



## Product Knowledge:

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# Recommending darts

**T**he right dart is chosen based on personal feel, and as such it can be tough to tell your customer that *such-and-such* dart is exactly what he needs when he comes to your shop. If possible, the best is to let him try a few darts in different lengths, diameters, weights, materials, shapes, grips, etc. and see which feels right for him.

The birth of the modern darts game can be traced back to 1949 when Unicorn made a set of darts of roughly the same weight. Prior to that, darts came in any shape or size and were all dumped together in bins with no differentiation between size or weight.

Today the weight is standardised (Unicorn guarantees accuracy within 0.1gm on most of their tungsten darts), and the only uncertainty when it comes to darts is the one your customer might have over which dart is right for him.

## Weight

The maximum allowed weight is 50gm, but most people will use darts in the mid-20s. If your customer doesn't know which weight he prefers, start him off with a dart that falls in the medium range and see if he needs to move up or down in weight.

- Light darts: 16-21gm;
- Medium: 22-26gm;
- Heavy darts: 27gm or more.

Only the tip and barrel of a steel tip dart are weighed, not the shaft and flight.

- Typically, darts towards the heavier side will give the player more control as they are more stable, are able to fly further due to the added momentum and are more forgiving of mistakes.
- Lighter darts are more sensitive to how the player is throwing. The player has to put more effort into throwing a light dart far, compared to when using a heavier weight, because the weight doesn't add much to its momentum and, due to the harder throw required, there's a greater chance that he might let his technique slip.

The weight of the dart will also affect how it flies: heavier darts tend to fly straighter, while light ones have more of a curve.

- If the dart goes higher than your customer

## Our cut-out-and-keep series to assist retailers with product knowledge

Words: Carin Hardisty. Compiled with information from Edward Lowy of Unicorn (distributed in South Africa by Opal Sports) as well as websites [www.harrowsdarts.com](http://www.harrowsdarts.com), [dartsouthafrica.co.za](http://dartsouthafrica.co.za), [www.darts501.com](http://www.darts501.com), [www.perfectdarts.com](http://www.perfectdarts.com), [dartbrokers.com](http://dartbrokers.com), [triplebullseye.com](http://triplebullseye.com), [dartbase.com](http://dartbase.com), [www.dartswarehouse.com](http://www.dartswarehouse.com) and [peakpicker.com](http://peakpicker.com).



aimed for, give him a slightly heavier dart to try.

## Length

Darts come in several lengths and the right one will depend on the way the player grips the dart.

- If he likes to grip right at the front he might not need as long a dart as someone who has more of the fingers on the barrel.
  - The size of your customer's hand will thus also play a role in finding the right length.
- Additionally, the length of the dart affects how it travels through the air once thrown.
- If it's too long for the player, the dart will be difficult to control and it's likely to wobble.

## Material affects the diameter

The narrower the barrel, the closer the player can get groupings in a small area, which leads to a higher chance of scoring the maximum score of 180 – and because materials have different properties, darts of the same weight and length could have different barrel diameters.

The material used will also influence the price point.

- Tungsten is a high density material, which means that you can make thinner barrels, compared to what you can make from other materials, while keeping the same weight.
  - On its own it is a brittle material and it is therefore mixed with other materials during the manufacturing process (nickel is the most popular and it will provide strength).
  - The percentage tungsten is displayed on the dart's packaging. Typically, the higher the tungsten percentage, the thinner the dart can be, but the higher the price. As a guide:
    - 70% tungsten: an entry-level tungsten dart.
    - 80% tungsten: for people who are more than beginners and who might have just started out in a league. A better quality dart that is still relatively affordable.
    - 90%+ tungsten: for people who are more serious about their game as well as professional players.
- Brass: good for beginners and usually used by social players at home, club or in pub settings, because of the lower price point. The material is lightweight, but not very durable, which means the knurling is likely to wear down and will change the feel of the dart.
  - Because these are cheaper, it's more feasible for your customer to buy a few in different weights if he'd rather try them out at home to get a better feel.
- Nickel/Silver: thicker than tungsten, but more durable than brass so the grip area won't wear away as easily, and also falls into a more budget-friendly price range. They won't tarnish, like brass will. It **To p46**



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doesn't actually contain silver, but is a nickel and tin alloy.

### Balance

The dart's weight can be towards the front, back or centre. Have your customer pick up the dart: you can get an idea of how the dart should be balanced from the way he holds it.

