

Ozobot Evo Classroom Application: Demonstrations of Triangular and Square Numbers

By Richard Born
Associate Professor Emeritus
Northern Illinois University
rborn2@niu.edu

Introduction

A great majority of mathematicians now define mathematics as *the science of patterns*. These patterns can exist in a variety of forms including counting, reasoning, shape, and motion, to mention just a few. If you are a math teacher who teaches sequences, you are probably familiar with the concepts of triangular and square numbers. Study of these two number sequences by students can really bring home the idea that mathematics is indeed *the science of patterns*. In this classroom application, Ozobot Evo is used to visually enhance these patterns in a way that will motivate your students to understand the concepts underlying triangular and square numbers.

Triangular Numbers

A triangular number counts the objects required to construct a triangle. For reference while discussing triangular numbers, Figure 1 shows a small version of the Ozobot Evo map that students will use to investigate triangular numbers. A larger version appears on page 3 that can actually be used with Ozobot Evo while running the OzoBlockly program *TriangularNumbersWithEvo.ozocode* (share code is 9orgev).

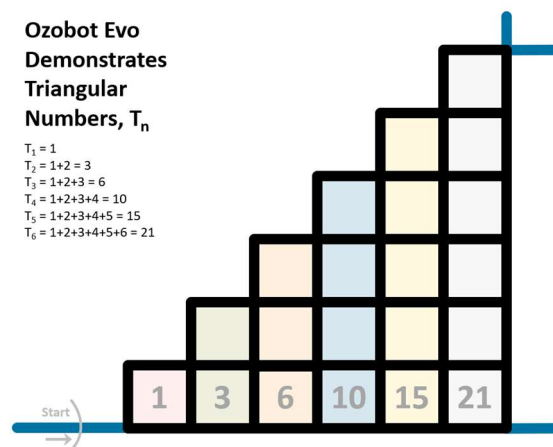


Figure 1

When Ozobot Evo is placed at the “Start” position facing the direction shown by the arrow and the program is started, he will speak “one”, indicating that he is about to demonstrate T_1 . His light will

turn red and he will then traverse the lone red block on the far left, return to the start position, make an about face, and then speaking “two”, indicating that he is about to demonstrate T_2 . His light will turn green and he will then traverse the triangle formed by the red block and the two green blocks. He will continue this procedure until he has demonstrated the first six triangular numbers T_1 through T_6 , and then start the whole process all over again, until he runs out of juice or you stop him. While traversing the map, he will show an LED color that closely matches the color of the blocks that he will be adding to the previous triangle to make a new triangle.

Classroom Exercise #1: By observing Ozobot Evo’s demonstration and the equations shown on the map for T_1 through T_6 , ask the students what T_n represents. [Answer: T_n represents the sum of the first n positive integers.]

Classroom Exercise #2: Ask the students to determine the value of T_7 , the next number in the sequence. [If they understand the pattern, they should see that $T_7 = T_6 + 7 = 21 + 7 = 28$.] Ozobot Evo demonstrated the recursive relationship that $T_n = T_{n-1} + n$.

Classroom Exercise #3: Now see if they can come up with an equation for T_n in terms of n itself. To get them to think about this, have them again consider T_7 by writing it down **twice**, once forward and once backward, and then adding the numbers in each column:

$$\begin{array}{r} 1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 5 + 6 + 7 \\ \underline{7 + 6 + 5 + 4 + 3 + 2 + 1} \\ 8 + 8 + 8 + 8 + 8 + 8 + 8 \end{array}$$

The total sum is $7 * 8 = 56$. Why is the total 56, and not 28, as was obtained in Classroom Exercise #2? The series was added twice, so we have to divide by 2 to get the correct answer 28. The value of T_7 is $(7*8)/2 = 28$. In this example, n is 7, so in general:

$$T_n = \frac{n(n+1)}{2}$$

Classroom Exercise #4: There is a story that Karl Friedrich Gauss, an exceptional German mathematician circa 1800, and his classmates were once asked by a teacher to add the numbers up from 1 to 100, in order to keep them busy for a long time. Gauss returned with the correct answer after a very short time had passed, using the technique that was outlined in Classroom Exercise #3. What answer did Gauss give his teacher? $[(100*101)/2 = 5050]$.

Classroom Exercise #5: A **fully-connected network** of n computing devices is a network in which each device is connected by a cable to each and every other device in the network. By observing patterns with 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 device networks, see if the students can show that the number of cables required can be expressed as a triangular number. [The number of cables required for a fully connected network with n devices is T_{n-1} .] This is equivalent to asking how many hand-shakes would be required if everyone in a room were to shake hands once with every other person in the room.

