



## NMRA Pacific Northwest Region

# Guidelines for Writing and Submitting Articles and Style Guide for *The Switchlist*

### Acknowledgements

In developing these guidelines for *The Switchlist*, the following editors generously shared the article submission guidelines and style guide they use for their publications: Joe Fugate (*Model Railroad Hobbyist*) and Cinthia Priest at White River Productions (*NMRA Magazine* and *Railroad Model Craftsman*). Helpful comments were also received from several NMRA PNR members.

### Introduction

Thank you for your interest in submitting articles and images for publication in the Pacific Northwest Region's online newsletter, *The Switchlist*. We depend on members like you to help share news and your model railroading knowledge and experience. These style and article submission guidelines include general and hobby-specific advice to help make it easier to prepare and publish your work. They are neither a substitute for a textbook on English grammar nor a complete style manual. We encourage you to study recent articles in the hobby press to see examples of subject content, writing style, captions, and how an article's elements are presented.

This material is presented in three parts: Part 1 covers **article submission guidance**; Part 2 is a **style guide**; and Part 3 is a list of **key terms**. These guidelines are not strict requirements because even published, professional style manuals vary in how they address grammar and word usage. We attempt to apply grammar and punctuation rules in *The Chicago Manual of Style* but do recognize the need for flexibility. Having said that, we have a few basic requirements that cannot be avoided, such as submissions must be all-digital and use specific file types. These guidelines will likely be revised over time to reflect our evolving English language, model railroading terms, and communication technology.

### Article Subject Matter and Length

We welcome articles ranging from a short overview or essay to full-length multi-page feature articles. They can cover prototype railroads, modeling, or railroad experiences. Well-written and researched prototype railroad information should make a connection to how to model this prototype.

We are also looking for articles about Pacific Northwest Region (PNR) members, groups, and activities. This includes division events, elections, meetings, and fundraisers; unique activities that may be of interest to the PNR membership; and information related to divisional or regional operations. In addition, we also accept reports on past or upcoming model railroad-related events within the PNR geographic area.

Feature articles must be accompanied by images (photos or illustrations) with complete captions (See detailed guidelines below). The target length of feature articles is somewhere between 1,500 and 3,000 words. This equates to about 3–6 pages (500 words per page), not including the space for photos and illustrations. Each article should have at least one image and probably no more than four per page.

### Before you begin writing, contact the Editor

Make sure we are interested in the subject of your article before you start working on it. Also, we want to minimize duplicating subjects that have recently been published in other magazines. We will confirm our interest and may offer suggestions on content or other changes to consider.

The editor's contact information is posted on the PNR website (<http://pnr.nmra.org/>), in *The Switchlist* masthead, and on its last page in the Pacific Northwest Region Staff listing.

## 1. Submission Guidelines

### Composing and Submitting Text

**Electronic Documentation.** We cannot accept any material that is handwritten or otherwise not provided in an electronic (digital) format. Text (including photo and illustration captions) must be submitted digitally as a Microsoft Word document (.docx or .doc file format).

**Writing.** Not sure where to begin? First, make sure your subject inspires you to write. What makes your subject interesting to you? What will make it interesting to an outsider? If the subject excites you, it is likely to inspire your fellow modelers, so write your ideas as if you were telling your modeling buddies about it.

- Make life easy for readers. Use simple, straightforward, complete sentences.
- In most cases, two or three simple sentences are easier to understand than one long one.
- Long sentences are difficult to read. If you are expressing two separate ideas in one long sentence, rewrite it into two shorter ones.
- Keep paragraphs short, with two to four short sentences being optimum. One-sentence paragraphs are sometimes okay, especially if the sentence is longer.
- If you introduce technical terms or obscure references, add a line or two of explanation.
- Read your writing aloud to hear if it sounds conversational.
- We follow grammar and punctuation rules in *The Chicago Manual of Style* (15th edition). If you don't find an answer to a question in this style guide, check online resources, your local library, or purchase a reputable style guide.

Present your subject simply and directly in plain English but use of model railroading jargon is totally acceptable. Do you remember writing essays in high school English class? Your article should have a clear beginning (aka introduction), middle, and end. Some background information on your subject is always a welcome introduction. Never assume the reader is familiar with your subject but do resist the urge to over-explain, even if it is a step-by-step "how-to" article.

For how-to articles, tell how you completed the project using direct, simple language and making liberal use of photos and illustrations. Use *active* voice writing, such as "I painted the wall white" or "Paint the wall white." Avoid *passive* voice, like: "The wall was painted white."

**Materials and Tools List.** The most useful how-to articles often include a detailed list of materials and tools needed to complete the project. Include manufacturers' names, part numbers, part names or descriptions, and quantities of the materials required. Be sure your information is current. For example, explain if the reader will have to substitute for items that are no longer available.

