

Counting cubes

Maths

Ages 11 to 14

How much would it cost to send 1,000 dice through the post? (The absurdity of the question is part of the fun: this is not meant to be realistic).

As a problem-solving task, this provides a lot of scope for pupils in Years 7 to 9. Have some dice handy (not 1,000 though) to be measured and weighed. You will also need leaflets from the Post Office (or go to www.royalmail.com)

for the postage rates and rules. Questions to consider might include:

- What is the best way to weigh one? (Perhaps weigh 10 and divide by 10?)
- What will be the most economical arrangement of the dice?
- What shape will fit in a post-box or letterbox? What shapes will be sturdy enough?
- Which shape of parcel(s) will require the least paper and sticky tape? Will some shapes

of package need reinforcing cardboard?

The cube shape of dice simplifies the volume calculations and they are also readily available in most maths departments.

Setting pupils to work in groups to see which group can post the dice for the least cost can be a lot of fun ■

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