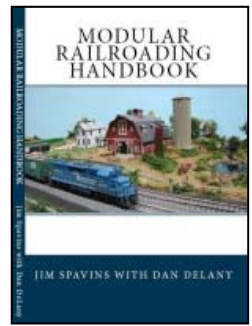




Economical Transport Containers





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By Dan DeLany

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As modular railroaders, we use a lot of different systems to transport rolling stock and locomotives to shows. My system combines high capacity and lightweight, two of the biggest goals when taking your hobby on the road.

My favorite aspects of the hobby includes collecting rolling stock and locomotives. For most of our displays, I typically bring anywhere from 100 to 200 cars to fill up the layout. Organizing, carrying, unpacking and re-packing all that equipment is a lot of work, but I've

refined my system over the years to streamline it as much as possible.

When my collection was smaller, I used to carry all my rolling stock in their original boxes. Before each display, I'd consolidate all the rolling stock into a couple cardboard boxes and head out. When setting up my trains on the layout, I'd have to take each car out of its original box and place it on my module. This worked pretty well when I brought 15 or 20 cars to each display, but it got more and more time consuming as my collection grew.



My father Jim came up with the solution during an unrelated trip to the local surplus store. He stumbled across a pallet full of 12-quart clear Rubbermaid style storage containers for \$1 each, and picked up a bunch for use around the basement. At the time, we had just purchased and assembled a number of the then new Walthers 89' autoracks. We realized that when assembled, they were too long to fit back in their boxes, and

we needed to find a way to transport them to the club layout. On a whim, Dad stacked them in the new storage containers with some leftover foam sheets separating the layers. We were able to comfortably fit 9 autoracks in one of the containers, and we quickly realized we needed to go back and buy some more containers!



After stocking up on the containers, I went about transferring most of my fleet of rolling stock to the containers for storage and transport to shows. As you can see from the photos, the orientation of the cars, as well as the number of cars you can carry depends on the size and type of rolling stock in each container. Starting with an empty container, I lay down a layer of $\frac{1}{4}$ " foam, and place anywhere from 4 to 7 cars. On top the cars goes another layer of foam, followed by 4 to 7 more cars. The same thing goes for the third layer of cars, finished off by a final layer of foam on top. The foam is $\frac{1}{4}$ ", which I buy in bulk at a local fabric store. You can buy it by the yard, and then

cut it with household scissors to fit your type of containers. I usually leave a list of the cars in each layer in the box, or tape it onto the top of the lid.

I've had great luck using this system. It makes loading and unloading at shows very quick, and storage at home is easy, since the containers are stackable. The fact that they're clear is a bonus, since I can see at a quick glance what's in each container. Being able to consolidate 12 -20 cars into one container saves a lot of space both at home and in my truck on the way to a display. The containers also have a big advantage over cardboard boxes in that they're rigid and moisture resistant. This is especially important for those who store their trains in the basement, or for when you do a display in lousy weather.

The system does have some minor limitations. The system works best with "square" cars, such as boxcars, covered hoppers, hoppers, autoracks, etc. I usually pack similar sized cars together. For instance, I have a container which is all gondolas, and I group all my coal cars in the same containers. Odd shaped cars, such as tank cars, typically don't travel well in the containers. I leave my tank cars in their original packaging for transport to shows, as well as specialty cars like cushion coil cars and cabooses. Even with these limitations, it can cut down you're storage space and

transportation space. It also makes setting up and taking down a lot faster, since you're just laying cars in the containers and not dealing with individual packaging. The system will also work with any style or size of container, so you can modify it to fit your rolling stock fleet as well as your transportation and storage needs.

