



## Recruitment at Train Shows and Public Events

**1. At train shows or swap meets, if your budget allows, wear three-inch diameter pin on “Ask me about Model Railroading” buttons.** Available from [www.promotional.com](http://www.promotional.com), 3 inch pin-back buttons cost 61 cents for 100 pieces. They're great conversation starters leading to how the NMRA education programs, events, and fellowship improve member knowledge and skills.

**2. Dress cleanly and casually at any public event where you set up your Division's booth, or a table displaying a stand-up card, maybe even a banner.** First impressions are paramount. Not only do you represent your Division and your Region, but you're also an overall NMRA Ambassador. Move in front of your table when you engage an interested person in conversation. Doing so eliminates possible feelings of intimidation (remember that scary teacher behind the desk you had in school?), giving both of you a better chance of being heard above crowd noises and distractions.

**3. Be an enthusiastic and interested listener.** It will give you an idea as to the person's level of model railroad experience and what key elements of NMRA membership you should stress that will serve him or her best.

**4. Wear a name badge, and hand out a business card with your name and contact information.** Sometimes, especially at larger train shows, the person with whom you were speaking says they'll be back later. They can't ask for you if they don't remember your name. The card you handed out is the answer and a reminder. [www.vistaprint.com](http://www.vistaprint.com) can print them inexpensively

**5. Have on hand an ample supply of NMRA application forms and brochures.** Add to these free copies of your Division's newsletter or Timetable, your Region's news-let-ter or magazine, back issues of the NMRA Magazine and other model railroad publications. Make sure your Division handout has current contact information, when and where the next Division event will be, and a map with directions showing how to get there.

**6. Finally, if another volunteer member can cover for you at your booth or table, take some handout materials and circulate throughout the crowd.** If you're wearing conspicuous NMRA identification, you can anticipate stopping to answer questions and handing out several brochures. Say and indicate where your Division (or Region) booth or table is located and that another member is there to help with additional information.



## Division or Region Recruitment and Retention

The first two items here are motivated by a simple, tangible exchange of “you do this for us, and we'll give you that” as a thank you for your effort and support.

**7. Encourage existing members to sponsor a non-member.** A one-on-one RailPass is a low-cost (\$10) investment in the NMRA and a new member whose introduction to what it provides are benefits that can last a lifetime thanks to your kindness. Get five other members to chip in and you can either buy five RailPasses, or a full, one-year membership for some lucky person with change for coffee left over. Reward your sponsor(s) with a free Region or Division patch, pin, mug T-shirt, or any inexpensive item from your company store.

**8. Reward any member signing up a new member with a free item as described in #7.**

**9. Welcome a new member by letter with an invitation to attend your next Division event.** Include a free Division or Re-

gion patch. Have new members stand and introduce themselves at the next Division event and designate members who will talk to them during a break.

**10. Larger Divisions can have a “New Member Welcome & Division Information” table at events.** Manned by a member volunteer, he or she distributes handout materials (or application forms) to new members or non-member visitors, answers questions, and expresses thanks for joining or visiting. Trial RailPass membership is encouraged to non-member visitors showing interest yet hesitating to commit. Good first impressions are extremely important; being ignored is the very unfortunate opposite and one of the top reasons why new members drop out.

**11. Solicit local hobby shops to run periodic non-NMRA member model railroad contests with kits purchased from the store.** “Best of Show” (determined by popular vote) wins a full, one year NMRA membership paid for by the shop, a win-win-win for the contestant, the hobby shop, and the NMRA.

**12. Distribute NMRA brochures and/or newsletters with your Division's contact information to hobby shops, libraries, rotaries, YMCA, barbershops, beauty salons (for moms), doctors and dentist offices, tire shops, quick lube centers, general aviation pilot lounges, and so forth.**



In other words, anywhere adults are likely to wait; however, always ask for permission when leaving promotional material. NMRA HQ will supply free brochures — just ask.

