

TROLLEY TIPS

BUILDING AND FINISHING TROLLEY MODELS

by CHARLIE PITTS

This article is intended as a guide that a modeler can use to organize trolley model construction. The article identifies typical steps in the planning and construction process and places them in a logical order designed to avoid problems and disappointment. The step order may vary to suit the circumstances. I find that using this guide helps me do the up-front planning, gather the photos and material, and survive the stops and starts that I always encounter. It seems that waiting for parts is always an excuse for starting another project and starting another project means more waiting for parts. I usually have 5 or 6 projects going at a time and a little bit of planning helps me keep track of them.

While each of the steps outlined below is a legitimate subject all by itself, the focus of this article is to consider and plan the overall process of model construction. Using this guide should help you plan and construct your models in a more enjoyable and efficient manner. As a result you will enjoy the reward of watching a well build and finished model in operation sooner. You can develop your own checklist using the outline that follows.

Some other ways to improve your skills and to achieve early success are to visit hobby stores in your area and to join a club. Generally this will allow you to meet experienced modelers and gain access to a lot of good ideas and techniques. You should also attend trolley meets and visit trolley museums. Look around, see what others are doing and benefit from their success. Remember that there many ways to do most things successfully. Find a way that works for you and go for it. You will notice when you look over the outline that I don't answer the questions about removable roof vs removable floor or power truck in the front vs in the rear. Sometimes the model will decide for you, other times you must decide.

I would be remiss if I didn't point out that in my experience the single most useful reference through the years has been [Trolley Talk](#). It never ceases to amaze me how one can find information on almost any model and prototype traction topic in Trolley Talk. So get the complete set of Trolley Talk on your library bookshelf today.

PLAN THE EFFORT

GATHER MODELING INFO AND PROTOTYPE DATA

PLANS - GOOD DATA IS NECESSARY FOR A GOOD MODEL
PHOTOS - BOTH SIDES, ENDS, ROOF, UNDERBODY, INSIDE
ROSTER AND HISTORICAL INFO - GET FROM BOOKS AND FRIENDS
TALK TO PEOPLE WHO HAVE BUILT MODELS BEFORE
STUDY FINISHED MODELS

DECIDE ON CONSTRUCTION MATERIAL

WOOD - EASY TO USE, SEALING AND SURFACE PREPARATION IS NECESSARY
STRATHMORE - EASY TO USE, SEALING IS NECESSARY
STYRENE - EASY TO USE, SURFACE PREPARATION IS EASY
BRASS - DIFFICULT TO USE, MOST PERMANENT
A COMBINATION OF MATERIALS IS USUALLY THE BEST.

DEVELOP MATERIAL AND PARTS LIST

WOOD, STRATHMORE, STYRENE, BRASS STRIP, WIRE, ETC.
TRUCKS AND POLES
UNDERBODY, END AND ROOF DETAILS
INTERIOR DETAILS, LIGHTS
PAINT, DECALS, DESTINATION SIGNS, PEOPLE

CONSTRUCTION

CONSTRUCTION OPTIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

KIT BUILT vs SCRATCH BUILT vs KIT BASH
REMOVABLE ROOF vs REMOVABLE FLOOR
INTERIOR DETAIL ?
REVERSING HEADLIGHTS AND INTERIOR LIGHTS ?
CREW AND PASSENGERS ?
POWER TRUCK FRONT OR REAR ?
ALLOW FOR DISASSEMBLY TO PERMIT MAINTENANCE

BODY PARTS

LAYOUT ALL PARTS AT ONCE
SAND AND SEAL PARTS SO THEY ARE SMOOTH

BODY ASSEMBLY

TRIAL FIT PARTS AND MAKE SURE THEY ARE SQUARE AND TRUE
ASSEMBLE BODY TO ROOF OR FLOOR
INSTALL INTERIOR BULKHEADS
APPLY SURFACE TRIM

TRUCKS AND DETAILS

MOUNT TRUCKS
MOUNT ROOF DETAILS AND POLES
MOUNT UNDERBODY
PIPING, BREAK RODS AND MUD FLAPS

PAINTING

SANDING AND SEALING

CHECK ROOF OR FLOOR FIT-UP
REMOVE ALL FUZZ AGAIN
SEAL BODY PARTS AND ROOF INSIDE AND OUT
SAND BODY PARTS AS REQUIRED TO OBTAIN A SMOOTH FINISH

PRE-PAINTING ACTIVITIES

MIX COLORS AND DO A TEST PATCH
INSTALL WIRING IN HIDDEN LOCATIONS (GOO IN PLACE)
USE BRASS STRIPS ON UNDERSIDE OF ROOF FOR LIGHTS
MAKE SURE GLASS WILL FIT

PAINTING

INSIDE, OUTSIDE, ROOF, UNDERBODY, ETC.

FINAL ASSEMBLY

INSTALL SEATS AND CONTROLLERS
GLAZE
INSTALL TRUCKS AND LOOSE HARDWARE
INSTALL LIGHTS
CONNECT WIRING
INSTALL CREW AND PASSENGERS
TOUCH UP CHIPPED PAINT
ASSEMBLE AND TEST RUN