**References.** When referencing content from another article, book, or other information source, please provide sufficient information to lead readers to the source used. This does not necessarily have to be detailed, scholarly level information usually included in a bibliography or reference list. Suggested information would be the author's name and publication name and issue/date. The reference could be worded as a sentence or placed within parentheses immediately after the text making the reference.

**Sidebars.** If your article includes a sidebar, its text should be inserted into the article's Word document but clearly separated from the main article and labelled as a sidebar.

### **Photo and Illustration Captions.**

- Do not insert or embed photos or illustrations into the Word (text) document. They need to be submitted in one or more separate emails (see below).
- Each photo/illustration needs to be numbered according to the order in which it will appear in the article (e.g., Fig 1).
- Each photo/illustration also needs a clearly written, succinct caption briefly describing what it illustrates.
- Number each caption to match its photo/illustration and insert the caption within the text as a placeholder for the image's location.
- If the author of the article is not the photographer (or illustrator), please include that person's name or source(s) in the caption, if known. If the image was downloaded from the Internet, please include the website name or URL if possible.

See additional guidelines below regarding attribution and labelling of photos and illustrations.

At the top of the article, include the article's full title, your name as author (and photographer, if appropriate), and email address.

Your article's Word document filename should include a short title of the article, your name, and the date in year-month-day format (example: ModelingWater\_JDoe\_20200425). This will help us track subsequent versions.

**Submitting Articles.** Send an email to the editor with your article's Word file attached. The email's Subject line should include the article's short title and the author's name. Editor's email address: [switchlist@pnr.nmra.org](mailto:switchlist@pnr.nmra.org).

### **Submitting Photos, Illustrations, and Other Images**

Photos and illustrations make or break most articles. As the saying goes, "A picture is worth a thousand words." If your photo quality is not above average, it may hurt your submission chances more than would poorly worded text. Therefore, it is worthwhile to make sure your photos are sharply focused, well-lit and exposed, and composed to reinforce the accompanying text. If your submission has any weak photos, consider redoing them.

Unfortunately, we don't have the space here to provide a tutorial on digital photography techniques or use of computer-aided design (CAD) programs. However, articles on these subjects are available in the model railroad press.

**Photos.** All photos must be submitted as digital images. We strongly prefer high quality (high resolution) JPEG or TIFF images no smaller than 2400 x 1600 pixels and no larger than 3 megabytes (MB) in size. We will resize the images as needed and may also do some minor cropping.

Other than historic or vintage photos, all photos should be in color.

If photos need to be scanned, set the scan resolution at 300 dpi (dots per inch). If only a small portion of a photo is the subject and therefore needs to be enlarged, scan the photo at 600 dpi and crop it as needed to reduce the file size. Save these as JPEG files. If you are hesitant to crop a photo, we can do that if you identify or describe the subject to keep.

Designate a lead photo. For how-to articles, this could be a photo showing the result of your project at its best to encourage the audience to read your article and give the project a try. If possible, show the subject of the article in a finished model scene, with the photo composed so the article's subject is the dominant element. Alternatively, and for other how-to photos, show the subject against a plain, untextured backdrop of a neutral color.

**Illustrations.** If your article includes how-to illustrations, electrical schematics, track plans, or maps, they must be digital drawings (e.g., CAD) or clean, neat, legible pencil or pen drawings that have been scanned and saved as JPEG or PDF files (see below). Track plans should be drawn to scale and labelled. Similar to photos, be sure to number each illustration and include a corresponding caption in the article's Word document where the illustration is to be located.

We do not have the capacity nor software to redraw or reformat your illustrations. These JPEG and PDF files should be submitted like photos, as described below.

Line art illustrations should be scanned in grayscale at 600 dpi and saved as JPEG files.

**Text Callouts and Arrows.** For photos and illustrations with text callouts and arrows or lines on the image, *please* also include a version of the image *without* the text and lines. This allows us to reproduce your text callouts and lines accurately and in a consistent style throughout the newsletter.

**Attribution/Captions.** Even though *The Switchlist* is not a commercial entity, please be sensitive to copyright laws and the use of photos and other images you did not personally create. Copywrite materials usually require permission to use. The photographer or source should be identified in the image's caption. If the image was downloaded from the Internet, please include the website name or URL if possible. See the Style Guide/Captions for formatting.

**Labelling Images.** Number each photo and illustration according to the order in which it will appear in the article. Include this identification number in the image's file name and caption to ensure we keep these organized at our end and can match each image with its corresponding caption and location within the article.

**Submitting Images.** Do not paste photos or illustrations into the article's text (Word document). Instead, the corresponding captions will show where the images fit within the text.

