unique and highly reliable electronic signature. They are used for values from \$1 to as high as \$14. CTX Tokens™ are made from other specialty alloys not commonly found in coins or tokens. Each has a unique electronic signature so coin mechs can distinguish them from common tokens. We offer over 20 unique varieties, all available with controlled area distribution exclusivity. They are recommended for values of 50¢ or more.

### ***Remember to leverage the value of tokens:***

No matter which style or type of token you choose, you are missing the boat if you do not customize the tokens with your car wash name, logo and marketing message. And it is a big boat indeed. For the marketing value inherent with tokens is one of the major selling points for making the switch from quarters.

Customers cite the advertising and branding that occurs as one reason they use tokens. Some refer to them as mini billboards – to be seen by your customers each time they view your token with their pocket change. Frank Meneghetti of Wave Wash wants his tokens to stand out. His bi-metal tokens are functional because they eliminate cross acceptance from nearby batting cages, FEC's, arcades and other

venues. On top of that he designed them to be distinctive and memorable – two points of differentiation that quarter-based car washes can never achieve.

For a small 1-time fee, every batch can be ordered with custom artwork.

### ***Tokens are a profit center***

As Virgil Vance, the Token King of Lexington once wrote, "If you have used tokens before, then you are already familiar with the "walk-away" or "shrinkage" factor... "If not, know this, tokens which are sold, and are kept by the customer are walk-aways. This is pure profit, and is a significant sum of money over a period of time. Sell a token for a quarter and pay a dime; you make fifteen cents every time one doesn't return.

The "shrinkage" factor is ever-present, even with higher values.

Some tokens are sold once or twice, and then disappear. Most tokens are sold many times, recycled and resold over and over. If a token is sold 50 times, it is only purchased once. The Ratio of Revenue (Sales), as compared to the one-time cost, keeps improving with each sale!