

Learning about Model Trains

Learning about model trains is more than learning a new hobby: it's a way to learn about trains in real life. The model train kits popular with hobbyists are generally so loved because they represent accurate reproductions of the trains that serviced the world throughout history. The amount of detail can be truly staggering and those hobbyists who can assemble the most difficult of train sets—those that come in the “Craftsman” kits—are quite often experts in the history and working of trains. These trains are, to some extent, toys but, more than that, they represent scale models of history.

One of the attractive things about model trains is that there are so many different options available to collectors. Trains have been in use since the 1800's and, if a train had any notoriety at all, there is likely a model kit that offers hobbyists an opportunity to reconstruct that train in the form of a functioning scale model. In the best kits, these models are very exact reproductions. Those who engage in this hobby at the level of true enthusiasts are really doing something no less demanding or gratifying than constructing museum exhibits which offer a glimpse into the past.

Learning about model trains also means learning about the towns and landscapes through which those trains passed. Most hobbyists spend nearly as much time working on the stations and the landscape as they do the train themselves. There's a bit of railroad engineering involved, as well. As is the case in real life, the weight and size of a train determines how well it can handle bends in the track and other obstacles. Railroad enthusiasts usually learn these lessons the hard way but they do learn them and that knowledge affords them a deeper understanding and appreciation for the workers who constructed the first railroad tracks.

There is a certain magic about model trains which is conspicuously absent in many of today's hobby and toy offerings. While most of today's toys come pre-constructed and offer little in the way of useful information, model trains require a bit of work to put together and, in that experience, one learns about the satisfaction that comes with accomplishing a difficult task. One also learns a great deal about mechanics and other useful skills which are valuable throughout the course of one's life. Model trains are quite a bit more than a hobby!

If one wishes to learn about model trains, there are plenty of organizations online which can provide that introduction. Many hobbyists have sites about the railroads they've set up and, considering the amount of work that goes into these models, it's no wonder why they exhibit a bit of pride in their end results. Starting out, one may wish to purchase a readymade kit which will allow one a more gentle introduction. A “Shake-the-Box” kit is slightly more challenging. A Craftsman kit, however, is certainly beyond the abilities of most beginners and best left to the pros.