Photos and illustrations need to be submitted to the editor via email separately from the article's Word document. We do not have an ftp site for uploading photos or other large files. If your images are relatively large (up to 3 MB each), please email them in batches of 3–4 images per email. Otherwise, your email may not be deliverable. When sending images in a series of emails, please identify each email in the Subject line with the article's short title plus *1 of 3*, *2 of 3*, and so on. Send images to the Editor's email address: [switchlist@pnr.nmra.org](mailto:switchlist@pnr.nmra.org)

## 2. Style Guide

We recognize that a range of opinions and advice exists regarding writing style and sometimes there are exceptions to the "rules." We primarily depend on *The Chicago Manual of Style* for guidance. Our style guide also incorporates advice from other sources in the model railroad press, especially regarding model railroad and prototype railroad-specific terms, abbreviations, etc. See the References section for these other sources.

### Text Formatting

Consistency is essential. Keep text formatting to a minimum because we will reformat the text to meet the publication's style. Examples of acceptable formatting include numbered or bulleted vertical lists and judicious use of bold text such as for headings and subheadings.

**Font.** Font size should be 11- or 12-point. This will help you gauge the article's number of pages.

**Line Spacing.** Double line spacing is not necessary. Single spacing between lines is standard for editing.

**Word Spacing.** A single character space, not two spaces, should be left after periods at the end of sentences and after colons. Inserting two spaces between sentences may have been taught in typing but is no longer used in publishing. No extra character space should be left after the final punctuation at the end of a paragraph; the hard return should follow the punctuation immediately.

**Justification and Margins.** Only the left-hand margin should be justified. Right-hand justification should be turned off, leaving the margin unjustified (ragged right) so that correct word spacing is preserved.

**Paragraph Indentation, Tabs, and Hard Returns.** Use the Tab key (*not* the space bar key) to indent the first line of a paragraph.

## Grammar and Word Usage

Dictionaries lag common word use. Merriam-Webster's free site at [www.merriam-webster.com/](http://www.merriam-webster.com/) reflects mainstream U.S. practice, is frequently updated, and is always available. Wikipedia ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main\\_Page](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main_Page)) is also a valuable resource for spelling and technical terms.

Check your writing to be sure a term is used and spelled consistently throughout the document. A good rule is, "First be sure you're right, then be sure you're consistent."

Do not depend solely on your computer's Spellcheck function. It is not a model railroader and does not know many of our hobby's special words (jargon). If you are not certain about the spelling of a word, check hobby publications, the word lists below, or search online at manufacturer and retailer websites.

## Abbreviations and Shortened Names

Try to limit the use of abbreviations; too many can make the text choppy and difficult to read. Below are guidelines for a few of the more common abbreviations. See **Numbers and Physical Quantities** and **Electrical Terms** for additional abbreviations.

**Acronyms and Initialisms.** The word *acronym* refers only to terms based on the initial letters of their various elements and read as single words (NASA, OPEC, NATO, radar). *Initialism* refers to terms read as a series of letters (FBI, CIA, ATM, DPU). The difference between an acronym and initialism is that the abbreviation formed with initialisms is not pronounced as a word. Rather, you say the individual letters, such as FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation), CIA (Central Intelligence Agency), and DPU (distributed power unit).

Acronyms and initialisms should not be used without first identifying the compound term from which it is derived. Once an acronym or initialism has been defined, it may be used throughout the same article without its definition. Always define these forms of abbreviation no matter how commonplace they may seem.

Southern Pacific's Tractive Effort Booster Units (TEBU) will be assigned to the Pyramid Lake line next month. This latest batch of TEBUs will be mated with SP's new DDA40Xs.

**et al.** This is the abbreviated form of *et alii* ("and others"), the *others* being people, not things.

**etc.** This is the abbreviated form of *et cetera* ("and other things"). Never use it in reference to people (see et al.) Substitutes include "and so forth" or "and so on," which avoids using an abbreviation at the end of the sentence.

**i.e.; e.g.** The first is the abbreviation for *id est* ("that is"); the second is the abbreviation for *exempli gratia* ("for example"). Always put a comma after either of them.

**OK.** Don't spell it out as "okay" or "Okay."

**Cities.** Do not abbreviate cities such as L.A. or S.F. Spell them out. Avoid nicknames such as "the Windy City," etc.

**Days of the Week.** Do not abbreviate days of the week except in tables or charts.

**Length, Area, and Volume.** See **Numbers and Physical Quantities.**

**Months.** Do not abbreviate months of the year except in tables or charts.

**Nations.** Generally, avoid use of periods in USA, USSR, etc., but “U.S.” is fine when not including the “A.”

**Organizations.** AAR, DOT, FRA, ICC, PUC do not require periods.

**Railroads.** UP, BN, SP, CSX, D&H, NS, etc. No periods but use ampersands (&). Always spell out Conrail, Guilford, Southern, Alaska, and other one-word railroads.

