



Holiday Gift Giving and Hobby Shops for Beginners

Are you new to the hobby and have questions? Or are you shopping for a special someone and think all their words about trains sound like an ancient and defunct language... stick with us, we will get you through the holidays.

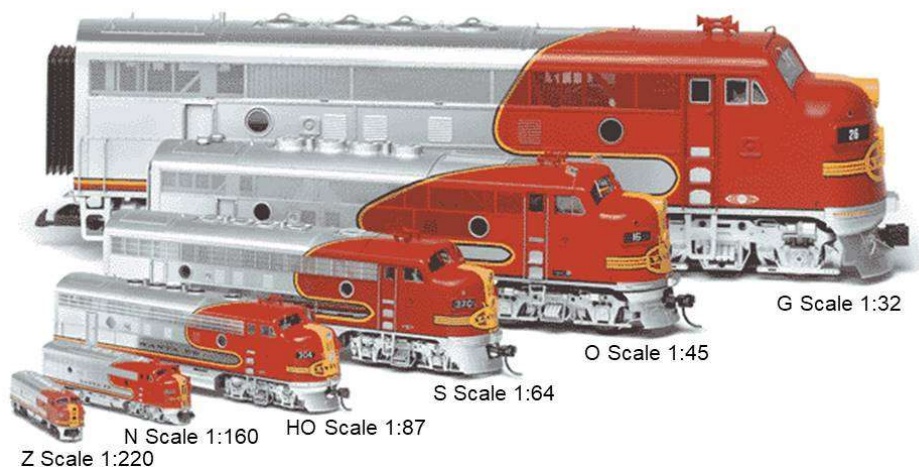
1. Scales – Does Size really matter?
2. DC/DCC – What does this even mean? What is the difference?
3. Hot Items for under the tree this year or for your next gift giving opportunity
4. Questions to ask your person before you hit the hobby shop
5. Questions to ask at the hobby show and how to go in looking like you know what you're talking about . . .
6. Next steps.....

1. Scales – does size really matter?

In this case.... It sure does! EVERYTHING you're going to buy for a layout or collection will be in this scale so we need to make sure you get it right. You can't buy an HO scale engine and run it with an N scale boxcar. It just won't work.

So first.... Let's figure out what scale you're interested in.

Popular Model Railroad Scales



SCALE is the size relationship of a model to the real world.

GAUGE is the distance between the rails:

Standard gauge = 56 ½ " (4' 8½")

Narrow gauge = 36", 30", 24"

The most popular scale is HO, this is a ratio of 1:87th. This is the easiest to find in the stores and the most common to see at shows.

The Lionel sets many people's parents and grandparents had as kids is O scale.

N scale is exactly HALF of HO scale, which means everything is smaller, the cars, the scenery, the little fingers you need to work on everything . . .

Our club models HO and N, some of our members have a little of both.

There is no right or wrong choice But what you choose is what you're going to stick with for awhile. If you are buying for someone else, have a look at the boxes to see what scale it is, or take a photo of a common household item next to one of their train cars, this will help the hobby shop figure the scale out for you. A great example would be a photo next to a pop can.

2. DC/DCC – what does this even mean? What is the difference?

When you're shopping you might see that a locomotive or engine is DC or DCC or perhaps DCC ready... this can get confusing.

DC – < Direct Current > when controlling an DC engine you can move it forward and backwards and control the speed. With DC there are no train sounds If that matters to you Consider DCC

DCC – <Digital Command Control > when controlling a DCC engine you can move it forwards, backwards, control the speed as well as lights and sounds if the engine is equipped with them. Your DCC compatible system can also be set up to control switches and turntables when you get more advanced. A DCC system allows you to control more than one engine at a time.

It is possible to upgrade from DC to DCC. You will need to know what engine you are upgrading and a hobby shop can sell you a "decoder" which is a computer chip that you install in the engine.

When you see something is DCC ready that means it's ready to have a de-coder installed.

3. Hot Items for under the tree this year or for any other gift giving.

- a. A gift certificate to the local hobby shop is ALWAYS a great stocking stuffer. Let them go in and select their own gift. Or perhaps a hobby shop they have always wanted to go to. <We will list some great stores at the end of this >
- b. One of Canada's and the world's biggest companies for Train and train products is RAPIDO, they are based in Markham Ontario, they build and distribute some fantastic items, your local hobby store will be able to order items in from them, check out their website for more information on what the latest and greatest is.
- c. Is the module or layout looking a little sparse? Sometimes we get a little hung up on the engines and rolling stock (freight cars, passenger cars etc.) that we forget to do the scenery.... A kit or maybe some modeling medium would be helpful. Take a photo of the layout or module and send that photo to the hobby shop or if you are going in person take it with you, the person there will know what you need. Layouts can always use more trees, buildings, fences, cars, people.
- d. Subscription to model railroader magazine or another publication

