

Fun Time

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Last time we explored the concept of size or scale for model trains. This time we want to look in more depth at what can you do with model trains.

Different aspects of model trains include focusing on static models, such as having a collection of model locomotives, and operating trains, which has a number of facets.

Static Models

With static models, the focus is on both the accuracy of the models and the theme of the collection. For example, do you want to have a collection of locomotives? If so, which ones? Do you prefer steam locomotives or Diesels? Do you want to model the equipment of a particular railroad? And what size do you want to collect and display?

If you just want a static collection of locomotives, my suggestion is either HO or O scale. HO offers the most variety, typically is lower cost, and can reside in a much smaller space. O scale models are much larger and are easier to see and super-detail. In addition, the larger O scale models are more impressive than HO; they have a presence the smaller scales cannot match. While HO is my personal choice, I have seen wonderful O scale models that were breath-taking, and have resolved to convert to O scale if I ever win the lottery so I can afford a large enough layout!

Operating Models

Operating model trains are the most popular because they **do** something and are fun to play with. Here the main choices range from O to N, with HO being the most popular. O scale looks wonderful but requires a lot of space. N scale enables you to put a lot of layout in a small space, but these trains are harder to see and a little more challenging to make run smoothly because they are more affected by track imperfections, etc. Again, HO is the most popular compromise.

The next thought is, what do you do with operating trains? Do you just run them around the layout or do you do something more focused? While those new in the hobby like to just run trains, many experienced model railroaders attempt to run their layouts like a section of a real railroad. This may involve bringing in an inbound train and breaking it down into individual cars that are 'spotted' at specific industries, then making up an outbound train from those cars and others already there. This activity has a purpose and keeps you interested in operating the model railroad. More advanced modelers run a model of an actual railroad at a selected time in history and run examples of trains from an actual historic operating schedule! Here a 'fast clock' is sometimes used to cram a 24-hour day into a four-hour operating session.

Should You Join a Club?

Another question that comes up is, should you go solo or join a model railroad club? After purchasing some locomotives and rolling stock on my own, I finally joined a club and I recommend it for a number of reasons, especially if you want to operate trains. First, you can immediately run some trains and have fun right away. Second, you will learn a lot from the more experienced members. Third, you will make a lot of new friends. Fourth, you will more quickly learn what aspects of the hobby appeal most to

you. Some modelers like great models to display, others want to run trains, others like to model structures, scenes, or scenery, etc. Finally, you can do all this without spending a lot of money!

Resources

- ❑ The San Diego Model Railroad Museum features large HO and N layouts: www.sdmodelrailroadm.com
- ❑ The Glendale Model Railroad Club has an HO layout: www.gmrrc.org
- ❑ The Pasadena Model Railroad Club has a large HO layout: www.pmrrc.org
- ❑ The South Bay Historical Railroad Society is located in the Santa Clara Depot, has both HO and N scale layouts, and is open to the public Tuesday evenings and Saturdays: www.sbhrs.org
- ❑ Silicon Valley Lines is a large HO club in San Jose: www.siliconvalleylines.com
- ❑ The Tehachapi Loop Railroad Club: www.tehachapi.com/railclub
- ❑ The Bay Area Garden Railway Society is very active in G gauge and has an informative website: www.bagrs.org
- ❑ Riverside Live Steamers: www.steamonly.org
- ❑ LA Live Steamers: www.lals.org
- ❑ The World's Greatest Hobby site has lots of information, including ways to search for public layouts to visit: www.greatesthobby.com
- ❑ The National Model Railroad Association has an extensive website: www.nmra.org