

## G Scale Track Cleaning Car

For over 20 years, I have run G scale trains on my outdoor layout, consisting of 450 ft of brass track on 3 loops, and it needs to be cleaned on a regular basis. Years ago, I read an article about what to use to clean your tracks, after trying all of these methods, I found the one I liked the best was *Drywall Pole Sander* on a stick with 120 grit paper. Some people believe this way of cleaning the track will damage and remove too much material from the rail head, but after 20 years of using this process, what I found was that new track has a thickness of .332" to .337" and my rail is at .327". So that's about 7 to 10 thousandths of an inch of material removed, not very much at all.

So, I set out to make a car that I could use a full-sized drywall sanding block and standard paper sizes. Because of the length of the block and paper, I realized that a standard *Aristocraft* car was "a little" too short, resulting in the wheels rubbing the block in the turns. And after a while, the wheel flanges were starting to wear down by the paper rubbing against them.

Next, I built 4 custom cars from extruded aluminum and extended the length between the wheel trucks by about 5/16 of an inch on both ends. They were made so that it was easy to remove the sanding block and change the paper when needed. These cars worked great and have been running on many layouts for over 10 years.



*This is the first version of the Track Sanding car. They work great, but need special parts to make. I used a product called 80/20 extruded aluminum. I have 4 cars like this being used on a number of commercial layouts.*

My most recent attempt was to use a standard 40ft *Aristocraft* box or refrigerator car figuring it would be less obvious on a layout. The prototype car worked great and moving the trucks out 5/16 inch on each end is not very noticeable. It's a project the most people can do and can be made with off the shelf parts from a hardware store.



*Disassemble the car by removing the 6 long body screws, the 6 brass grab irons, and the wheel/truck assemblies.*



Using a Bandsaw, cut the car into 3 pieces. Where you cut the center portion is not critical. Remove 5/16 of an inch from both end pieces. This will allow you to move the truck mounting block out to the end of the car floor base.



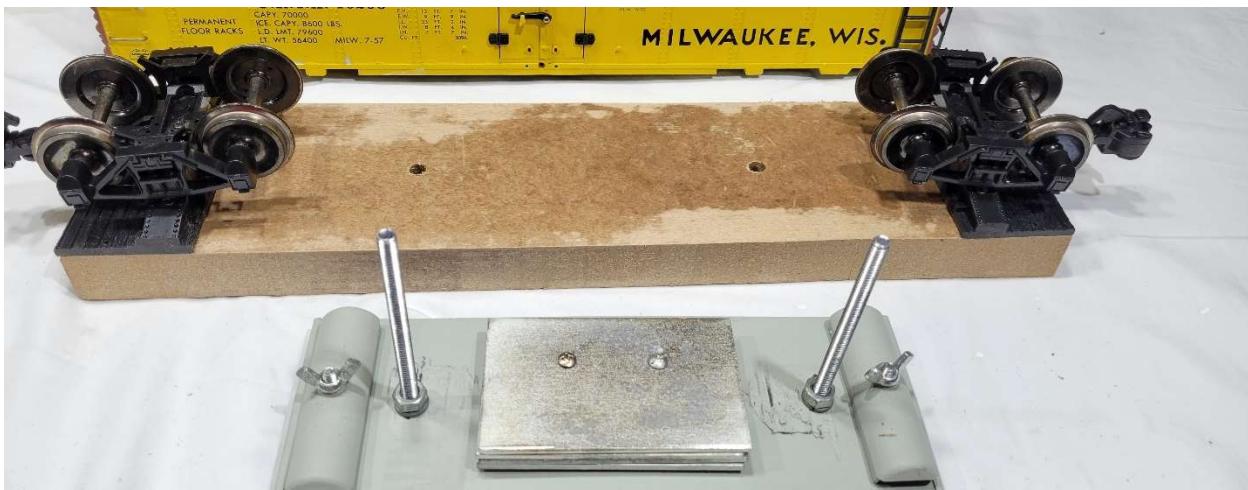
I used a piece of solid core decking material for the base plate (**16 1/2" long and 3 13/16" wide**). It has plenty of weight to keep the car on the track, the screws hold great and the holes for the sanding block keeps the 1/4-20 bolts straight. You could make the base plate out of a piece of hardwood, or an acrylic type material, about 1.0" thick. Mount the wheel trucks flush at the edge of the end of the base plate.



There are 4 plastic pins inside of the car that need to be shortened depending the thickness of the main plate. I used a Dremel grinder to cut the pins to the length and snipping them off with a sharp side cutting pliers. The car will then rest on the remainder of the pins when reassembled.



You can use a hand-held Drywall Sanding Pad or one that is used on a stick. All you need to do is cut off the handle or the pivot mound. I used a Craftsman bandsaw for all of the cutting to make this project.



What I did was drilled the holes thru the Sanding Block 6 inches apart first and then laid the block over the base plate and drilled deep enough for a start, removed the Sanding Plate and finished drilling thru the Base Plate. The screws are 1/4-20 X 4" long Counter Sunk heads. I added a lock washer and nut to hold it in place. You will need to add about 1lbs of weight to the Sanding Block, you can use less weight, but no more than 1 lbs. Most of my cars have sheets of lead, but in this car I used steel plates from Aristocraft steam engine tenders that I did not need any more.



You can put shrink tubing over the screws to make it slide up and down easier and any type of nut on the end of the screw to keep the Block from falling off when you lift it off the track. I prefer to be able to lift the car off the sanding block, so I don't use any nuts. Or you can also install screws into the side of the car body to keep the base attached.

This is basically on how to build the car. Modifications can be made as needed to work out the way you want. Any Aristocraft 40' refrigerator or box car will work, or you could custom paint one to your liking. These cars work great on an 8ft diameter track or larger. On most layouts 3 trips around is plenty to clean the track, but if the track is really dirty, run the car until you're sure it's clean enough. The big advantage is that you can put the car back into a consist and pull it around whenever needed and most people won't even notice.

**Build time 2 to 3 hours.**

— Bob DuFresne