4. Questions to ask your person before you hit the hobby shop

- a. What scale are they working with, you might find this on a box they have,
- b. Are they partial to Canadian Pacific or Canadian National? or maybe Union Pacific or Via Rail only. This information will help you know what to get and what NOT to get. Imagine a person that only drives FORD trucks, you wouldn't want to get them a Toyota or Honda.
- c. Do they only model a particular time or era? for example the 1950's? You want to know this so you don't buy them a VIA locomotive with a KOOL AID paint scheme from the 1980's that doesn't fit their layout theme.
- d. Do they have other preferences or pet peeves ? have you heard them complain about wheels or couplers ? make note of these for when you're shopping.
- e. Are they looking to complete a set ? do they have an A-unit but need the B-Unit ?
- f. Do the numbers on the cars matter? Some people will add their own number or decals.
- g. Does the colour scheme matter ? take a photo of what they like with you when you go to the hobby shop, or if you're shopping for yourself just go with your gut. Each train corporation like for example Canadian Pacific has had a few different logo and colour changes over the years, while it doesn't matter to some it can be a BIG deal to other people.

5. Questions to ask at the hobby shop and how to go in looking like you know what you're talking about . . .

- a. Ask the hobby shop if they have any used items, not only is this a great way to save a few bucks but also you might get something that's a little rarer now or different.
- b. Make sure you know if it's DC or DCC you're looking for.
- c. Brass engines are EXPENSIVE. They are meant for the most discerning collector, they are often painted to look like other trains but being made of brass raises the price point.
- d. Examples of great hobby shop conversations would be:
 - i. I'm looking for a Canadian Pacific Engine in the ____ paint scheme, here's a picture of what they like...
 - ii. I'm looking for some freight cars that are union pacific....
 - iii. I'm looking for a building kit of a train station in N scale
 - iv. I'm looking for HO scale people for a layout

6. Next steps.....

- a. Consider signing up online for a magazine subscription
- b. Join a local association or club or at least follow as many as you can – they are always posting new ideas and this is a great place to learn from others.
- c. Model train enthusiasts are very passionate about their hobby, there are so many facets to it, there are people who are in it to collect engines and train cars, there are people interested in the logistics and the operating of the trains, there are people that love the automation of it, the lights, the signals, whatever it is you are interested in know that there are others! Get online and join a group or a club.
- d. Most importantly – ASK QUESTIONS. We all had to start somewhere.
- e. Get out to train shows – it lets you see a variety of layouts and is a great way to connect with people.

Bricks and Mortar as well as Online Hobby Shops

1. Georges Trains – Markham Ontario <https://www.georgestrains.com/>
2. Otter Valley – Tillsonburg Ontario <http://www.ovrtrains.com/>
3. Credit Valley – Mississauga Ontario <https://www.cvrco.ca/>
4. Panther Hobbies – Mississauga Ontario <http://pantherhobbies.com/>
5. Dailey's Hobbies – Whitby Ontario <https://www.daileyhobbies.com/>

Clubs and Associations

- Pine Ridge Railroaders – Oshawa Ontario <https://pineridgerailroaders.ca/>
- Soper Valley Model Railroad Assoc. <http://www.svmra.ca/>
- Belleville Model Railroad Club <http://www.bellevillemodelrailroadclub.ca/>
- Midland District Railroad Club <https://www.facebook.com/midlanddistrictrailroadclub/>
- Lindsay and District Model Railroaders <https://ldmr.org/>
- Scarborough Model Railroaders <http://scarborough-model-railroaders.org/loom/>
- Railroad Club of Toronto <http://www.modelrailroadclub.com/>
- Nottawasaga Model Railway <http://www.nottawasagamodelrailway.com/>
- Barrie Allendale Railway Modellers <https://barm.ca/>
- Credit Valley Free-Mo <http://cvfreemo.ca/>
- Kingston Model Railroad Club <https://www.facebook.com/Kingston-Model-Railroad-Club-157880130902014/>
- Ottawa Valley HO Trak <https://www.hotrak.ca/>
- Ottawa Valley N-Trak <http://www.ottawantrak.com/>
- CARM – Canadian Association of Railway Modellers <http://www.caorm.org/>
- NMRA – National Model Railroad Association <https://www.nmra.org/>

this is just the beginning – there are SO MANY online resources

STAY TUNED FOR OUR NEXT INTRO TO THE HOBBY . . .