

Problems with that new trainset?

Locomotive not running or running erratically:

Start with the obvious – power pack plugged in?

Ensure good electrical connections between the power pack and the track? Make sure the track power wires are not hooked up to the accessory connections.

If you have a VOM you can check the power pack. The output should be between 0-14VDC when you turn up the throttle.

Are the rails clean? Oxidation impedes the flow of electricity to the wheels. Clean the rails with an abrasive block but **never use steel wool**. You can also purchase a track cleaning car to add to your train that will help keep the track clean. Brite boys (abrasive block) can be purchased at Parkade Hobbies.

Check the wheels on the locomotive. They also need to periodically be cleaned for the same reason the track needs to be cleaned.

If there are problems on only part of the track, then check the mechanical connections (rail joiners) and consider running power to more sections of the track. If you are missing rail joiners, they can be purchased at Parkade Hobbies.

Cars tend to derail:

Check the trucks and wheelsets. The trucks should swivel freely, and the wheelsets need to roll smoothly when spun with your finger.

Check the track and rail joiners. Run your finger over the track to make sure none of your track sections are on top of the rail joiners. The joint between them should be smooth.

Check the couplers on all your cars. Older sets are often equipped with X2f couplers, commonly referred to horn hook couplers. Serious modelers do not use horn hook couplers but prefer Kadee or Kadee compatible knuckle couplers. They look more realistic and function better. Kadee and horn hook couplers, however, do not couple together. If you use Kadee couplers they need to be at the proper height and the trip pin set so as not drag on the ties or catch on track at a switch. A coupler height gauge can help with that.



X2f

Kadee

coupler height gauge

Are your cars too light? The rule of thumb for HO is a car should weigh 1 oz plus $\frac{1}{2}$ oz for every inch of car length. Therefore a 6-inch car should weigh $1 + 3 = 4$ ounces. A car that is too light will not track well.

Are your cars not the right size for your curves? Most sets come with 18" or 22" radius curves. These are not suited for long passenger or extra-large freight cars. As you add new cars you should stick with 40' or 50' scale cars.

How fast are you running your trains? Model trains are not designed to take curves at full speed.

Different types of tracks and roadbed:

Most sets today come with track that has rail already installed on plastic roadbed. This is your best bet for casual train running especially if the track is not permanently installed on a board. There are different manufacturers, and the track is not interchangeable. The most common is Bachman Easy Track. It comes in gray and black plastic roadbed. They do work together; the only difference is in the material the rail is made of. Additional track and switches can be purchased at the local hobby shop.

Another type of track is snap track. It is sectional track that is not on a plastic roadbed. This type of track works best when attached to a fixed board. We recommend using a cork roadbed under the track and gluing them down with white glue, however, the cork is not required. If you choose to nail down the track, not recommended, ensure you do not damage the rail or hammer the nail in too far so as to distort the distance between the rails.

In summary:

- Good electrical connections,
- Track properly hooked together with rail joiners,
- Clean track and locomotive wheels,
- Couplers working properly and aligned between cars,
- Appropriately sized locomotives and cars for the track radius you have,
- Visit your local hobby shop (Parkade Hobbies 23 N Cascade, when you are ready to expand and,
- Most of all have fun and stop is to see us again..