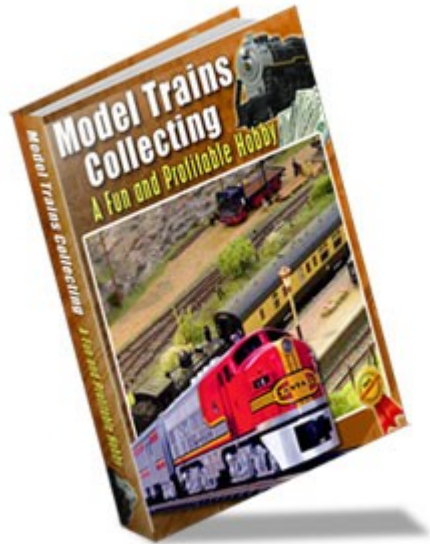


MODEL TRAINS COLLECTING



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Collecting Model Trains

Collecting special and interesting items is one of the most attractive, appealing and popular hobbies worldwide. Globally, many collectors are keeping their own special sets of collections that vary from books, to comics, coins, t-shirts and whatever else could be collected, displayed and sold as novelty items over time. Collecting model trains is one of those recreational activities that has been enjoying huge popularity in the past decades.

History of Model Train Collecting

The habit of collecting model trains can be traced back to the United Kingdom. During the onset of the 20th century, the elite from London and from other important British cities started making their own replicas of trains, which were the most common and fastest mode of transportation those times.

Model trains are miniature versions of trains. Of course, the items could not be used as actual forms of transportation. But they are getting attention and attracting interest because it's simply amazing and fun watching small trains run and operate on miniaturized railways. Many people are actually awed by the sight of these little moving trains. These people attest that watching miniature or model trains move as if they are real trains is equally amazing.

From the regions of England, Ulster, Scotland and Wales in the United Kingdom, the recreational activity of model trains collecting has spread rapidly to other parts of the world and countries like the United States, Turkey, Canada and Australia. Kiwi collectors from New Zealand are also known to be fond of model trains.

As a proof of the popularity of model trains collection as a hobby in those nations, there are numerous organizations and clubs for model trains collectors. Thus, such people would always be busy doing and improving their collection. Such collectors convene regularly to compare notes, brag about collections and share tips and advices about maintaining and further improving their respective collections.

Who Collects Model Trains

Kids of all ages would surely be interested in collecting model trains. As a matter of fact, the hobby is considered more as a recreation for adults than a play kit for children. That

is because model trains are quite expensive and require a significant amount of money for maintenance. If you plan to get into the hobby, you would need to give these things some consideration before finally jumping into this hobby.

However, when you see your model train running around that track you've assembled, you surely would be awed and satisfied. Avid Model Train Collectors claim that nothing comes close to the ecstasy and satisfaction of watching their little trains in motion.

General Classifications of Model Trains in Terms of Scales

Basically, model trains are of course significantly smaller in size compared to the actual real trains. Therefore, model trains are almost always considered as toys. However, people would not readily categorize such items as ordinary toys for kids because of two main reasons: one, model trains are very expensive compared to usual moving toys and two, model trains are complicated and need particular technical attention and care by knowledgeable adults.

For these reasons, it is very rare that there are young people who are into the hobby of collecting model trains, though there are few teenagers who are fond of collecting such items. It is also the reason why buying model trains is not an easy task if you are not too familiar with the activity.

Understanding The Model Trains Terminology

To better understand model trains, it would be helpful if you would familiarize yourself with the main and common scales of such items. Among the commonly used scales are the N scale, the TT scale, the O scale, the HO scale, the G scale and the Gauge 1 scale.

The N scale model trains are one of the most popular scaled moving trains. The scales are usually ranging between 1:148 and 1:160. The distance notable between the rails used is 9mm. Collectors almost always choose N scale model trains because of its space efficiency.

The TT scale of model trains is also very common. TT, which means Table Tops, has a scale equal to 1:120. The TT scale model trains are a little larger in size than the N scale and smaller than the HO scale. The original purpose of TT scale model trains is to be facilitated and appreciated in tabletops.

Germany has been a big contributor to the model train sector. The O scale of model trains was developed and introduced by a German manufacturer of toys, Marklin. O scale model trains can be considered as toy sizes and are the smallest in the group. The scale has a 1:43 size ratio and has a 32mm distance in between its rails. The overall scales of O scale model trains are also considered fictional or are far from being truthful in scale.

Most Popular Model Train Scale

The most popular scale of model trains all over the world is the HO scale. This model train scale has a 1:87 scale that is almost half the scale of the typical O scale. The rails are 16.5 millimeters apart from each other. Collectors in the United Kingdom initially used this scale during the early 1900s.

