

Easy OP Sessions on the B&O Lost Division.

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11/09/2015

I don't have much to do for OP sessions on my layout any more. Just make sure the cars and car cards are in the right places at the start, the track and engine wheels are clean. And if I'm the dispatcher, make sure there are not too many trains in the same place at the same time. Then let it roll. The yard masters will make up the trains and ask who wants to run it. The train crews deliver the freight cars to their destination and they or the switching crews may spot them.



There are car card bins at each town for every industry in that town. If there is a card facing out, it needs to be moved. If the card is turned around so the blank back side shows, that means it stays, or it is where it belongs, so you can leave it alone. So when you deliver a car, put its card in the back of the bin with the blank back facing out. When all cards in all the bins are turned to the blank side, the OP session is done, time for pop & cookies!

I have heard say that all rules on a railroad are written in blood. The rules for my layout did not have such a tragic start, rather they are meant to prevent problems from occurring.

Here are the rules that let things flow well on my layout with comments;

All trains must have a single engine and a caboose! (Personal preference.)

Next are limits on train length, so every train will get up the grade or fit into the sidings. **On the Mountain Branch, 6 car trains are the limit due to grades and siding lengths, but between Grafton Yard and Van Doren train length can be up to 10 cars. This allows trains to drop off 4 cars at Van Doren, and then continue up the Mountain Branch. Then on the way down they can pick up to 4 cars at Van Doren that go to Grafton Yard.** This is how cars for Van Doren get delivered. After the train leaves, they have work to do spotting up to 4 cars before the next train arrives. And also spotting the cars for the train to pick up on its return trip down the mountain.

A wayfreight with less than 6 cars will check each station it passes to see if there is freight that it could pickup and deliver. Makes sense as we get paid for hauling freight, not for running trains.

All trains run as extras. No TT&TO or CTC on the Mountain Branch. Dark territory! Communication is by LV, Loud Voice.

A wayfreight must clear a route with the next station agent or dispatcher before departing for that station. Let them know you are coming and they will tell you if they can handle your train now or if you will have to wait. The switching crew may have cars spread all over the main and needs a few minutes to clear and get out of the way.

A wayfreight may be required to do switching work at any town. Even if there is a switch crew on duty, work with them and things will go smoother for you.

The next two rules still apply even if there is a switching crew on duty at Grafton Yard. Once again, help each other out.

A wayfreight terminating at Grafton Yard needs to run around their train and have the engine and caboose together. That way you are ready to head out again and not trapped at the back end of the yard.

A wayfreight terminating at Grafton Yard may be required to do switching to clear a yard track for the next train in. Sometimes another train will need to come in before one can go out, so make a hole!



The next two rules are to keep the switch crew in their respective yards. But if Van Doren has a lull, they can help by switching Jonesville.

The local engine and caboose at Van Doren may switch the town of Jonesville, WV. and can run a train to Grafton or up the Mountain Branch, as needed to clear out the yard.

An engine is stationed at Smith, WV., but no caboose, so it cannot move outside the yard limits. No caboose = No train! So stay within the yard limits! (Yes, I miss cabooses on the end of trains today...)

Another duty assigned to the Van Doren crew is to be the tower man at VJ Tower. They make sure the switches are lined and the track is clear to cross over. Main line trains have priority over Mountain Branch trains, so you may have to sit and wait your turn. With that said, here is the rule;



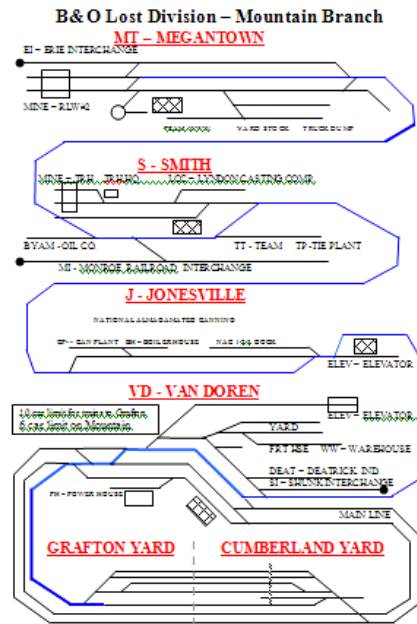
The Lost Division crosses B&O's Main line at Van Doren, WV and follows the tracks to Grafton Yard. There can be delays when waiting to cross the B&O Main line, either due to traffic or switching work being done in the yard,

so be patient, but be ready to go.

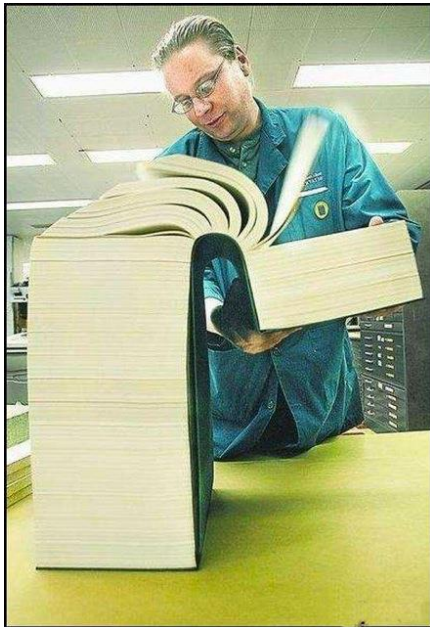
Also, it helps to have a map. The one I hand out shows all towns and industries, and the rules are printed on the back of it. I did put signs on all the industries with names that match the waybill destinations too. Also at each town is a diagram showing the track work and all the industries by name. It helps!

So with just the above rules, and a good crew, OP sessions don't need much from me, at least until they are done. Then it is up to me to pay them their wages in pop and cookies!

The next morning I get to switch around the loads, turn the car cards around and turn their waybills so they are ready to go for the next OP session. It takes about 20 minutes for my 11' x 18' layout with about 100 cars on it. Not too bad, easy in fact!



Could similar rules make OP sessions easy on your layout too?



Give it some thought and see what you come up with.

One word of warning though, don't make it so large or complex that the operators won't read it. Most operators are not going to spend hours reading your rule book and committing it to memory. Just one page should do it!

And, don't put in the "Got Ya" type rules. Remember that we are trying to have fun. And even the worst mistakes made on a model railroad, won't leave blood on the tracks or result in loss of a life.

So give it a try and see if it improves the operations on your layout. Just remember to have pop & cookies readily available!

Hope it makes your OP sessions easy to do!