**Railroad Names.** Avoid use of *the* in front of the railroad’s name. One exception: *The Milwaukee Road* is the name of the railroad, so *The* should always precede *Milwaukee Road*. It is proper to use *the* when the railroad name is used as a modifier.

The D&H is looking for ways to speed up schedules (incorrect).

SP will combine power with Rio Grande (correct).

The SP system is powershort.

Train names should be in italics.

“The Humming Bird was L&N’s...”

Since many lines have been absorbed or merged, it’s helpful to refer to the line’s previous owner.

Conrail trains have been using this former NYC line since September.

UP’s former MoPac line to Pueblo has little local traffic.

Always use *former*, instead of *ex-* when referring to a railroad or line; *ex-* is used when referring to the former owner of a locomotive.

ex-BN SD45

**Builders.** EMD, GE, BLW, FM, Lima, and Alco (not ALCO or ALCo)

**States.** Spell out state and province names. Do not abbreviate these except in addresses. When abbreviating before a zip code, use the standard USPS or CP (Canadian) two-letter abbreviation (both letters capitalized and no period).

**Other Abbreviations.** See also Numbers and Physical Quantities and Electrical Terms.

horsepower: hp

miles per hour: mph

pound(s): lb lbs

## **Capitalization**

Use capital letters for proper names (a person’s name or the official name of a place or thing, including brand-named products). Example: Vert-A-Pac and Goo are trademarked products and should be capitalized; but “automobile car” and “canopy glue” are generic terms.

Some companies spell their entire name in capital letters, such as X-ACTO. However, use only initial capitals with these to avoid distraction: X-Acto.

**Divisions and Subdivisions.** When specific, capitalize; otherwise, don’t.

C&O’s Cheviot Subdivision was part of the Chicago Division.

He worked his way down the subdivision to the yard.

Capitalize routes such as the Sunset Route, Moffat Road, Bee Line, St. Charles Air Line, etc.

## Captions

Begin captions with the photo or illustration number and a period. Captions use conventional punctuation. Photo credits should be in italic type and have no ending punctuation (*Joe Smith photo*).

## Compass Points and Directions

Do not capitalize north, south, east or west except when it appears as part of a proper name.

East Sibley (correct); East of Sibley (incorrect).

Capitalize when indicating a specific region of the country but use lower case when using an adjective is derived from these terms.

the Southeast; southeastern; the Midwest; midwestern, midwesterner

## Dates, Time of Day, Season

**Exact dates.** Spell out month and set year off with commas. When in the middle of the sentence, set off the year with commas.

December 7, 1941

On July 20, 1969, the Apollo Lunar Module *Eagle* landed on the moon.

**Month/Year.** No commas. Example: June 1938 (never use *of* as in *June of 1938*).

**Plural Years.** No apostrophe. Example: 1940s.

**Centuries.** Capitalize. Example: 20th Century.

**Major Historical Events.** Capitalize.

The Depression, or the Great Depression

**Time of Day.** Numerals (hours and minutes) are used with a colon when exact times are emphasized. Add a space before the abbreviations *a.m.* and *p.m.*

7:15 a.m.; 11:00 p.m.

**Seasons.** Lower case: winter, spring (vernal), summer, and fall (or autumn)

## Italics

Use italics to emphasize words, but this technique will become ineffective if overused. The names of publications should be italicized.

## Numbers and Physical Quantities

Spell out only single-digit numbers and use numerals for all others.

He has five flat cars and 47 boxcars.

However, in mathematical, statistical, technical, or scientific text, all physical quantities and units of time are expressed in numerals, whether whole numbers or fractions, and are almost always followed by an abbreviated form or symbol of the unit of measure with a space before the abbreviation. No space is between the numeral and a symbol. See **Electrical Terms** for guidance on electrical units of measure and their abbreviations.

the 5 mi distance; a 2 oz weight; a 45 mph freight train; 3 in. (or 3")

When a number begins a sentence, the number is always spelled out; twenty-one through ninety-nine are hyphenated; others open. Try to rewrite sentences that begin with a very large number.

Sixty-seven members attended. One hundred twenty did not.

A six-year-old girl; a five-to-four court decision; \$1.05, \$655,000; \$2.45 million; six GP40s and 27 U25Bs

Use a comma to separate groups of three digits.

9,973; 1,234,568

Spell out *zero* when it stands alone.

There is zero chance of a letter appearing here.

Write fractional decimal numbers with a leading 0 before the decimal point.

0.5 millimeters; 0.020 inches

For large quantities, use words instead of a number series unless a specific number is needed.