G scale model trains are more bulky and are very much ideal as outdoor model trains. Collectors as garden model trains use such items. You would notice that such moving transport models are almost always used to give life and excitement to homes of most model trains collectors.

Finally, Gauge 1 model trains are the standards when it comes to outdoor model trains. These model trains became popular during the pre-World War era but rapidly lost its impact after the war. The 1:32 scale is just on the average.

Landscaping and Model Trains

Perhaps, aside from the amazing and wonderful sight offered by the movement of model trains, landscapes or the background commonly present in all model trains solicit and enjoy much attention and admiration. Certainly, model trains would never be complete without landscapes and miniature land areas where the rails of the trains are located and constructed.

For sure, collectors are very particular about the landscapes exhibited by their model trains. The landscapes create a fantasy world, a replica of the common sights of trains. Thus, in such miniature landscapes, you could see replicas of landmasses like mountains, hills and plateaus. Interesting lakes, rivers and historic landmarks can also be seen in such landscapes.

Landscapes of model trains are facilitating for the existence of 'small communities'. Therefore, you could almost always see small homes, buildings and other landmarks. The green pastures are also depicted and replicated to create a realistic effect that the model train is really for real.

Landscaping in model train building is also known as scenery building. The term 'scenicking' is also coined to refer to the phrase. In scenicking, the designer or owner of the model train is making replicas of interesting landscapes and landmarks to create a very interesting sight.

Most Common Model Trains Landscapes

Among the most common landscapes and historic landmarks usually used in model trains include hills, farms, lakes, the Eiffel Tower, the Rice Terraces, the Leaning Tower of Pisa and the Statue of Liberty. In some model trains, you could also see several world landmarks in one, creating an impression that the train is traveling all around the world.

Model Trains Landscape Can Increase the Price

When buying model trains, you should also take note that landscape of the item make model trains premium priced. The beauty of landscapes helps boost the prices of such items. This should come as no surprise, as model trains are made more attractive and more interesting with the help of such landscapes. In fact, collectors find model trains without landscapes dull and boring.

If the model train you bought has no landscapes, there's no need to fret. Such a situation would help test your resourcefulness and creativity. It's really not hard to make landscapes for your model train.

You would also have the freedom to choose what land forms, sceneries and landmarks you could include to make your model train much more fascinating. Beautify your model train. Make it more attractive. You would not only satisfy yourself, but also bystanders and people who love watching your model train operate and run around the tracks.

Energy Requirements of Model Trains

All things requires some sort of power to operate, so of course that model trains require energy to support its movements and operations as well. Because there is mechanical action, model trains do have railway engines, albeit at significantly smaller sizes. That way, model trains are somehow like the actual trains and rail transports, with which they are patterned after.

What Powers the Model Train

Because there are embedded small engines at model trains, there are minimal or small-scaled engines within the simple equipment. And because there are engines, there should be sources of power. You know that engines would never function without energy and there are a few types of power sources that could be usable and applicable for model trains.

Battery Powered Model Trains

The simple generations of model trains simply have battery sources. In the past, people thought batteries were the sole reliable and convenient sources of power and energy for model trains. Now, inventors and innovators are integrating other energy sources for model trains.

Direct Current Electricity

In addition to batteries, there are model trains that employ the use of direct current electricity, as well as those that are experimentally powered by solar cells, especially those that are made to run outdoors. There are those that also run at alternating current sources of electricity.

Generally, model trains are usually powered by very low-voltage direct-current electricity. Thus, you would find that the model trains have ardent energy and power to go on continuously and climb up or crawl down rails that may be elevated or down-sloped based on the prevailing landscape used.

Gasoline Powered Model Trains

Surprisingly, some manufacturers have come out with model trains that run using gasoline. People are so curious and are so interested in these model trains. However, critics and environmentalists have been opposing popularization and wide-scale distribution of such items because they are found to contribute to pollution with their emission, although in small amounts.

Model trains would not be operational and would not be interesting if they didn't employ and use energy to power and propel themselves. One of the main concerns of collectors is the power sources and requirements of such items. Would the model train require too much energy and incur significant costs in the long run? As leisure items, model trains ought to remain less costly than the actual expenses of running real trains. But as the trend indicates, people are more impressed to model trains that have really powerful engines.

Check the power requirements of the model trains you are eyeing before finally closing the deal to purchase the items. By doing so, you could spare yourself from any problems and cost concerns in the future.

Important Uses of Model Trains

You might be a little surprised but model trains can be considered as not just recreational objects. In the past and current times, model trains have been very useful to many industries. People simply do not realize the fact very well, but experts could attest to how useful the items have been to many landmark and important activities that benefit mankind as a whole.

Model Trains and Filmmaking

First, model trains are considered one of the most important and useful tools of global filmmaking. Hollywood and other cinema centers around the world have long been using model trains to depict scenes in motion pictures that require aerial view of moving trains. If you could remember breath-taking explosions of trains in movies, do not worry. Those scenes are just special effects and often are actual explosions of model trains. Thus, the explosions look very realistic and are responsible to boosting the overall appeal of the movie.

