



NTRAK Modular Railroading Society, Inc.

Tips SCALE Techniques

Railroad Courtesy for NTRAK and T-TRAK Clubs & at Train Shows

June 1, 2020

Introduction

Common courtesy and respect in dealing with Members and the public, and in the handling of property belonging to Members and the public is important to the well-being and ongoing harmonious development of the Club. Courtesy and respect are especially important during periods of stress, such as during train show set-up, tear down and operations, and when visiting Members and other modelers at their homes.

The guidelines provide suggested rules of etiquette for Club Members in the handling of modules, locomotives and rolling stock, and at Train Shows and during visits to Member's homes and other layouts. Most are simple matters of courtesy and common sense, but some people need occasional reminders to prevent problems. These guidelines essentially describe respect for private property. The more senior members of the Club are expected to set the example.

Basic Rules

Personal Conduct

All Members shall conduct themselves so as not to bring discredit upon themselves, the Club or the hobby in general. Profane speech, offensive gestures, and clothing or other items having inflammatory, vulgar or otherwise objectionable words, illustrations or markings are discouraged at Club activities, and prohibited at public shows.

Intoxicants

No intoxicants are permitted at Club meetings, Club-sanctioned work sessions or at public shows where the Club has a layout. The Club shall not be responsible for any loss or damage as a result of its Members consuming intoxicants. Illegal substances will not be tolerated and use or possession thereof at Club functions is grounds for removal from the Club Roster.

Handling of Modules

Much time, effort, expense and pride go into the construction of the NTRAK, T-TRAK and Free-moN modules built by Members for display in Club layouts and at Train Shows. Sometimes these modules are also part of the builder's home layout. Thus, all modules should be handled with care to protect them from damage during transport and during set-up and tear down at shows. This is true regardless of the degree of completeness or complexity of the module or of the experience of the modeler.

The following guidelines are therefore strongly recommended for handling of modules used in the Club.

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- It is recognized that modules will receive normal wear and tear and occasional damage during transportation, set up, tear down and operation. Such wear, tear and damage is to be repaired only by the owner of the module, unless prior agreement of the owner is given.

The modules owned by the Club are under the control of the Show Superintendent. Repairs to Club-owned modules will be as directed by the Show Superintendent.

- If a module is significantly damaged such that it cannot be repaired or made operational then it is not to be installed in the layout, or, if already installed, removed from the layout. Such major damage is to be repaired only by the module's owner. Such a damaged module must be re-certified before further use in any layout.
- In the absence of the module's owner, minor corrections or repairs may be carried out to ensure reliable operation in a layout. Repairs made must only be those absolutely necessary to achieve reliable operation, be carried out by a Club member under authorization of the Show Superintendent, and the owner of the module must be advised of the repairs done.
- The presumption of fault with breakaways and derailments lies first with the rolling stock and locomotives, not with the module. Only after repeated problems at the same site with multiple rolling stock and locomotives are repairs to the module to be contemplated and carried out.
- Do not use a coin or metal tool across the track rails to stop a train. This can cause damage to high current power packs and could burn your fingers if the coin or tool gets hot. Also, the jerking stop and start of the train can damage couplers and/or derail cars and/or cause breakaways. Such jerking starts and stops can also cause a decoder to reset to its default values.

The only acceptable use of a coin across the rails is for testing Power Boosters under Digital Command Control at the time of set up of the layout. Full details are provided in other documents.

Handling of Locomotives and Rolling Stock

Over time the quality of N Scale rolling stock, locomotives, track and structures has dramatically improved, with a widening variety of equipment available. Along with this improvement in quality and availability has been a significant increase in the purchase price. A less desirable feature of recent years has been shorter production runs, which means that much of what was produced is no longer available, except possibly through auctions at extremely inflated prices. Some equipment owned by members, which was expensive to purchase in the first place, is now actually appreciating in value rather than depreciating.

