

Freight Train Interchange Layout in a "Tinplater" style

A 4x8 sheet of plywood is *not* the ideal platform for a layout. However, using a view blocks and a little creativity, a plywood sheet can operate up to two O-27 freight trains along with staging.

The theme for this layout is a crossing of two separate railroads along with an interchange. The crossing is 90 degrees, which makes it both compact and trouble free. The minimum curvature for all track is O36, which can accommodate any O-27 rollingstock as well as much of the shorter O rollingstock.

The visible tracks owned by the separate railways are marked on the track plan by orange and green color. Note that if you only have one locomotive, you can still simulate that their are two separate railroads, just by remembering which railroad owned track the locomotive is currently operating on.

Although inferring separate railroads, the track plan is actually a continuous run figure-8 with two opposing staging fiddle tracks. Below the crossing is a double ended connecting track between the two railroads that is used as a drop-off/pick-up for Interchange freight cars. Although not intended for this purpose, passing a train through this track will cause the train to reverse direction on the figure-8.

The crossing should be protected by at least 4 signals (the two near the view blocks can just be dummies, as their lights are unviewable). All the trackside safety signals could be dummies, but ideally some should be working signals (two position stop/go signals are suitable). For variety, each railroad can use its own signal type (including possibly semaphores). It is easily possible to place sensors on the tracks (such as an insulated rail) which will cause the signal aspects to change automatically. Operating two viewable locomotives can be interesting, as you can simulate one being blocked from using the crossing, or simply have one awaiting along the track for an interchange drop.

One railroad also features a spur track, on which you can ideally place an animated accessory. The spur is long enough to hold at least two cars. Note that *only* this railroad should directly access this spur. The other railroad needs to leave any car destined for the spur on the Interchange track. I have placed an accessory above the spur, but there is room to place it below. You could also place an accessory on each side of the track (such as a pair of dump bins) or straddling the track. The magnetic activator track should be shifted along the spur to be in a correct position relative to the accessory. The view blocks should be themed accordingly to reflect the environment of the accessory and track crossing.