Model Trains and the Engineering Industry

In the engineering industry, model trains have been useful as replicas of actual trains. Thus, when transport engineers need to test specifications and actions in trains, they first run miniature tests using model trains. For example, if experts want to test the efficiency and safety of trains and rails, they would first run experiments using model trains. Actual sizes and weight are computed and are mathematically rationalized to duplicate the effect and physical movement capacity of actual trains.

Model Trains and the Real Estate Industry

Real estate industry has been using model trains to lighten up and depict actual trains in replicas and miniature models of actual properties. Real estate exhibitors make model or miniature sized replicas of the actual property or site for sale. Model trains surely create a more realistic effect and are almost always bolstering the overall appeal of such materials.

Model Trains and Artists

Artists of course are using model trains to express their newly developed arts and patterns. You would find that many painters, designers and architects are working on model trains to get a firmer grip of their craft.

Model Trains used by Real Train Makers

Lastly, train makers and engineers are first required to come up and assemble their own model trains to test if they are familiar with the basic parts and functions of trains. It is a known fact that all parts and engines present in trains should be present and included in miniature scales in model trains.

Model trains are actually useful. Aside from providing a collection for hobbyists, they are sources of entertainment and enjoyment especially to people who are bored and who are confined to a small space.

Model Train Controls

Another area of concern when collecting and operating model trains is the method as to how the items are controlled and operated. As mentioned, modern model trains are now integrated with simple and miniature engines. Otherwise, there could be potential problems about the way the model trains are controlled.

Some people are very particular about how movements, speed and directions of model trains are manipulated and controlled. Collectors and owners would like to treat model trains the way actual trains are treated in the market. Model trains can also speed up and abruptly slow down which may result to collisions and accidents. Owners would not like that to happen, but it is also weird that they want to keep the possibilities of such occurrences, especially for three-system model trains.

Therefore, people controlling and manipulating model train operations are like actual train drivers who are in control of the situation. Driving and manipulating trains is a hard task to do but it is a thrilling one. Although no actual casualties would arise from simple or significant mini accidents involving model trains, collectors and owners would always strive to prevent such from happening because the model trains are simply costly and expensive. Thus, repair and replacement would involve significant amounts of costs.

Electric Powered Model Trains

Electric powered model trains are easier to control because electric currents could easily be manipulated and played at. There can be electrically isolated blocks that could influence how model trains are functioning, thus, enabling you to control and manipulate the model train movement.

For example, if you want to slow down or decelerate the speed of the model train, the control panel you are holding, which could be in the form of wired control or remote control, would enable the control of electric or energy currents in flow. Thus, for deceleration, the power requirement and use is reduced. Otherwise, the power is raised to enable acceleration.

Digital Command Control for Model Trains

Modern model trains are using the Digital Command Control (DCC) standard command system, which is widely used in the model train industry. The control system is so effective that manipulation of model trains is made more effective and efficient. DCC is also somewhat digital in nature. This allows the model trains to operate similarly to modern digital actual railways.

DCC is also behind the operations of larger garden model trains. The system is integrated with radio control to facilitate better performance and control of the miniature trains. Indeed, technology has also flowed over into the model train market as well.

Model Train Organizations

Collecting model trains is one of the most popular and interesting hobbies shared across almost all societies. In any country, there is bound to be numerous people who could get interested in this leisure activity. This increasing popularity is reflected by the rise of many organizations and clubs that unite people who are into collecting and maintaining model trains.

For every hobby, there are corresponding organization and support groups that are established and maintained by enthusiasts to unite other people who are sharing the same interests. Such enthusiasts aim to foster a cooperative and interactive relationship between people in the society who are into the common hobby. In model train collecting, there are many organizations and clubs that actively exist to facilitate interaction and encourage an exchange of thoughts and ideas between model train collectors.

If you are a model train collector, it would help others if you would decide to be a part of such groups. Such organizations also serve as support groups that would enable each other to share experiences and provide advice to each other in terms of taking care, improving and maintaining model trains.

You could find joining such a group to be beneficial to yourself as well the other members. However before you join any groups you should do a little research and determine what model train clubs if any, are available in your community.

There are model train organizations that are striving to set standards regarding the model train sector. Such groups serve as mini regulators that help oversee and set best practices in purchasing, maintaining and improving model train items.

Such organizations include NTRAK (focuses on Narrow Gauge and Standard Gauge or model trains that are more of ornaments), FREMO (Europe-based organization that focuses on HO scale items) and the National Model Railroad Association or NMRA (the biggest group of model trains collectors for promotion, development and further enjoyment of the activity).

