

MODEL CONTEST ENTRY FORM HINTS AND TIPS

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Many model contest entrants and potential entrants dread completing the required Contest Entry Forms more than any other aspect of contest-level model building; in fact, many models are probably not entered in model contests because of the “hassle” of completing the Entry Form. Moreover, many models that are entered do not receive the points they may be entitled to because of a poorly completed form. This guide is an attempt to rectify this situation and explain what type of information is needed.

First, do not believe that a long “book” is necessary to obtain a high score in model contests. In fact, such “books” are not read by most judges; any more information than 1-2 paragraphs is more of a detriment than a help. The “trick” is to condense all the information needed into those 1-2 paragraphs. To do this, you must first know the type of information the judges need and then how to condense this information on your model into those 1-2 paragraphs.

The easiest way to do this is to “pack” your sentences so that each sentence includes as much information as possible. For example, the statement, *“I painted the completed model using an airbrush. I lettered with decals which I had made from a master I made. I then weathered it with powdered chalks.”* Can be condensed as follows, *“The boxcar was airbrushed and lettered using custom decals produced from my own artwork. Weathering was accomplished using powdered chalks.”*

Remember that points are many times “lost” by not including pertinent information that is needed by the judges in order to allow them to make an “informed decision.” When in doubt, judges are required to evaluate on the conservative side and not award points where there is confusion or lack of specific knowledge. For example, if an entrant does not say that a model or part is scratch built, then judges are required to award points on the basis of the part not being scratch built.

All models are judged in five categories. These categories are CONSTRUCTION, DETAIL, CONFORMITY, FINISH, and SCRATCH BUILDING. In order to properly complete Entry Forms, it is essential that you understand what these categories include. The description of each category will therefore be listed and then discussed.

Each set of judges scores a different category. Don’t expect judges to read other sections of the Entry Form in order to learn needed information related to their area of concern. Therefore, don’t be afraid to restate certain basic information in more than one section of the Entry Form.

CONSTRUCTION

Construction is defined as:

The apparent quality of workmanship. Proper handling of materials, applied labor, skill and craftsmanship as demonstrated by the construction.

Judges evaluate the following factors for each model:

Consider joints, alignment, attachment of parts for quality and neatness. Consider the amount of work done and the results achieved. Consider the materials used and the difficulty in handling them. You are not judging the quantity of scratch-building, but you do judge the construction involved. The quality of details made by the entrant is considered. Judge all scales the same. While an .010” gap looks worse in N than O scale, consider them the same.

The key area in Construction is the amount of work involved and the materials used. Although scratch building and conformity to a prototype are scored in a different category, this is the basic information which also influences Construction points. It can therefore be worthwhile to first state the overall basis of the model, i.e., "The model is scratchbuilt using styrene and commercial castings based on plans I prepared from photos and prototype dimensions." This one sentence thus informs the judges that the basic model was scratch built (which indicates the amount of work involved), the fact that it is based on a particular prototype, and that the builder did the research necessary to prepare the drawings and plan the construction.

Do not fall into the trap of describing the actual construction process, i.e., "I cut the 5 stringers from scale 5x9 stripwood which was first stained using Rit dye. The stringers were then glued to the end sills using white glue." This type of information describes typical techniques and is not that useful.

Judges assume that commercially available parts and raw materials such as stripwood and styrene are used unless mentioned otherwise. Therefore, if you cut your own stripwood, mention that fact to obtain extra points.

Mention the use of any special jigs used in the assembly, castings made from your own patterns, or homemade corrugated siding. Mention too if such items as windows and doors are scratch built rather than commercial castings. Mention also any special, unusual, or extraordinary construction techniques.

A typical entry form using these techniques might read as follows:

This caboose is scratchbuilt from styrene using some commercial parts. A plan was prepared by photo interpretation, "board counting" and overall dimensions. The model was constructed in separate components in order to allow for painting and detailing of the interior. The ladders were built up from photo etched parts from Tarus. The end and side fascia pieces were fabricated from brass and soldered together before adding to the model to allow the ladders to be soldered to the end fascias. The roof and cupola sections are separate pieces to allow the removal of the roof. Jigs were used to fabricate step assemblies. Details include complete underbody, complete interior details, and all exterior visible details. "Brass" door knobs are Contact Timed Release Cold Capsule granules. The calendar is photo reduced from a real calendar. The water cooler is scratch built from a coil spring. All windows and doors are scratch built. Piping elbows are constructed using Detail Associates lift rings.

This type of information first provides the judges with a basic description of the model (scratchbuilt from styrene) and then goes on to provide information regarding the amount of work involved as well as the variety of materials used. Samples of jigs and masters can be exhibited with the model. For kit-bashed models, it helps to have an unmodified model displayed with the entry to allow judges not familiar with the particular model to judge the work involved.

DETAIL

Detail is defined as:

The refinement of the model, the amount of subordinate parts added, and the complexity of the model is considered. Quality of detail is not considered – only quantity.

Judges evaluate the following factors for each model:

The quality and conformity of detail is being considered by others. Working details should be considered as having more quantity than dummy details. Details which are basic part of the item modeled (brakes, turn buckles, opening windows) should be considered superior to "clutter" details like tools and junk. Judge all scales alike. Do not add points to a small scale entry just because it is harder to detail.