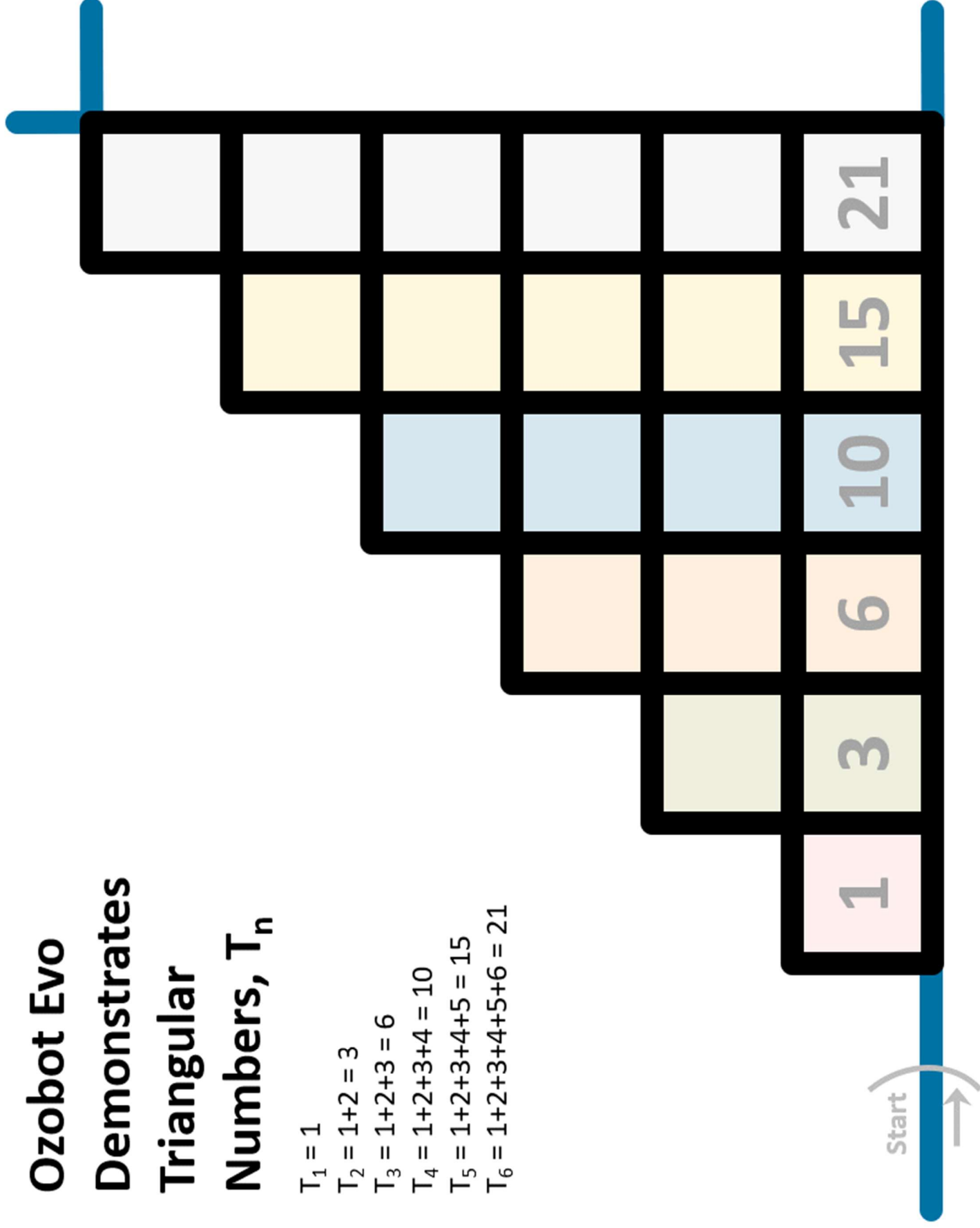
Ozobot Evo

Demonstrates

Triangular

Numbers, T_n

$$\begin{aligned}T_1 &= 1 \\T_2 &= 1+2 = 3 \\T_3 &= 1+2+3 = 6 \\T_4 &= 1+2+3+4 = 10 \\T_5 &= 1+2+3+4+5 = 15 \\T_6 &= 1+2+3+4+5+6 = 21\end{aligned}$$



Square Numbers

A positive integer that is multiplied by itself, *i.e.*, squared, is called a *square number*. A square number counts the number of blocks required to make a square. For reference while discussing square numbers, Figure 2 shows a small version of the Ozobot Evo map that students will use to investigate square numbers. A larger version appears on page 6 that can actually be used with Ozobot Evo while running the OzoBlockly program *SquareNumbersWithEvo.ozocode* (**share code is xvkzze**).