BNSF estimated 2010 fuel expenses of \$2.3 billion.

The locomotive cost \$3,265,334.

**Units of Measure.** Use U.S. customary units of measure whenever possible (feet, inches, yards, miles, pounds, ounces, etc), either spelled out, abbreviated, or using symbols. In some articles by non-U.S. authors, it may prove unnecessary and impractical to convert all units. Units must be consistent within an article.

Abbreviations for U.S. customary units of measure are usually set without periods, but in nonscientific contexts, periods are customary. Exception: Retain the period in abbreviations that spell normal words. Note that *in* can mean inch or inches, *ft* can mean foot or feet, and so forth.

ft, foot/feet

sq ft, square foot/square feet

in., inches (*not* in)

no., number (*not* no)

**Numbers, Abbreviations, and Symbols in How-to Technical Articles.** In construction directions and lists of materials, use numerals to define specific electrical or other physical values. Also see **Key Terms/Electrical Terms** below.

6 ohms, 9 milliwatts, 5 amps, 8 degrees, no. 6 turnout

In giving technical dimensions, denote inches with the inch symbol (") and feet with the foot symbol ('). Note the use of symbols vs text as units of measure and the use of hyphens and spaces in the examples below. Also see **Hyphens and Dashes** for more examples.

10'-6" internal height, 8' door

8½" strip (or 8-1/2" strip); 0.100" x 0.125" styrene; 1/2 inch-thick MDF

16' x 32' room, 17 x 36-foot room, 8'-4" x 12'-6" room

For dimensions, to avoid confusing line wraps, use a hyphen to link the major and minor numerals.

40'-6"; not 40' 6"

For thin sheet stock sold in fractional sizes, use a decimal and up to three places.

0.040-inch (0.040"), 0.001-inch (0.001")

**Percent.** Spell out *percent* instead of using the % sign except in tables; *percent* is one word.

## Punctuation

**Apostrophe.** The main uses of apostrophes in the English language are to indicate contraction and possession. Example: **it's; its.** *Its* is the possessive form of *it*; *it's* is the contraction for *it is*.

It's a decommissioned locomotive that has had its prime mover removed.



**General Rule for Possessives.** The possessive of most *singular* nouns is formed by adding an apostrophe and an *s* ('s) and the possessive of most *plural* nouns is formed by adding an apostrophe only (no *s*). An alternative practice is to omit the possessive *s* on all words ending in *s*.

Atlas' catalog (rather than Atlas's catalog); ABC Models' newest release

No apostrophe is required in such constructions as *1800s* or *1960s* because neither would be a contraction nor a possession.

**Comma.** Use commas to separate three or more words, phrases, or clauses in a series. Use a conjunction (*and, or*) between the last two items of the series. While some authorities say that the comma before the conjunction is optional, leaving it out may cause confusion, so it is better to include it.

The system included a power supply, throttles, and cab controls.  
The brake wheel can be painted red, black, silver, or rust.

**Semicolon.** When elements in a series involve internal punctuation, or when they are very long and complex, they should be separated by semicolons. Semicolons are also often used between two independent clauses not joined by a conjunction (*and, but*) or when the independent clauses are joined by an adverb (*then, however, thus, therefore*).

Johnson stole second base; he was called out on the ensuing play.  
The Great Northern Railway primarily extended from the upper Midwest to the Northwest; however, it also had a route into northern California.

**Colon.** A colon introduces an element or a series of elements illustrating or amplifying what has preceded the colon. A colon is normally used after *as follows, the following*, and similar expressions. However, it is *not* normally used after *namely, for example*, and similar expressions. Nor is it used before a series introduced by a verb or preposition. The next word after a colon is not capitalized unless it is a proper name or beginning of a quote.

The Wheeling & Lake Erie Railway is located in the following states: Ohio, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Maryland.  
Guilford's roster includes MEC U23Bs, ST SD26s, etc.

**Hyphens and Dashes.** We mainly use three lengths of dashes, each with its own purpose. There should be no spaces before or after any hyphen or dash.

**Hyphen (-).** Use hyphens to connect two or more words to convey a single idea.

toll-free; half-finished

Hyphenate compound numbers from twenty-one through ninety-nine when they begin a sentence.

Thirty-four people attended the club's first operating session.

Hyphenate compound adjectives with a numerical first part, but do not hyphenate a number when used with an abbreviation or symbol.

600-grit sandpaper; 40-watt bulb; 60-foot boxcar; 0.25-inch-diameter styrene tubing  
60 ft boxcar; 60' boxcar; 1 oz weight

Some diesel locomotive designations include hyphens (RS-3, SD40-2).

See **Numbers and Physical Quantities** above and the list of hyphenated railroad terms and **Locomotive Designations** at the end of this guide for more examples of when and when not to use hyphens.