Aside from these organizations, there may be small clubs that formally and informally exist in your community. If you see an announcement that a model train collectors group is having a get together and it's open to all, don't hesitate to go and join discussions. Doing so would help you interact with other people and hobbyists who are into collecting

and maintaining model trains. Don't let the opportunity to interact with people of same interest pass you by.

It would be fun to share your experiences with other collectors and listen to their experiences related to hobby as well. You could find that in time, your group no matter how small, could unite and join hands in finding better solutions to challenges and issues regarding model trains collecting.

Model Train Makers

Since there are thousands of collectors and numerous model train products, there is a need to know even a slight knowledge about model train manufacturers. By doing so, you would find that you will have a better understanding of this hobby.

You may be surprised to know that there are many model train makers that are currently operating worldwide. Thus, these manufacturers make up for the thick volume of model train brands, which are being patronized by collectors all over the world.

Here are some of the more popular brands or manufacturers of model trains.

Lionell LLC – This rail toys maker is based in Michigan in the United States. The company was established in 1969 and has been very active in further innovating its model trains. As a result of these endeavors, Lionel is contributing to the overall status of the model train sectors. Lionel's plunging into bankruptcy protection indicates how model train makers are having hard time coping up with the overall toy industry.

Germany's Marklin – The toy manufacturer was put up in 1859 and has since been active in renovating itself and broadening its products portfolio. Thus, when the company decided to offer model trains into the market, Marklin made a mark as a name you would first remember if you are buying model trains. Marklin is also active in initiating innovations to rule the sector.

Atlas Model Railroad – The company is well known for producing very good 0 scale, HO scale and N scale model trains. Like many other model train manufacturers, Atlas Model Railroad started not as an exclusive maker of such items. But through the years, the firm has been made into a household name, thanks to its wonderful and interesting portfolio of model trains.

Jouef – The company is France's contribution to the emerging and striving model train sector. Founded in 1944, Jouef initially manufactured model trains using tinplate, but in the 1950s, it started the trend of using plastic components into the collection item. The company is planning to revive its model train presence across the industry.

Austrains – An Australian entity, the company is well known for its dominance of the Australian model train sector. The company admits that almost all its model trains are

manufactured by contractors in China and then exported to Australia, where the items are finally packaged and branded.

Tips on Taking Care of Model Trains

The hobby of collecting model trains is one of the most rapidly growing and popular past times of many people globally. There is no denying that model trains are premium items. With the products' complex structure and sophisticated designs and assembly, model trains are costly to purchase and maintain. Moreover, many expenses would incur if the model trains would need damage repair. As much as possible, owners aim to reduce the likelihood of model trains repair.

Prevention is always best, as the saying goes, and is better than repair. Therefore, if you want to spare yourself from the uncontrollable costs of future repair charges, it would be practical for you to sit down and think of the measures you can take to properly and effectively take care of your model train unit.

Here are some recommended guidelines and suggestions that will help you in taking care of your model trains effectively and are well worth the effort. Take note that you are not asked to take too much effort, just presence of mind and a little cautiousness.

- Pay attention to storage measures. If the item is not wrapped and packaged in a box, it would be advisable for you to provide proper protection from scratches. Wrap unpackaged items in any type of blank newsprint or thick layers of paper towels. This way, you would help prevent any scratches and even minor surface alteration to occur.
- If the item is properly packaged, still make sure you are handling it with care. Overall, model trains are fragile and should be given particular and utmost attention. Do not store the item, even if it is inside the packaging, in areas of the garage that is prone to possible flooding.
- Do not let the model train get wet or soak in water. Because there are materials that will rust, make sure you help make the product rust proof. Just remember whatever would be bad for a real train, is also bad for the model train.
- Clean the surface of the model train with clean, soft piece of cloth or a Scotch pad sponge scrub. These materials would surely wipe away excessive dirt and even minute dust particles. Refrain from using steel wool for it will surely damage and scratch the surface of the model train. Use liquid cleaning solution or isopropyl alcohol to clean the item.

- Always test run the model train and check if there is any change in its movement and engine running. Take note of the sound. Are there weird and distinct changes in the item's sounds during its operations? If there are, immediately determine what it is or seek help from professionals.

Wrapping Things Up

It is really fun and exciting collecting model trains. No wonder, there are numerous collectors who are quite serious about this fun hobby. Although model trains are not cheap, many people still manage to find ways to secure and purchase their own units.

Running a model train is much like running your own miniature world. You will find that you can manipulate how model trains run, and at what direction and speed. Model trains are also prone to accidents. Although such accidents are not deadly, they are reminders that you should always be careful when running your little trains.

Maintaining model trains requires a great deal of discipline. Therefore, getting into the hobby is a fun and a good way to exercise your personal discipline. Model train collecting can be fun as well as healthy for the mind, the body and even your emotions.