**13. Local libraries often accept old magazines.** Try donating back issues of model railroad magazines in exchange for model railroad/NMRA display space, especially in November during “Model Railroad Month.”

**14. Advertise and implement periodic “Train In’ Camps.”** Provide contact information and limit class sizes to a first-come, first-served basis. Free, but for the cost of materials (if needed), these hands-on clinics (i.e. Weathering with Pan-Pastels) are taught by a fellow member(s) and are open to all model railroaders. Scheduled at a Division facility or at a member's home, “Train In’ Camps” offer an excellent, intimate environment in which to learn or improve skills and an opportunity to “talk up” joining the NMRA to non-members in attendance. Have handouts available, and extend an invitation to attend the next Division event.

**15. With Region help, organize an annual one-day “Mini-Meet” (or “Mini-Event”) coordinated with a Division short on members and activities.** This can be a group dinner on a Friday night followed by a Saturday featuring clinics, AP evaluating, and maybe a local layout or railroad facility tour. Creating these simple events wherever help is needed can re-ignite Divisions that have lost enthusiasm and inspiration.

**16. Plan and schedule outdoor social excursions during the warmer months, moving indoor during cooler months.** These excursions can be as simple as a Division barbecue or picnic to include families, carpooling to a baseball game, a pre-arranged tour of a local railroad facility, and the like. When the leaves begin to fall, arrange for group visits to indoor local area attractions and to member layout open houses.



### Recruitment Outreach Opportunities

More than likely, there are untapped opportunities in your community to promote promote model railroading as a great hobby and NMRA membership as a very worthwhile ancillary.

**17. Boy Scouts of America.** Many communities support the BSA with a local chapter(s) within your Region. The BSA has a Railroad Merit Badge program, which can be earned in one day. Counselors must be vetted (a simple process), and there's a curriculum to be followed. As with any member working at an NMRA-sanctioned event, Counselors accrue AP Association Volunteer T/U's (Time Units) while teaching the program. NMRA Secretary John Stevens is the NMRA's National liaison to the BSA. He can be contacted at [secy@nmra.org](mailto:secy@nmra.org).

**18. Railroad-themed Events within a Region.** These commemorative occasions are a great recruitment resource. Soliciting Event Planners/Coordinators well ahead of time for display space is rarely rejected and most often embraced. Consider, for example, setting up a Division or Region table, even an operating display for annual “Amtrak Train Days,” or similar events that draw railroad enthusiasts.

**19. Museum Events for Children.** Children are drawn to interactive operating model railroad displays as if by magic. You won't recruit children to join the NMRA, but children come with parents, adults who can be approached, given handouts, and invited to the next Division event. Assuming they have space, museums holding these events are usually more than happy to have the NMRA participate, especially if you can bring an interactive operating model railroad display.

**20. Children's Hospital Wards.** If your Region has a Division capable of financing, building, and most importantly maintaining a small, operating layout to be donated with prior approval to a children's hospital, here is an outstanding opportunity to promote the NMRA in a very positive way. Any easily maintained interactive layout built for kids is a good candidate. Uplifting stories are always of interest to local print and television media, so don't hesitate to let them know what you're doing and when the layout will be donated to the hospital.

**21. Social Media.** Designate an “electronic guru” Division member to get on to social media to promote what NMRA membership has to offer, who we are, what we do, where we do it, and why you should join us. NMRA members who log in to the Members Only website section can access the PROMO MATERIALS tab and download NMRA logos, the Recruitment video, National Model Railroad Month logos and a listing of member benefits.

“Get more from your hobby,” says the handout brochure, and you will, but it's up to each and every one of us to spread the word. It's this team effort, this “esprit de corps,” that personifies what the NMRA is all about.

Visit the NMRA online at: [www.nmra.org](http://www.nmra.org)



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# 21 Easy Tips to Improve NMRA Member Retention & Recruitment



National Model Railroad Association