*en dash* (–) Longer than a hyphen, the en dash is primarily used to connect numbers. In this use it signifies *up to and including* (or *through*). Examples include range of dates, pages, or series of numbered objects.

1938–1944; pages 3–6; locomotives numbered 2300–2399

*em dash* (—) An em dash or pair of em dashes sets off an amplifying or explanatory element (Commas, parentheses, or a colon may perform a similar function.) “

The Northern Pacific Railway—now a “Fallen Flag”—was one of the first transcontinental railroads.

**Quotation Marks.** Place all sentence punctuation *inside* quotation marks. Quotes within quotes are single apostrophe.

“Because I said so, that's why.”

“Because it's easier to read!”

“...he would ride in the ‘railfan seat,’ and would...”

“...he would ride in the ‘railfan seat.’”

References to railroad **slogans** should be placed in quotation marks.

“Serves All the West”

“Seaboard Serves the South”

**Parentheses:** Use parentheses and em dashes sparingly; most phrases should be set off with commas.

### **Titles of People**

High-up titles are capitalized only when preceding a name, otherwise lower case.

There was a time when the New Haven’s President McGinnis met with Robert Young, president of the C&O.

### **Troublesome Words**

**affect; effect.** *Affect*, almost always a verb, means “to influence, have an effect upon.” *Effect*, usually a noun, means “an outcome, a result.” But it may also be used as a verb meaning “to make happen, produce.”

**as; because.** When used to denote the cause or reason for something, we prefer to use the conjunction *because*. Use *as* to denote the passage of time.

### **Web Issues**

You can drop the `http://` on all links that start with `www`.

When inserting a link into your article, do not include the punctuation in the sentence part of the link. For the benefit of our printer-friendly edition audience, spell out links. Don't hide them beneath a reference:

Do this: For more information, visit [www.moreinfo.com](http://www.moreinfo.com).

Don't do this: For more information, [click here](#).

### 3. Key Terms

#### Modeling

benchwork	ready-to-run (avoid RTR and r-t-r)
CA (cyanoacrylate cement; <i>Superglue</i> is acceptable, ACC is not)	roadbed
canopy glue (not a brand name)	runaround (adj., as in <i>runaround track</i> )
cardstock	runby
diecast	scenicked
flex track (two words)	scratchbuild, scratchbuilder, scratchbuilding, scratchbuilt (all one word)
footprint	spray paint (two words, noun and verb)
HOn3 scale	stay-alive (hyphenated, as in stay-alive circuit. "Keep-Alive" is trademarked by Train Control Systems; use only when referring to TCS products)
kitbash, kitbashed, kitbasher, kitbashing (all one word)	stripwood
L-girder	throw bar ( <i>see switch rod under "Railroad Terms"</i> )
lauan	track plan, track planning
mock-up (n.), mock up (v.)	train order
overspray	wheelset
painter's tape (singular, apostrophe 's per 3M Corp. usage)	X-Acto (hobby knife is acceptable in generic use)
polyfil	
railfan, railfanning (one word)	

#### Product and Manufacturer Names

Below are a few names that have atypical spellings. When in doubt as to spelling and capitalization, check the manufacturer's website.

Detail Associates	Microbrush	ScaleTrains
Details West	Micro-Mark (corporate name has a hyphen)	SoundTraxx Tsunami2
Dullcote, Glosscote (Testors products)	Microscale	Tangent Scale Models
Econami (by SoundTraxx)	Micro-Trains (with a hyphen and a final s)	Testors (no apostrophe)
ExactRail	Modelflex	Tru-Color paint
Floquil	NorthWest Short Line	Vallejo
Homasote	PanPastel (one word)	Walthers (no apostrophe)
InterMountain	PollyScale	Woodland Scenics (no apostrophe)
Kadee	Scalecoat	X-Acto
Life-Like		

## Railroad Terms

Hyphenated Terms. The following list includes examples of common hyphenated words used in model and prototype railroad publications.

100-ton	low-cost	run-through
Auto-Train	hours-of-service	Sea-Land
bad-order	maintenance-of-way	set-offs
bi-level	mid-December	single-sheathed
dead-in-tow	on-line	start-up
double-sheathed	pick-ups	time-freight
double-stack	push-pull	trade-in
ex-Conrail	re-engined	two-man
first-generation	right-of-way	

Some terms are written as a compound word while others are two or more separate words.