- If he grips close to the front, he'll probably want a front weighted barrel.
- If he holds the barrel more to the back, recommend a rear weighted barrel.
- If he holds it in the middle, try a centre weighted dart.
- Beginners often prefer front or centre weighted darts.

### Shape

The ratio between the length and diameter will influence the shape of the dart.

- Straight or pencil shape: a consistently straight barrel.
- Torpedo: a short and wide barrel, with the most of the weight in the middle and tapered at the ends. The design provides extra force when the dart hits the board.

- Bomb: short and wider than most other barrels. Similar to the torpedo's shape, with the most of the weight towards the front.
- Scallop: has a notch in the barrel for finger placement, which makes it easier to get a consistent grip as the fingers seek out the same spot each time.
- Tapered: starts thick in the front and tapers towards the stem. Good for players who use the thumb more to grip the dart.
- Stealth: thin at the front and thick at the back. Good for squeezing into tight spaces.

### Grip

The grip is created by cutting into the barrel to create a texture that helps with holding the dart. Typically, the heavier and rougher the texture the more secure the grip. But on the other hand, too much texture and the dart might stick to the fingers and mess with the accuracy of the throw.

- Knurled: a criss-cross pattern etched into the barrel.
- Ringed: multiple prominent rings that create a non-slip surface.
- Micro: close, soft rings positioned close to-

gether.

- Precision: even finer rings than the micro grip, creating a rough grippy surface.
- Razor: tiny cuts on the barrel create thick grip rings that offer a very tactile grip.
- Wave: smooth rings that flow in waves along the grip area.
- Shark fin: wide grooves that have angled edges that face towards the shaft.
- Stone: technology that creates a stone-like grip.

A general guideline for when recommending the right grip is to consider your customer's hands:

- Naturally dry hands (especially men's): light grip.
- Rough, dry hands require a rougher grip.
- Smooth, well moisturised hands (especially women's) require a smooth grip.

### Cosmetics and finish

Should the dart have a paint or titanium finish?

- Paint: aesthetically pleasing, but can make the surface slippery. There are exceptions to this, however, so it's important that your customer tries for himself.
- Titanium finish: will protect the metal underneath from salts and oils (so it won't corrode) as well as dirt and grim build up, and general wear and tear. This finish is applied very thinly and thus won't affect the grip.

# New dartboards change the game

## New technologies and designs have enabled manufacturers like Unicorn to create the next generation of dartboards that keep score of the needs of the digital-age customer

UNICORN'S ECLIPSE HD2 dartboard (below) is the board of choice for the PDC (Professional Darts Corporation) – a partnership that will be in place until 2022. This means that the board is used in all the PDC's tournaments, which feature top dart players competing for a share of the more than £10-m in prize money on offer from Unicorn. Not only do the tournaments draw live crowds to watch the exciting events, they are broadcast online via video services.

The Eclipse HD2 board gets a lot of exposure during these lively tournaments and if your customers have watched any of them, they'll be familiar with it. If they haven't yet, here's what you can tell them about the dartboard.

The championship-quality bristle board has a seamless playing surface with a staple-free construction, which prevents bounce outs and means players stand the chance of getting higher scores.

The board is divided into tournament regulation segments.

Additionally, Eclipse HD2 also features ultra-slim wires without external legs that create a high definition radial spider. Additionally, the slimmer wire around the bullseye increases the playing area by 14%.

It has high visibility moulded numbers that are fully replaceable, and the rotatable matt black number ring minimises distractions.



### Digital dartboard

Unicorn doesn't only cater for steeltip darts, however. The latest innovation is a digital smartboard for use with soft tip darts, which works together with an app.

"For over 80 years *The Big Name In Darts* has been at the forefront of innovating darts technology," says the brand. "Now we introduce the revolutionary new Unicorn Smartboard, the world's first app-enabled auto-scoring dartboard."

"With instant scoring, made possible by the amazing Unicorn Scorebuddy app, you can play eight exciting games for up to eight players in doubles or four players in singles." Your customers can even play solo games against the Scorebuddy Robot.

It is suitable for all skill levels and the board doesn't require a mains connection so your customer can take it anywhere with him to play (he just needs to remember to pack the AA batteries).

The bristle smartboard connects with the app via built-in Bluetooth technology that instantly transmits the scores to the Scorebuddy app on your customer's mobile device.

The smartboard comes with six steel tipped darts that can be magnetised on the board, but your customer can also magnetise any other of his steel tipped darts with the board.

Unicorn is distributed locally by Opal Sports.

