

# Build a Fiddle Yard



**Fabrice Fayolle**

*Fayolle's Concise Dictionary defines a fiddle yard as a collection of tracks that represent the rest of the world...*

Building a layout to be exhibited means managing constraints such as size, weight and sturdiness. For me, size is the most important criteria since it is limited by the capacity of my car.

Koonunga Junction is my third layout and measures 1.35m by 0.45m. In O scale, this compact size makes it quite difficult to plan for maximum interest and fun. That's why I've used some tricks to artificially increase the apparent size. In particular I've added a fiddle yard; this extends the layout's operation and provides a place to store engines and cars.

The diagram opposite illustrates several different types of fiddle yard. The easiest to build - but the most space-consuming to feed a certain number of tracks - is made of point work. The fiddle yard I used for my first layout (the Josephtown Craddonium Company featured in NGDU issue 29) was made of a simple track at both exits - simple, but limited in capacity. The fiddle yard for my second layout (Point Davis, an American N scale layout) was made of storage tracks that traversed on drawer slides. This allowed additional storage and worked well - it appears in the photograph opposite.

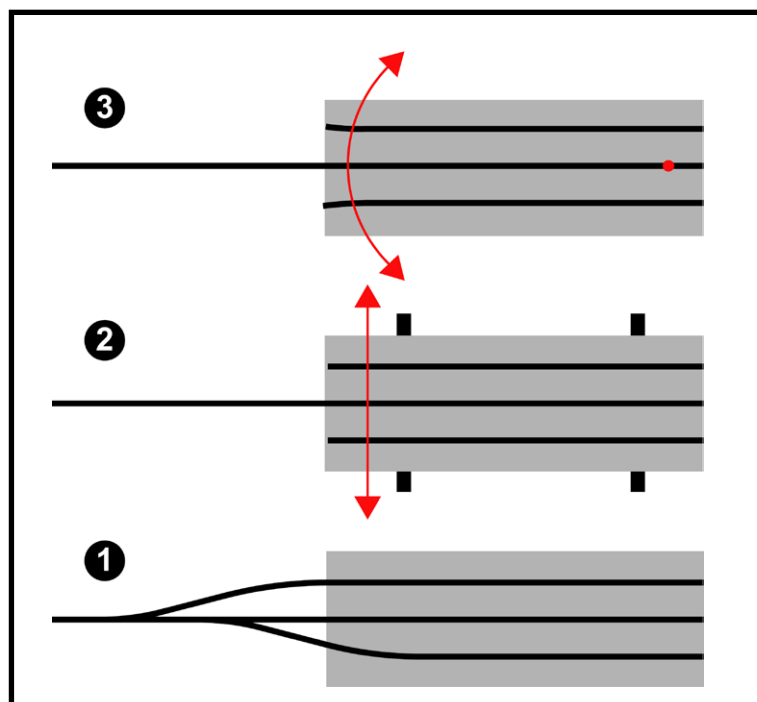
For Koonunga Junction I chose a sector plate system - more precisely a two sector plate system. This design provided a good compromise between storage space and compactness; and I developed an easy method to construct the two plates I need.

The first plate creates a passing track to make switching possible; the second plate provides off-scene storage with two tracks to store engines and cars. Such a system is better than a pointwork and a trail track as it reduces the size of the layout by at least 70cm. Construction of a fiddle yards is very easy using plywood, nuts and bolts - well within the capabilities of most modellers.

Whatever the theme of your layout, a fiddle yard will provide an illusion of size. It also allows different trains to take turn on the scened portion, and increases the variety of operation possible you can enjoy.

We'll look more closely at Koonunga Junction - my layout using these two sector plates - in future issues of NGDU. Hope you enjoyed this brief visit!

*BELOW: Three differing designs for fiddle yards. At top, the sector plate uses a simple pivot, with tracks diverging slightly to meet the entry track. In the middle is a plate that slides laterally, allowing tracks to be parallel. At bottom is a traditional fiddle yard design - note the extra length required to allow for the points.*



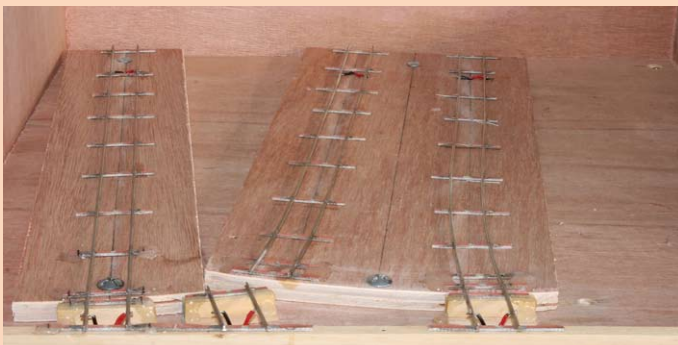
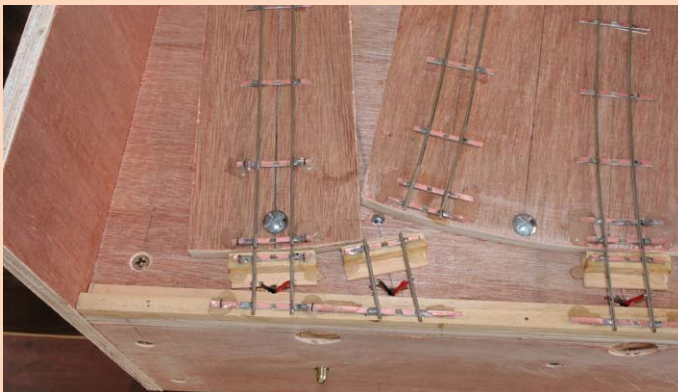




ABOVE: This photo shows another way to add valuable staging space to your layout - a simple cantilevered bin holding a single-ended staging track. This is useful to add capacity to an industry siding; or simply to provide extra length on a headshunt.



ABOVE: The sliding sector plate used on the author's N scale layout, as described in the text.



## Construction Steps

- Cut a plank from 12mm or 19mm plywood to the desired size. Don't forget to allow a little extra spacing between tracks if you wish to handle the stored stock
- Draw the middle of each track on the plank, and the base of the layout. Make sure you have sufficient clearance at the end of the tracks for departing trains to squeeze by the stored items
- Mark the pivot on the plank and drill it, then put the plank on the layout base with the help of the locating marks, and drill a further hole through the base. The pivot is often located in the middle to allow trains to be reversed, but for confined spaces a pivot at one end works better, and minimises the 'spread' of the tracks at the entry point.
- Screw the plank to the base with a 6mm nut and bolt. To ease the sliding action you can use soap on the underneath
- Fix your track on the plank and at the end of the layout. This is added as a single continuous length - don't cut the track at this step
- Locate a suitable "locking point" and drill through the plank and base
- If needed, install the second track at the end of the layout, locating this with the plank
- Cut the track to allow the plank to slide
- Drill another hole through the base to make a second locking point, if required
- Wire the different tracks to power them.