Thus, rolling stock and locomotives must be handled with regard to their fragility and value. The following guidelines for the handling of Member's and visitor's rolling stock and locomotives were prepared with these factors in mind.

- Use a rerailling section of track or a re-railer to place rolling stock and locomotives on the track, or by hand place each truck on the track. Do not run rolling stock or locomotives back and forth rapidly over a turnout, crossing or rerailling section of track in order to place it on the track. Wheelsets can be damaged on cars and locomotives, and gears on locomotives can be damaged. Be careful not to damage the finish of the model.
- One car or locomotive per hand maximum when picking up rolling stock and/or locomotives following a break-away or derailment, or in taking equipment off the layout. More than one per hand can result in dropping of equipment or the finish being scratched by the equipment rubbing together.
- When carrying rolling stock or locomotives extreme care should be taken to prevent damage to the finish of the equipment. Care should also be taken to minimize fingerprints left on equipment finish. Many Members have custom finished equipment, which required much time and effort to achieve.

Care should be particularly taken when transporting equipment to and from the yard in trays to ensure equipment does not rub together.

Also take care when carrying equipment that any rings worn on fingers do not scratch the finish.

- Rolling stock and locomotives are to be repaired only by the owner. Exception: if a truck falls off and replacing the bolster pin is the only correction necessary, or an axle needs to be replaced in the truck. Faulty rolling stock and locomotives are to be removed from the layout and given to the owner along with an explanation of the problem.
- The Show Superintendent and/or Dispatcher (if present), have the authority to remove trains, individual cars or locomotives that do not operate reliably when running on the layout; this includes, but is not limited to, derailments, breakaways, rough operation, wobbling, etc., as well as physical appearance.

In general, the rule of "two" will apply:

Two derailments
Two uncouplings

For uncouplings, unless it is clear which equipment is at fault, both cars and/or locomotives involved will be removed. Rolling stock, locomotives or trains so removed will not be returned until the malfunction has been remedied and tested.

- Cosmetic flaws in rolling stock and locomotives are also cause for removal from or prohibition from the show and/or Club layout. This includes damaged bodies, misaligned bodies, badly damaged paint (not to be confused with legitimate weathering effects), and missing parts.

Train Show Etiquette

The Club's objective at train shows is to have fun running trains on our NTRAK and/or T-TRAK layouts while being courteous to each other and members of the public.

Do Not Do's

The following appear obvious, but all have occurred at train shows in the past.

Do Not be a "Bull in a China Shop" where you rush from one part of the layout to another without regard for who or what is in your way. This can result in injury to another person or yourself, or damage to another person's models.

Do Not Run Untested Trains on the Layout. Only proven, well-running locomotives and rolling stock are to be placed and operated on Club layouts. Many Club shows will have test track or layout present where new locomotives and rolling stock can be tested. However, if you must run something new then start small — one locomotive and a few cars, and then add another locomotive and some more cars, etc. — until they are known to run well.

Do Not Handle Other People's Property Like You Would Your Own, Handle It Better. Whether another member's property or the property of the club, be very careful handling the various items around the layout. It could be easily damaged or be worth more than it appears.

Do Not Consider a File as the Universal Tool No section of track or a turnout should be filed unless there is a problem at that location as demonstrated by multiple different sets of locomotives or rolling stock, and then only after careful and detailed detection and evaluation of the problem location, and a determination on whether filing is the correct solution.

Do Not Blame Other Equipment or Module(s) Before You Are Sure Your Train is Not at Fault Members will often ascribe blame to whatever track their train is running on, or their throttle doesn't work as they think it should rather than look first at their own locomotive(s) and rolling stock, and their level of familiarity with the operation of their throttle. Members should make sure their locomotive(s) and rolling stock is not at fault — wheels and axles are free-rolling, and trucks are free-turning, couplers are centered and fully operational, coupler trip pins are the correct height, and the wheels are clean. If you cannot get your throttle to do what you want it to do then ask for help and learn from that help.

