

Quarters to Tokens

Step-by-Step Conversion Instructions for Car Washes

The best way to run a safe, secure, low-vandalism, profitable coin-operated car wash is to use tokens. Armed with the right information — and after a little planning — switching from coins to tokens can be done in a few hours. This article will cover the key changes that must be made for a seamless transition.

STEP 1 – WHAT SIZE TOKEN SHOULD I USE?

By law, tokens can't be the same size or electronic signature as legal tender coins. They are all made slightly larger or smaller and with different metal. We'll start with the four areas in a car wash where token size or metal comes into play.

BILL CHANGERS

There's no need to buy new changers as they are designed to dispense coins or tokens. The most cost effective solution is to choose a token size that works in your existing equipment.

Most changer hoppers accommodate a range of sizes; others require modification. The intent of this section is to give an overview of sizes that work in popular models. Please contact the changer manufacturer for instructions on converting the specific changer model you own. Having the model and serial numbers in hand will speed you along when you call.

Rowe International

Rowe BC model changers have hoppers that accommodate tokens. Their quarter/dollar/token hoppers (Model 65027609) work with either 0.984" or 1.073" tokens. The dime/nickel/quarter hoppers (model 65027608) work with 0.800", 0.880", and 0.900" tokens.

Settings in Rowe's CCC (computer control center) need to be changed when switching coin value (e.g., from \$0.25 to dollar tokens) or in order to dispense "bonus tokens" (e.g., 23 quarter value tokens for a \$5 bill). Specific instructions are available in Rowe's product manuals or from technical support (800) 523-2760.

Model Number: _____
 Serial Number: _____
 Model Number: _____
 Serial Number: _____

Standard Changers

The hoppers in MC and EC model changers accommodate a range of coin sizes. If you are already dispensing quarters, hoppers will accommodate either 0.900" or 0.984" diameter tokens.

Older SC model changers only accommodate 0.880" or 0.900" diameter tokens without hopper modification.

Switching to 1.073" diameter tokens involves the installation of a new feed component.

When changing from a quarter value to dollar value, the #4

switch on the hopper control board needs to be flipped up and the red button pressed, instructing the changer to dispense four tokens per dollar.

It is best to note the serial numbers of your changers and call Standard's Service Department at (800) 968-6955. A factory technician will tell you which parts are needed (if any) and guide you through the changeover. The parts can be owner-installed or the manufacturer will be happy to make the changes.

The service technician will also help set up "value pricing" (e.g., bonus-dispensing five tokens for a \$1 bill, 23 tokens for a \$5 bill, etc.).

Model Number: _____
 Serial Number: _____
 Model Number: _____
 Serial Number: _____

American Changer

American Changer's universal hoppers will dispense tokens in diameters from 0.900 to 1.125" without modification. The changer settings need to be changed when switching coin value (e.g., from \$0.25 to \$1.00) and if you want "value pricing." Specific instructions are available in American Changers product manuals. Visit the TokensDirect YouTube channel (www.youtube.com/user/TokensDirectVideos) and watch as a changer is re-programmed in under 2 minutes.

Model Number: _____
 Serial Number: _____
 Model Number: _____
 Serial Number: _____

Hamilton Manufacturing

According to Hamilton Manufacturing, current production models (RNS, DRS, ER-60, 3600R, 3600FL, 1200FL-C, 1200FL-S, 2000V/A, 2600V/A, and VN-1) that are set to dispense quarters have hoppers that work with 0.900" or 0.984" tokens. To accommodate a 1.073" token, the hopper wheel will need to be replaced.

Hamilton's changer controller comes pre-programmed with several payout (bonus) options. No program change is needed if the payout value remains four \$0.25 value tokens to the dollar. For more creative payout strategies, like six tokens for a dollar, contact Hamilton directly to verify whether the desired payout is already installed.

Hamilton recommends contacting technical service (888) 723-4858 for models not listed. In fact they would be happy to provide assistance to ensure a smooth conversion from coins to tokens.

Model Number: _____
 Serial Number: _____
 Model Number: _____
 Serial Number: _____

Token Sizes that Work With My Bill Changers

- 0.900" Diameter
- 0.984" Diameter
- 1.073" Diameter
- 1.125" Diameter

COIN DOORS

Older doors on meter boxes may have coin slots sized specifically for a quarter or dollar coin. Your sample kit came with a variety of token sizes. Test the preferred token in all coin doors. Chances



Photo credit: Pro-Tech Services Company LLC

are that they will fit nicely in most modern units. Remember to check your vacuum coin slots as well.

If you plan to use a token and it doesn't fit, the entry slot can be enlarged. The quickest way is with a handheld grinder like a Dremel tool. Another way is to use a rattail file to open the slot. Some techs report using a hack saw blade to quickly open the slot and then cleaning up with a small file.

Token Sizes that Work With My Coin Doors

- 0.900" Diameter
- 0.984" Diameter
- 1.073" Diameter
- 1.125" Diameter

STEP 2 - WHICH TOKEN TO CHOOSE?