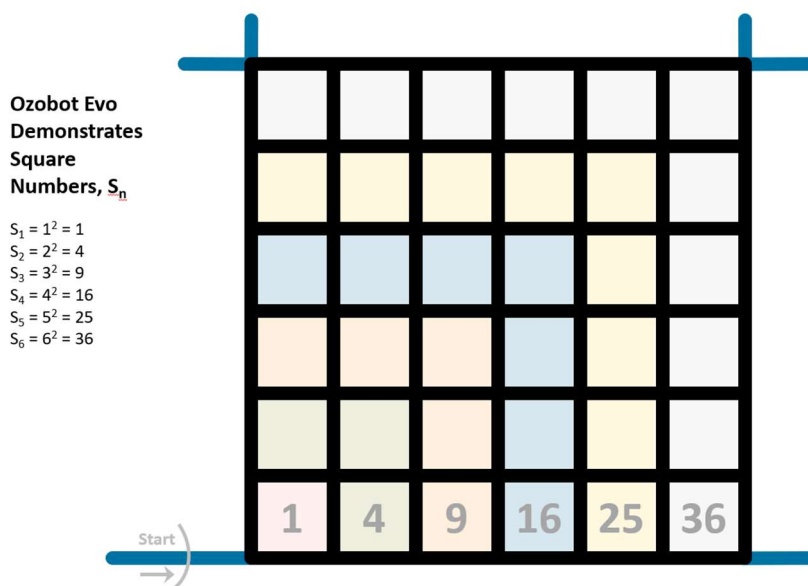


Figure 2

When Ozobot Evo is placed at the “Start” position facing the direction shown by the arrow and then the program is started, he will speak “one”, indicating that he is about to demonstrate S_1 . His light will turn red and he will then traverse the lone red block on the far left, return to the start position, make an about face, and then speak “two”, indicating that he is about to demonstrate S_2 . His light will turn green and he will then traverse the square formed by the red block and the three green blocks. He will continue this procedure until he has demonstrated the first six square numbers S_1 through S_6 , and then start the whole process all over again, until his battery is depleted or you stop him. While traversing the map, he will show an LED color that closely matches the color of the blocks that he will be adding to the previous square to make a new square.

Classroom Exercise #6: Help students to identify the recursive relationship $S_n = S_{n-1} + (2n - 1)$ by studying the patterns suggested by Ozobot Evo’s demonstration:

$$S_2 = S_1 + 3 \text{ (adding the 3 green blocks)}$$

$$S_3 = S_2 + 5 \text{ (adding the 5 orange blocks)}$$

$$S_4 = S_3 + 7 \text{ (adding the 7 blue blocks)}$$

etc.

Classroom Exercise #7: Have the students observe patterns to show that **every square number is the sum of two consecutive triangular numbers**. Figure 3 shows how $S_2 = T_2 + T_1$ and $S_3 = T_3 + T_2$. In general, students should observe the pattern that $S_n = T_n + T_{n-1}$.

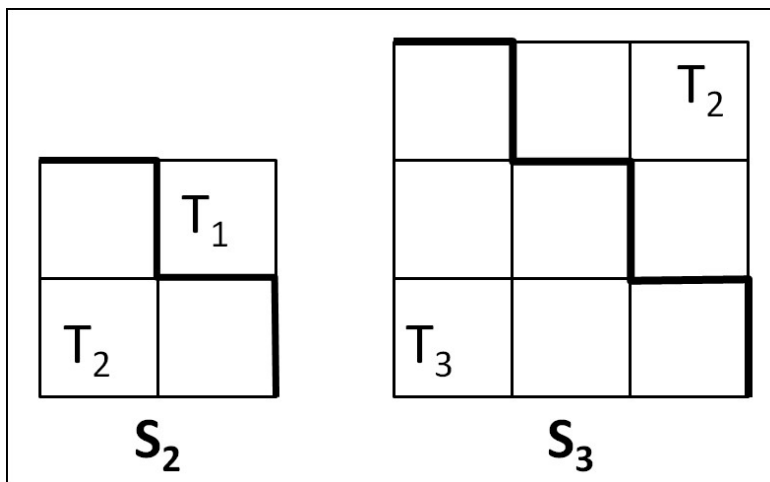


Figure 3

Classroom Exercise #8: Ask the students to prove that **squares of even numbers are even**; in fact such squares are divisible by 4. [Even numbers can be written as $2n$, where n is any non-negative integer. So, squaring an even number, we have $(2n)^2 = 4n^2$, which is both even and divisible by 4. Note that Ozobot Evo's demonstration shows that S_2 , S_4 , and S_6 are all even and divisible by 4.]

Classroom Exercise #9: Ask the students to prove that **squares of odd numbers are odd**. [Odd numbers can be written as $2n + 1$ where n is any non-negative integer. Therefore, squaring an odd number, we have $(2n+1)^2 = 4n^2 + 4n + 1 = 2(2n^2 + 2n) + 1$, which is of the form $2k + 1$ and therefore odd. Note that Ozobot Evo's demonstration shows that S_1 , S_3 , and S_5 are all odd.]

Ozobot Evo Demonstrates

Square
Numbers, S_n

$$S_1 = 1^2 = 1$$

$$S_2 = 2^2 = 4$$

$$S_3 = 3^2 = 9$$

$$S_4 = 4^2 = 16$$

$$S_5 = 5^2 = 25$$

$$S_6 = 6^2 = 36$$

Start



					36
					25
					16
					9
					4
					1