Amtrak	hotbox	set out (v.), setout (n.)
arch bar truck (three words, no hyphens)	main line (n.), mainline (adj.)	short line (n.), shortline (adj.)
autorack (one word)	multiple unit, or MU (abbreviation is capitalized, no punctuation)	side frame
backhead	m.u. cable (for multiple-unit cable)	side rod
boxcab	Murphy	smokebox (one word)
boxcar (one word)	pickup (n.), pick up (v.)	smoke jack (two words)
branch line (n.), branchline (adj.)	piggyback (one word)	Stanray
caboose, cabooses	plain bearing (or journal bearing or friction bearing)	stock car
centerbeam (generic. Manufacturers use specific trademarked names)	Pullman Standard (no hyphen), shorten as P-S (with hyphen), freight cars PS-1, PS-2	switch rod
Chicago & North Western	reailer	tackboard
deadhead	reefer	tank car
drawbar	refrigerator car	throw bar (switch rod is preferred)
Dreadnaught	road names (two words)	timetable
fish belly (two words)	road numbers (two words)	trainmaster (a railroad official)
flat car (two words)	roller bearing, roller bearing truck	Train Master (a Fairbanks-Morse locomotive)
gladhand (one word)	roof walk	train order
grab iron (two words)	running board (not roof walk, except when writing specifically about covered hoppers)	uncoupling lever (not lift bar or cut lever)
grille (as in, a grating)		underframe
hopper car (spell out and hyphenate the number of hoppers: four-bay hopper, triple-hopper, quad-hopper)		way freight
		wheelset (one word)
		yardmaster

## Locomotive Designations

Manufacturers used various standard and non-standard designations over the years. Just a few examples are shown below but Wikipedia is an extremely valuable resource that is updated as new diesel locomotives are produced. Just go to the [Wikipedia](#) website and search by manufacturer or model.

**Steam Locomotive Designations.** In specific references, use the railroad name, wheel arrangement, and the specific railroad nickname in the first reference (e.g., an NC&SL Dixie 4-8-4, a Union Pacific 2-8-2 MacArthur). Locomotive type names are capitalized (Consolidation, Big Boy, Fairlie, etc).

**Diesel and Electric Locomotive Designations.** Identifiers do not contain hyphens unless specifically applied by the maker. (e.g., FA-2, RS-1, S-2, GP9, SD40, SD40-2, U25B, Dash 8, C39-8, H12-44).

**Alco (American Locomotive Works) and MLW (Montreal Locomotive Works):** Hyphens on everything except early models and a few oddballs (no hyphens on M-series):

FA-2, RS-1, RSD-15, S-2, HH900, M420

**BLW (Baldwin Locomotive Works):** Baldwin used hyphens on all models:

AS-616-B, DR-6-4-15, S-8, VO-1000

**EMC/EMD (Electromotive Corporation/Division):** No hyphens in model designations except in the “-2” series and selected models:

BL1, DDA35E9A, F7A, F40PH-2, GP9, MP15DC, SD-38, SD40-2, SD70ACe-T4, SW9, SW1500

**FM (Fairbanks-Morse):** Hyphens used same as Baldwin:

A-Erie, CFA-20-4., H-12-44TS, H-16-44

**GE (General Electric):** No dashes in early model designations except in a few selected models, particularly the “tonners,” and the “-7” and “-8” series:

23-ton Boxcab, 44-ton, B30-7, U28C, C30-7A, Dash 8-40CW, AC4400CW, ES44DCi, ET44C4, NYC T-3

## Electrical Terms

Electronic devices for model railroading are booming in popularity. Technology has advanced to the point that modelers with little experience can assemble a sophisticated circuit if instructions are well written in an article. Use this guide to answer questions about how to write electrical terms—in particular, units of measure, such as volts and amps. They are consistent with and complement guidance provided earlier in this Style Guide regarding abbreviations, hyphens, numbers, and physical quantities/units of measure.

In mathematical, statistical, technical, or scientific text, physical quantities and units of time are expressed in numerals, whether whole numbers or fractions, and are almost always followed by an abbreviated form or symbol of the unit of measure. However, to reduce confusion in some circumstances, spell out numbers that denote quantities.

You need three 5-volt power supplies. Not: You need 3 5-volt power supplies.

Use a hyphen when a unit of measure is a compound modifier. Do not hyphenate an abbreviated compound modifier and do not add a space before electrical abbreviations. Do not hyphenate when the unit of measure is not a modifier.

Use a 12-volt capacitor.

Use a 12V capacitor.

The capacitor is rated for 12 volts.

Place a zero before numerical values less than one.

5/11/2020

0.5 volts, 0.1 amps, 0.01uF

Spell a unit of measure the first time it is used and abbreviate it thereafter.

Buy a 12-volt transformer. A 15V transformer won't work.

Most DCC boosters can supply up to 5 amps, but this is a 3A booster.