This category is basically concerned only with one factor; the quantity of detail. Therefore, you should “list” the extent of detail added to the model. Be careful of stating that the “*Model includes all of the detail of the prototype.*” Without listing the type or extent of the detail; judges will use the list (or lack of list) to find what details are not included on the model in order to determine the level of detail on the model. Don’t mention obvious details such as windows and doors but do mention working details and less obvious details. Your goal is to insure that the judges see all of the detail that you have incorporated into the model.

A typical entry might read as follows:

The model includes all visible detail of the prototype including N-B-W castings where required; end doors as on the prototype; all grab irons with N-B-W detail; underbody detail including all elbows and unions on all piping, air cylinder release levers, brake lever hangers; corner and fascia braces; lift bars, and air hoses etc.

CONFORMITY

Conformity is defined as:

Deals with what is commonly called prototype practice. Logical construction and application of parts is considered to be conformity.

Judges evaluate the following factors for each model:

The amount of detail is not of primary importance except that a model with very little detail cannot have more than an average score. Consider how well what has been included conforms. Consider the trouble the entrant took to achieve and to show conformity. If he/she consulted references and he/she lists them, consider giving an above average score. If photos or references accompany the entry, consider an outstanding score. Any unusual item such as a second brake wheel should be explained on the entry; otherwise you may assume nonconformity.

As indicated in the judging guidelines, references are nearly mandatory to receive full points for this category. References can be in the form of photos, measurements, and/or plans and should be displayed with the model if practical. Note that judges will use the same information to insure that your efforts have in fact produced a copy of the prototype.

Be sure to describe any prototype deviations from normal practice. For models based on a prototype for which information is scanty, call out the extent of the prototype conformity.

A typical entry might read as follows:

The prototype for this model is a USRA single sheathed box car operated by Northern Pacific Railroad. The model is complete and accurate and conforms to all dimensions of the prototype. It includes all brake equipment and visible details of the prototype as well as correct lettering for 1939.

For a simple structure which does not follow a particular prototype, the description might read as follows:

This structure is typical of the small maintenance structures used by the Southern Pacific Railroad in the 1930’s. It includes all details of such a typical structure including full interior studs, individual board construction, rafters, nail holes, rain gutters, and operating doors. It is painted in the colors used by the SPRR for such structures.

FINISH AND LETTERING

Finish and lettering are defined as:

This factor deals with the general appearance and proper application of finish and lettering (when lettering is a necessary part of the model) as reflected by surface treatment to achieve a specific effect through the proper use of materials. Painting, weathering and special effects are considered finishes. Lettering, (hand, decal, etc.) is considered for the job done. The quality of commercial decals or pre-lettered parts is not the responsibility of the builder.

Judges evaluate the following factors for each model:

Realistic weathering may be worth additional points, but the presence or absence of weathering does not in itself indicate superiority. Judge all scales alike. Do not allow a larger-scale entry to have proportionately larger defects for the same score.

Finish is judged almost entirely by simply how well the finish and lettering are applied and how realistic the model appears. Therefore, this is one category that doesn't depend too much on the contents of the Entry Form. If the model is not weathered for a reason, mention that in the entry. It is also worthwhile to mention the various types of techniques used (air brushing, hand lettering, etc.)

A typical entry might read as follows:

All brass parts were sand blasted and then air brushed. The natural wood parts of the model were stained using an alcohol based dye. Wood grain was added to all wood pieces and additional staining added to highlight the wood grain using Floquil Driftwood. All lettering was added using individual letters. Small details were hand painted. The entire model was finally weathered using powdered chalks.

SCRATCH BUILDING

Scratch building is defined as:

This deals with all parts of the model which have been **FABRICATED BY THE BUILDER**. Preformed wood and metal are considered the basic materials for scratch building.

Judges evaluate the following factors for each model:

Consider the parts of the model made from basic materials. Consider the amount of effort required to convert basic materials into finished parts, and consider any planning or design work that was necessary. A scratch-built model made with the aid of kit plans or a magazine article may not involve the effort required to build from prototype plans, photos, or measurements. You are primarily concerned with the quantity of scratch building. The quality is judged elsewhere.

This category is concerned only with the quantity of scratch building, basically as a percentage of the total model. If nearly the entire model is scratch built, state that fact and list the parts not scratch built. If only a small portion of the model is scratch built, list only the items scratch built. Don't try to fool the judges by saying that the model is scratch built and then list everything on the model except the grab irons. Don't bother to list only minor items such as simple wire additions or parts not requiring work (i.e., scrap wood, simple junk, etc.) If you made your own corrugated siding or cut your own wood, mention that in the description.

A typical entry for scratch building might read as follows:

The model is scratch built from styrene with a scratch built body, underbody, cupola, roof, windows, general interior furniture and miscellaneous details. Commercial parts used for the underbody include trucks, couplers, brake cylinder, unions, N-B-W castings, queen posts and turn buckles. Commercial body parts are limited to N-B-W castings, brake wheels, markers, ladders and doors. Interior commercial parts are limited to the chair and stove.

FILLING OUT THE FORMS

Many builders state that they like to keep notes during construction so that they can refer to these notes while filling out the Entry Form later. While this is probably a good idea, it has always required more discipline than I can muster and really not required. Instead, place the model in front of you before filling out the form and make notes on the items to be mentioned on the form.

Preferably, Entry Forms should be typewritten. If a word processor is available, consider printing the completed statements and tape them onto a blank form and then photocopy the “paste up.”

Don't forget, one of the easiest ways to gain insights into both how to best fill out Entry Forms to receive all of the points that you are entitled to as well as to learn “tricks” regarding building models is to volunteer to judge during the contest!