



Sharing Information About Your Model Railroad

Guidelines for Submitting Articles on Individual or Club Layouts and Modules

Editor's Note: This set of guidelines was originally published in the [February 2022 Switchlist](#) (pp.6-8). It serves as a standing invitation to each PNR member to submit an article about your layout or module(s) and provides a few basic guidelines and suggestions on how to do this.

Since 2022, we've had good success in how members have responded but we do need more folks to continue with this endeavor. Many thanks to those who have already contributed! It is great to see what is being accomplished and your efforts to share this with the entire PNR membership via The Switchlist are much appreciated by all!

Introduction

Who among us doesn't like to talk about our model railroad—whether it's already built, just started, or is still just in the conceptual stage of planning? Wherever you may place your layout on that spectrum, we are offering a standing opportunity to share your vision, ideas, and past and present efforts within this newsletter.

Don't be too quick to dismiss this as someone else's opportunity. We all have something to share, and it can be fun to do.

So, here's the pitch. Beginning with the February 2022 issue of *The Switchlist*, we launched a series of articles that feature model railroad layouts of PNR members. The intent is to give each of us an easy way to "talk" about our layout—to share with fellow members what you've already accomplished or, if layout construction has not yet started, your vision, concept, "givens and druthers," or any other information you'd like us to know. We want this to be a low-impact, non-intimidating way to share your efforts and ideas. In so doing, other PNR members will get to know your model railroading interests a bit better. If you're a lone wolf or remotely located, it's an easy way to host visitors.

Think of it this way: If you were meeting with other model railroaders for the first time, how would you go about describing your model railroad if you had their attention for 10-20 minutes? Do you remember Show-and-Tell in grade school? It's kind of like that.

Guidelines and Suggestions

- PNR member layouts only
- This initial focus is on home layouts, individual modules if you're a member of a modular club, and 100% NMRA club layouts.
- The layout can be at any stage of development—that is, conceptual, design, construction, completed, operational, or any combination of these.
- The layout can be any size or style (shelf, walk-in, island, etc)
- We're looking for a basic overview of your model railroad, perhaps just 2-4 pages, and that includes photos, track plan drawings, and maps.
- These are not intended to be "how-to" articles.

- The article's content is quite flexible and can be based on the layout's stage of development.
- A description of the layout could be written up in a summary-type of format like the traditional *Layout at a Glance* sidebar that you see in other model railroading magazines. See the detailed guidance and a template below.
- Here are a few other ideas on content:
 - Briefly describe notable design or construction challenges.
 - Why you decided on the scale, prototype, or other aspects of your layout.
- A few images always add a lot to an article. Here are a few ideas or suggestions:
 - Photos of prototype railroad equipment, structures, or scenes you're using for inspiration or ideas.
 - Map of the geographic area you're planning to model (such as from Google Maps or Google Earth).
 - Photos of your "train room" or available space (it's ok if it's still empty space or has a car parked there).
 - Photos of the layout, whether it's a shelf on the wall without any track or it's fully constructed.
 - Photos of any models (rolling stock, structures, scenery) you will use on the layout.
 - Drawing or sketch of the track plan, if available. This could range from being a CAD drawing to a photo of the proverbial pencil sketch "on the back of a napkin," as long as it is legible. Providing the room dimensions or grid scale would be helpful. A schematic of your track plan is an option, too. The level of detail provided is up to you, so it could just be a sketch of the main line.

Layout at a Glance Template

On the next page is a template for the optional *Layout at a Glance* section. You can approach it as a simple fill-in-the-blank section. These are only suggested items, and you can fill in as many or as few as you want. You can also add other items not listed and it's ok to fill in "TBD" (To Be Determined) for any of these. You can see how others have filled out the template by reviewing past layout articles in *The Switchlist* or in other model railroad magazines.

How to Submit Your Article

If you are at all interested in contributing, please first give me a quick "heads up" via email at switchlist@pnr.nmra.org and we can schedule your article. The article will need to be submitted as a MS Word document. Do not send it as a pdf file. Photos, maps, and other digital images should be attached to the email as separate files (See *Images* below). In the body of your article, please insert numbered captions at the locations where you'd like your images to appear. Email your article and images to the editor at switchlist@pnr.nmra.org.

Deadlines for submissions are:

February 1
May 1
August 1
November 1

If you are at all hesitant about your writing skill, you may find helpful information in [Guidelines for Writing and Submitting Articles and Style Guide for *The Switchlist*](#). I am also available to provide advice for your article.

Images: Image file names should be numbered or labeled to pair up with your captions. Photos (including any photos of your track plan drawing) should be sharply focused, have adequate lighting, and be JPEG files at medium to high resolution (1 MB to 2 MB). If necessary, a CAD track plan may be converted into a JPEG, PDF, or other commonly used image file type. I use CADrail and it provides the option of saving or exporting a layout drawing in a variety of formats (.jpg, .png, .tif, .dxf, etc).

Please provide a short caption for each image you submit and use a numbering system or something similar for matching the caption with the proper image.

Layout at a Glance [suggested items to include]

Railroad name:

Scale:

Size: [benchwork or room dimensions]

Prototype/theme: [prototype/freelanced/fantasy]

Locale: [geographic location modeled]

Era:

Style: [e.g., walk-around, shelf, mushroom, island]

Mainline run: [length]

Minimum radius:

Minimum turnout: [frog number]

Maximum grade:

Train length: [no. of cars or length in feet of a typical train]

Benchwork: [examples: no. of decks, open grid, L-girder, hollow core door, etc]

Height:

Aisle width:

Roadbed:

Track: [rail code, hand-laid vs flex track, commercial turnouts]

Scenery: [materials, techniques]

Backdrop: [(material, hand painted vs photos)]

Control: [DC vs DCC, manufacturer]

Operations: [e.g., TT&TO, CTC, car cards, switch list]

Online presence: [blog, YouTube channel, or other; is it listed in NMRA RR Directory?]

Conclusion

We want this to be a positive experience for everyone and a way to get to know each other, no matter where you reside in the PNR. So, remember, the idea is to keep these articles short and easy to put together. I'd like to emphasize that your article could be as basic as filling out the Layout at a Glance template and including one or two photos or a schematic drawing of your track plan. You can browse through past issues of *The Switchlist* for examples of what others have submitted.

Many thanks for considering this opportunity to share your model railroading interests with us. And again, thanks to all of you who have already contributed an article. They are all very much appreciated!