**Parts Listings.** Always abbreviate units of measure in tabular listings:

D1	Diode, 1N4001, 50V, 1A
C1	Capacitor, electrolytic, 47uF, 16V
C2	Capacitor, film, 0.1uF, 25V

**Volt.** The unit of measure for voltage is the *volt*, named for Italian physicist Alessandro Volta. Use a lowercase *v* when spelling the word. Abbreviate with a capital *V* following a voltage number (no space). 1/1000 of a volt is a *millivolt*, abbreviated *mV*, but this is rarely encountered in model railroading.

A 5-volt power supply produces 5 volts.

This circuit uses a 5V regulator.

**Amp.** The base unit of measure for current is the *ampere*, named for French mathematician and physicist André-Marie Ampère. Use the lowercase short form *amp*, or plural *amps*. Do not use ampere. When the current value is a compound modifier, add a hyphen and use the singular amp instead of amps.

A large layout needs a 5-amp booster, but this booster produces 3 amps.

Use a 5-amp booster.

Abbreviate amp or amps with a capital *A* following a current number (no space). A *milliampere* is 1/1000 of an ampere and is usually shortened to milliamp or milliamps (plural). Abbreviate milliamp(s) as *mA* with a lowercase *m* and an uppercase *A*.

Buy a 5A booster.)

The LED draws 20mA, so a 100mA power supply is sufficient.

**Resistors.** The unit of resistance is the *ohm*, named for German physicist Georg Simon Ohm. The uppercase Greek "Omega" symbol ( $\Omega$ ) is the standard abbreviation. For values less than 1,000 ohms in article text or captions, add a space and lowercase ohms (or the symbol  $\Omega$ ) following the value.

The resistor value is 820 ohms.

The resistor value is 820 $\Omega$ .

On schematics, the numerical value alone is sufficient.

R17 820; not R17 820 ohms.

When a resistor value less than 1,000 ohms is a compound modifier, add a hyphen and use the singular "ohm" instead of "ohms.

The 820-ohm resistor limits the current.

A capital *K* denotes a factor of 1,000. For values 1,000 ohms or greater, place a *K* (no space) immediately following the value. Do not add a hyphen when a *K*-value is a modifier.

The resistor value is 22K $\Omega$ .

A 22K $\Omega$  resistor works fine.

On schematic diagrams, always use *K* for resistor values 1,000 ohms or greater. Do not write the full numerical value, and do not add *ohms*.

Yes: 22K $\Omega$ ; No: 22,000, 22000, and 22K ohms.

**Capacitors.** The unit of capacitance is the *farad*, named for the British physicist Michael Faraday. A farad is a huge amount of capacitance, so capacitors come in values of *microfarads*. A microfarad is one millionth of a farad and the lowercase Greek *Mu* symbol ( $\mu$ ) followed by an uppercase F is the standard abbreviation (33 $\mu$ F). For reliability and consistency, use a lowercase *u* instead (33uF).

Do not add a hyphen when the capacitor value is a compound modifier and is abbreviated.

The 47uF capacitor smooths the DC voltage.  
Use a 33uF capacitor.

Add a leading zero to capacitor values less than 1uF. This applies to article text, captions, and schematics.

A 0.1uF or 0.01uF capacitor works fine for this purpose.

On schematics, the numerical value alone is sufficient.

470; not 470uF or 0.01 or 0.01uF

**Wire Size.** Describe wire size with values in the American Wire Gauge (AWG) system. Gauge numbers increase numerically as wire sizes become smaller. For example, 20AWG wire is larger than 24AWG wire. Wire sizes may be written in two ways. Please choose one and stick with it throughout your article.

1. Use the numerical gauge followed by uppercase AWG. There is no space between the number and AWG.

Use 24AWG wire.

2. Use a pound sign (#) (also called an “octothorpe”) followed by the numerical wire gauge. There is no space between the pound sign and the number.

Use #24 wire.

Do not use any of the following forms: “Use number 24 wire,” “Use no. 24 wire,” “Use No. 24 wire,” “Use 24-gauge wire,” or “Use 24 gauge wire.”

**Component Sources.** Some readers may have little experience with electricity and electronic devices. Authors should provide all information needed to order the components to build a project. Each electronics project article must have a parts list including a part number sufficient to order each component from Digi-Key, Mouser, All Electronics, or other suppliers.

List each component's technical specifications so readers can procure them from other sources as well. Identify every component with its designation shown on the schematic diagram and/or component layout diagram.

#### Example Parts List

D1	Diode, 1N4001, 1A, 50V, Digi-Key 1N4001DICT-ND
C1	Capacitor, electrolytic, 47uF, 16V, Digi-Key P969-ND
C2	Capacitor, film, 0.1uF, 100V, Digi-Key 495-1147-ND
J1	6-pin RJ11 modular jack, PCB-mount, Mouser 571-5520250-3

## References

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