Every video arcade in your area uses brass tokens for play. Most are valued at \$0.25 and there are a lot in circulation. We recommend choosing tokens that are more secure to prevent cross-acceptance.

Standard red brass tokens are a cost effective solution for the \$0.25 value. For higher values, there's always the fear that someone down the street will eventually start selling the same type of token at a lower price. The top solution for \$1 values is controlled value tokens. For \$1 and up, consider controlled distribution tokens that are exclusive within a 75-mile radius.

Let's continue our token selection with a local survey.

Check Nearby Token-Operated Businesses

Are you 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 brass token and not worry about cross acceptance. For \$1 value, there's a real concern that someone down the street is selling the same tokens at a lower price.

With those thoughts in mind, we suggest that you 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.

Rejection Testing

Armed with your sample kit and collection of tokens from other businesses in the area, the next step is to program your coin acceptor for the preferred type of token and then check to make sure competitors' tokens are rejected. If not, try a different sample token.

Car washes almost exclusively use electronic acceptors. They are easily switched from coins to tokens. Multi-coin acceptors from IDX, Magikist, Microcoin, Ginsan, and Parker Engineering are found in most coin doors these days. Newer models can be programmed to accept tokens, quarters, and dollar coins at the same time. Customers can continue to use coins from home as well as tokens purchased from the changers.

Slugbuster I and some Slugbuster IIs as well as Sensortron accommodate a single type of coin. Just remove the set coin from the mech and replace it with the new token. That's all there is to it.

Coin mechs designed to accept more than one coin are easily reprogrammed. There are many manufacturers and models on the market and each has its own instructions. For an example, check the TokensDirect YouTube channel and watch how an IDX X-10 Xeptor is programmed to accept tokens.

When switching from quarters to tokens, remember to change the value of the coin drop from one pulse to four pulses in the coin meter.

**STEP 3 -
ADJUST COIN COUNTER**

If you already accept coins, your existing coin counters should be able to count tokens as well by selecting the correct size on the control panel or dial. Most have the ability to sort

tokens from coins for situations where wash timers are programmed to accept both and they get mixed. Switching from quarters to tokens is usually done by rotating a dial. Consult the manufacturer's instructions for your specific model.

If you don't already have a coin counter or require more counting/sorting capability, there are plenty of options on the market. To determine the type of counter needed consider portability, availability of electricity at your count location, sorting needs, as well as count speed. For speed, start by taking your anticipated weekly coin-op sales dollars and divide by the tokens value. Then divide this by the number of times a week you plan to empty the coin boxes. This will give you an approximate number of tokens that need to be counted each time so you can select an appropriate speed rated counter.

While not something that has to do with the physical or electronic aspects of tokens, there are two other areas that should be covered.

**STEP 4 - SIGNAGE,
NEVER TO BE IGNORED**

An often overlooked yet simple part of any coin-to-token conversion is telling your customers about it. Customers need to know how much the tokens are worth or how much wash or vacuum time they buy. The best way is with a few clear, easy-to-read signs installed near the bill changers as well as in bays.

While you are converting to tokens, it's possible to give customers an incentive to purchase more by discounting with value pricing at the bill changer. What all long-term, self-service car wash operators who use tokens will tell you is that once money is converted to tokens, there's a psychological shift. People no longer think of spending money, they are simply using tokens, which they spend more freely. Industry surveys have confirmed this, reporting that


the average car wash customer spend increases 22 percent after converting from coins to tokens.

**HOW MANY TOKENS
ARE NEEDED?**

The question is often asked regarding the ideal quantity of tokens for smooth operation. The answer depends on the size of your operation, weekly revenue, and, more importantly, how often you plan to empty your cashboxes and recycle the tokens.

Let's take an example. You have a nine-bay car wash and expect average revenue of \$3,000 per week. With a 25¢ value, that means four tokens to the dollar, or 12,000 tokens accepted per week. If planning to empty cashboxes once a week, 15,000 tokens are needed. Why 3,000 extras? That's to make sure you have some back stock and extra inventory for changer fills.

It's a good idea to allow for walk-away tokens (the ones customers take home and don't return) at an average rate of 5 percent to 10 percent a week for the first three or four weeks. After a month, the walk-aways settle down to about 3 percent a month. So in this case, an additional 4,000 to 5,000 tokens are a good idea. Remember that tokens are sold for twice their cost, so walk-away tokens make money. When your inventory drops to 15,000, you've profited \$600 over the initial token cost and it's time to reorder.

For that same car wash using \$1-value tokens, 4,500 plus 500 for walk-aways, or 5,000 total, is a good starting point. \$1 tokens don't walk away as fast as quarter tokens. 

Converting from Quarters to Tokens is a White Paper issued by TokensDirect to explain and simplify a process that can, at times, be confusing. Copies of this white paper are available by request. For additional information, please visit www.tokensdirect.com.