Running Trains

The prime intent is to enable members to have fun running their trains. Remember the following:

- The first member to come has the first pick of tracks. Remember the rule of right-hand running on Red and Yellow tracks, except when bi-directional operation is in effect.
- If you come later a certain track is not yours just because you have equipment pre-set on that track.
- If you have been running a while and others are waiting to run, please offer to pull off a track so they might get to run.
- If you intend to share a track, please inform those already running on that track and ensure the speed of your train will be compatible with the train(s) already on the track. For example, a passenger train other than a local should not be run on the same track with a coal drag.
- For tracks with multiple trains each engineer is responsible for the safety of his/her train, e.g. rear-end collisions.
- When leaving or entering a yard, be sure to check for approaching trains and advise the engineer of your intentions. Trains entering a yard have priority over trains leaving the yard.
- Engineers with wireless throttles (Digitrax and/or smart phones) should control their train from outside the layout. Inside control of trains is only permitted when moving to and from the yard, and on the Green line.
- Watch your trains while running. Have someone else watch your train when you must take a short break from the layout.
- Keep your throttle with you, so when the call goes out to stop your train(s) you can.
- When a derailment occurs, offer to help the engineer(s) of the affected train(s) re-rail or move equipment so that mainline traffic can resume as soon as possible.
- Inform others when there is a break in their train or a derailment of their train.
- Remember that each operator is allowed a maximum of two trains on the layout and/or in the yard at a time.
- Remember the rule of “twos” — two derailments and/or two uncouplings — and remove the offending equipment.

Visiting Model Railroads

Viewing what others have done is one of the best ways to learn about model railroading, and visiting layouts, either private layouts or clubs, is how to do it. Every visit provides an opportunity to see how another modeler does things. The scale, size or stage of construction of the layout visited is generally not important to the benefits that can accrue.

Aside from Club meetings held at the homes of various Members, finding layouts to visit usually is not difficult.

- Club railroads are probably the easiest to locate as they generally have open houses, shows, or regular visiting nights. The columns in the model railroad magazines and listing on various web sites on the Internet are good places to look for such information.
- Contact your local hobby shop. Many publicize local events or have handouts from clubs in their area. Employees may be club members and can explain their visiting nights. Hobby shops may also know modelers who are willing to show their layouts.
- Layout tours are a popular convention activity, as they provide several locations to visit in a short time. These activities are listed in the convention's program, some magazines (such as the NMRA Magazine) and sites on the World Wide Web set up specifically for model railroad conventions. Such listings generally include a contact for more information or to register.

Following are the rules of etiquette for layout visits and tours. Most are matters of courtesy and common sense, but occasional reminders are sometimes needed to prevent problems. After all, the layout host will live in the neighborhood long after the open house.

- Do not park in the layout owner's driveway and be sure to follow parking regulations as posted on the street.
- No Smoking, even if the host is smoking. Layout rooms generally do not have sufficient ventilation to handle smokers, plus smoking is hazardous to the railroad itself, even if the owner believes not to himself/herself.
- Respect private property; make sure litter is not left behind.
- Do not pick up or handle any models and be careful of bumping into control panels or controls mounted along the edges of the layout.
- Never lean on the scenery and be careful of snagging things with bulky or loose clothing.
- Use diplomacy when talking about scales, prototypes, etc., especially if the owner's are different from yours.
- Most owners are happy to answer questions and talk about their layouts; remember that others may have questions too.
- If the layout room is crowded, try to keep moving so everyone gets a chance to see the entire layout. Check with the layout owner about the possibility of a return visit.
- If the host is busy, talk with other visitors. Model railroaders tend to be pretty friendly and willing to help.
- Don't forget to thank both the layout owner and his/her spouse as you leave.
- While none of these items is particularly difficult to comply with, it is amazing how often people ignore them. If everyone uses a little common sense, the layout owner will have a great day and will not hesitate to participate in future tours.

Source

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