



Judges Score Sheet

NMRA Achievement Program

by Bill Jacobs, Cajon Division AP Chairman

As discussed in the last Order Board, we will do a series of articles over the next few issues with the objective of helping you understand how models are judged in our contests, what the judges are looking for, and how to handle the paperwork (Judges Score Sheet), which will hopefully help you achieve the highest score possible. This information has been gleaned by discussions with other contest chairmen, the NMRA Judging Guidelines, and personal experience.

So, let's get started. Go on the NMRA website and get copies of the Judges Score Sheet-Model Contest and the AP Assessment Guidelines for Motive Power, Cars, and Structures. (Note that motive power, cars and structures are the only things entered in model contests. Other parts of the Achievement Program are handled in other ways.) The way to find this is: NMRA.org, then Achievement Program, then Forms. Do not be alarmed if the Judging Form boxes are numbered 1, 2, 3, 4, 4, and 4. They have been that way since 2010. I have (and I'm sure I'm not alone) run this up the flag pole a few times with nary a response. We are going to concentrate on 1-Construction. Right off the bat you see that this is worth a maximum of 40 points, 32% of the total of 125 points possible. In order to receive a Merit Award, your model must score 87.5 points or over so construction is a major part of that.

The first thing you have to do is check one, and only one, under model basis. This is fairly self explanatory, but be truthful. A comment here: scratch built or partially scratch built is not judged under construction-that comes in the second 4 box.

Second, under construction techniques, you can go wild here and check every box that applies. Another comment: The boxes relating to plans and a construction article are not judged here, either-they are judged under the 3 box. However, be sure to attach them while you are thinking about it. Another tidbit: if you made a cardboard shape of some kind to see how some piece needed to be laid out-that is a pattern, so check that box.

Third and this is the crux of construction, the description of how you did it, its complexity, and methodology. Go to the Judging Guidelines and read pages 2 and 3. You will note under "Points to Ponder about Construction" the theme seems to be almost directed to new structures, locos, or cars by the wording. This brings up something that I will say more than once and that I want you to remember: **do not let the judges guess what you trying to do.** An example: I once entered a model that had the words "abandoned shack" in its name. It had a short staircase that I put a broken tread in, thinking that this would add abandoned character. I was docked one point because I hadn't included that in my write up. If your model is supposed to be old and decrepit, describe how you made it that way. Under "Points to Ponder about Complexity" the theme seems to be the more complex, the better. Do not let that deter you entering a simpler but well constructed model; the chances are good that you will receive a score between 20 and 30 in this category.

Lastly, you don't need to write a book, because that sometimes puts the judges off, but, especially if you are handwriting, don't think that those four lines are all you have. Continue your narrative on the back or add pages until your description is thorough-just be concise.