



Speed Ballasting & Great Trackwork in Less Time

by Neal Anderson

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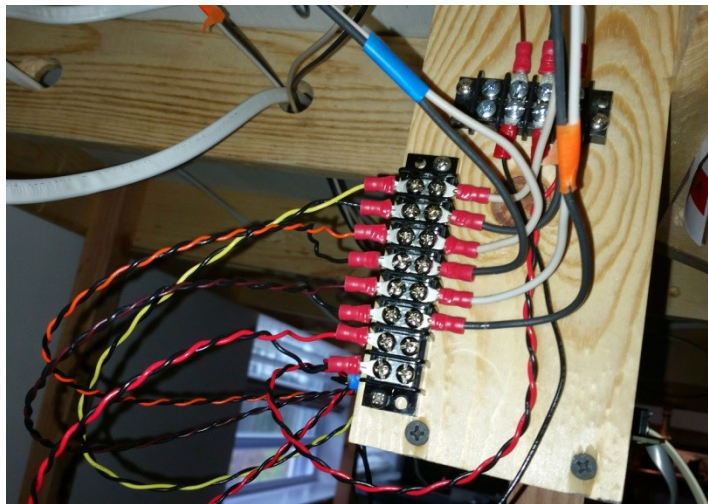
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Laying Track & Cork Roadbed

- With a pen or pencil, draw the center line which your track will follow.
- Midwest Products makes a premium cork roadbed to support your trackwork. The cork comes in two sections which can be placed on either side of your center line to follow any curve or design.
- When using Midwest cork, lay down one side and glue it down with 100% white glue. Then lay down the other side and glue it in position.
- Sidings and yards on your layout can use a thinner cork product sold at Lowe's as Cork Shelf Liner. This thinner cork is cut to 1 ¼" wide. To make this cork follow a curve, cut one inch slits every inch on the outside of the curve so it will lay flat.
- Once roadbed has been placed and glued, install track with spikes and nails. Use rail joiners to join all sections of track.
- If track exhibits humps, dips, or other sudden elevation changes, install additional cork or other material to ease the hump or dip in the track.
- Once layout is locked in, rail joiners can be soldered to track to improve electrical connections.

Powering the Track

- Buss wires are used to route power from one end of the layout to the other. Buss wires are typically 14 AWG and connect from the command station (power supply) to the terminal strips installed at key locations on the layout.
- Drop wires are a smaller wire (typically 22 AWG) soldered directly to the track rails to provide power and DCC signals to the track. Trim wires to length and attach to terminal strips with spade connectors.

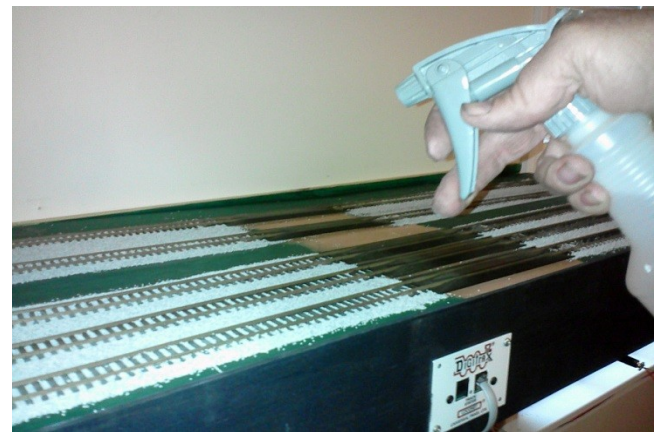


Weathering the Rails

- Once track has been laid and thoroughly tested through running sessions, you can then paint the sides of the rails to make the rails appear weathered.
- I use Rail Box Brown and Rail Brown colors mixed together to realistically weather my rails. These colors can be painted on or sprayed. Acrylic paint is readily available at your local hobby shop. Spray cans can be found at big box retailers and home improvement stores.
- After paint has been allowed to dry, and before running engines or rolling stock, carefully sand rail top with 180 grit sandpaper to remove any paint residue.

Ballasting Track

- Ballasting of track is one of the hardest things to get to look good and not interfere with the trains wheels or operation of the layout.
- A condiment bottle is a great tool for placing ballast on the track. The applicator tip needs to be cut off leaving a ¼” hole to allow a steady flow of medium ballast as the bottle is dragged down the track.
- The first pass of ballast is applied between the rails. Two passes are then needed on each bank on the outside of the rails as much more ballast is required to cover the cork roadbed and provide the best look.
- Use thumb and three fingers to level out ballast, with thumb smoothing the ballast on the ties nearest you while your fingers smooth the ballast on the ties furthest from you. Use your index finger to smooth out the center between the rails.
- To clean ballast from track and ties, use a stencil brush to push ballast down between ties, then tap the rails lightly to knock ballast off of them. It will take some more time to shape and contour the roadbed banks. You might have to add additional ballast to the sides until you are satisfied with how it looks.
- After ballast has been laid down, it should be secured with a mixture of 50% white glue, 45% water, and 5% dish soap. Prepare mixture in a glass bowl and then transfer to a smaller container to make it easier to use. I use a syringe to apply glue onto the ballast.
- When the track looks great, spray 70% isopropyl alcohol onto the ballast to make it absorb the glue mix better. This alcohol also stops the stones from clumping together.



Parts & Materials Used – Where to Buy

CORK ROADBED

#3013 Midwest Cork (Qty. 25)	ModelTrainStuff.com	\$24.99
#38177 Quartet - Natural Cork Shelf Liner (24" x 48")	Lowes	\$9.99

LAYING TRACK

#168-10 Atlas Code 100 Flex Track (36" lengths Qty. 10)	ModelTrainStuff.com	\$36.99
#10-102 Micro Engineering Flex Track (Qty. 6)	ModelTrainStuff.com	\$29.39

POWERING TRACK

#47106 Terminal Block (6x2)	Waytekwire.com	\$1.73
Romex 14AWG Buss Wire	Lowes or Home Depot	
22AWG Hook Up Wire (for drops)	AllElectronics.com	\$6.88 / 100'

WEATHERING RAIL

Rail Brown and Boxcar Brown paint	Local Hobby Shop	
Brown Spray Paint	Lowes or Home Depot	

BALLASTING TRACK

#B94 Woodland Scenics - Grey Blend Ballast - Medium 46.4 cu in	ModelTrainStuff.com	\$7.49
#10194503 Stencil Brush (Qty. 3)	Michaels or Hobby Lobby	\$3.99
Ketchup and Mustard Condiment Bottle Dispenser	Walmart	\$1.97
70% Isopropyl Alcohol	Dollar General	\$2.00
White Glue (16oz)	Hobby Lobby	\$1.99
Palmolive or Dawn Dish Soap	Dollar General	\$1.99