

Supplemental Instructions for Operators Burlington Northern – Seattle Region

Throttles:

1. Most NCE throttles (with a blinking light on top) are radio operated. To activate the radio transceiver, unplug from socket, then press the “horn” button three times quickly. Monitor blinking light during use.
2. To acquire control of a locomotive, press “select loco”, then slowly key in the loco’s number, and then press “enter” and wait a few seconds. (It usually acquires a loco more reliably when plugged in.)

Sound:

1. Use random horn blasts to confirm that you have control of the train you think you do. Sometimes you have to press F8 to turn on the engine sounds. If only the lead engine in a consist is making noise, you can select each other engine in turn and press F8, and then return to selecting your lead engine.
2. Blow two toots to move forward, three to move in reverse, and one when you come to a stop.
3. Ring bell when starting in forward or reverse, until you reach 4mph.
4. Blow at grade crossings: long-long-short-long.

Lights:

The “0” key turns on your headlights. Sometimes the headlights turn off if there is a momentary short, so remember to keep your headlight lit. Pressing F5 or F6 usually activates rotating beacons.

Train makeup:

The maximum train length should be kept to about 25 average size cars, but for each staging track specific train lengths are listed in the SPINS diagrams. Use at least one locomotive per 10 cars. I like to use three locos for a 20-car train when the route is uphill (Everett to Burlington, or Everett to Skykomish).

Track switches (turnouts):

1. The hardest thing about operating on a model railroad is remembering to *return* the track switches (turnouts) to the normal position *after* your train has passed. Do your best to keep remembering this rule.
2. A few of the turnouts may have annoying electrical lapses. I’ll tag it, if you let me know about it.
3. Some turnouts are actuated by rotary, push-button or toggle switches, and/or by “macro” commands from your throttle. Don’t be afraid to ask for help if you can’t figure out how to activate a powered turnout. A few of the manual turnouts are finger-activated at the points, marked with blue paint.

Train movements:

1. Do not move your train to the next town unless you have a clearance from the dispatcher, or sometimes from your nearby yardmaster, in the form of a “track warrant” addressed to your train. If you don’t have one, ask the dispatcher. A verbal clearance to move is OK, too, but make sure you have one.
2. Keep your speed as low as you can stand. The slower, the more realistic the whole operation is.
3. When taking a train out of Tacoma staging, check your car card stack and see if all the cars came out together, caboose on end. If you are missing some of the end of the train, try slowly backing back in for them, or, better, notify the superintendent who can use another locomotive to push them out to you.
4. The length of each track in the Tacoma staging yard is marked on the ground next to the approaching mainline, as measured from the right edge of the Royal Brougham street crossing. If you have concerns about train length, stop your caboose at Royal Brougham and measure, before entering the staging yard.

Car cards:

1. Each car, caboose and engine is supposed to have a car card following it around the railroad, on your person. Try to keep them clipped in order, and exchange them with other operators when exchanging equipment for any reason. Check your pockets before leaving the house, so we keep them all here.
2. When you have delivered a car to its destination, place the car card in that track’s bin facing away from you, to easily distinguish it from cars on the same track that still need to be picked up.
3. If a car is missing its waybill, deliver it to Balmer yard for handling (or the destination on the car card).
4. If a car misbehaves, fill out a bad order form (at dispatchers’ desk), place it in the car card, place the car on a Balmer car shop track, and place the car card in the corresponding “RIP” bin.
5. If you find a car without a car card, feel free to place it in your train and have fun confusing yardmasters with it. Or, set it in the “empty car” track in the nearest yard.