

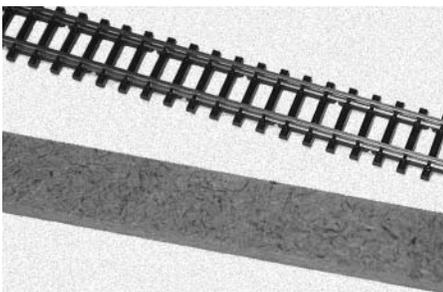


*Topics in this article are consolidated from material provided by:  
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**N**scale narrow gauge track work is either commercially made prefabricated track or “hand laid” track. A layout or module may be built with one, the other, or a mix. As there are a number of pathways to the same goals, a few different points of view will be presented.

### **Roadbed**

Both commercial and hand laid track require a flat and level base, called road bed, with smooth and gradual transitions at vertical curves to accommodate N-scale narrow-gauge locomotives with rigid driver wheel-bases. The first roadbed used in Nn3 (and still used) was 1/8” tempered hardboard, cut in 1/2” wide strips, doing as much of the track plan in one



*1/8” hardboard roadbed on foam base, with PECO track in background*

continuous piece as possible. An alternative is 1/8” plywood used for door facing (“door skin” or “Luan Plywood”) The plywood accepts spikes and track nails which are sometimes used to temporarily hold flex track in place. HomaBed now makes milled 1/8” thick Homasote (a sound-absorbing composition material) roadbed, with tapered edges, for Nn3. It is important to plan where you will be installing un-coupling magnets when laying your roadbed, and cut these into the roadbed prior to installing the track. Whichever roadbed is used, it should be firmly bonded to the layout base (lately, foam insulation board seems



*HomaBed*

to have become the preferred material) using adhesives such as latex-based “Liquid Nails for Projects”. Flex track can be held in place on curves with track nails, or with periodic spots of ACC, fixed in place by an accelerator. If constructing a module, be sure and slightly taper the roadbed down for the last 1.5” from 1/8” thick to about 3/32” - 1/16” thick. Also, when using flex or sectional track, add one or more PC board ties at the end of the track just before the set-back at the end of the module, to reinforce the track at this vulnerable point.

### **Commercial Prefabricated Track**

Pre-fabricated track is available either as rigid, sectional track, in straight and curved sections of various lengths and radii, or flexible (“flex”) track, which can be installed straight, or curved into various radii.

### **Sectional Track**

Sectional track, as the name states, is finite, repeated sections of track which join together using metal rail joiners. In the case of Märklin sectional track, metal rail joiners are crimped onto one rail at each end, similar to sectional track in other scales, and the connection is reinforced by a snap-together puzzle shaped interlocking connection of the plastic molded tie strips as is commonly used in other scales and gauges flex track.

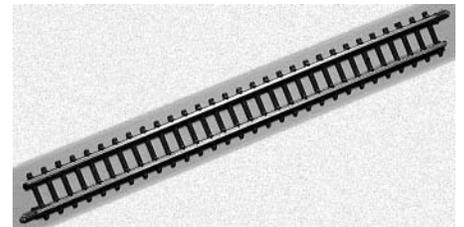
For maximum reliability in permanent installations, you should not rely solely on the metal rail joiners for electrical continuity; the rails should be soldered together at the rail joiners, or provided with separate electrical feeders at each section.

Sectional track can be glued down to the roadbed with carpenter’s glue, “Liquid Nails”, ACC, or held in place with spikes or rail-pins placed through the ties; some brands of track have holes molded in – others will require drilling with a small twist drill. These pins can be removed after the track is ballasted, as the bonded

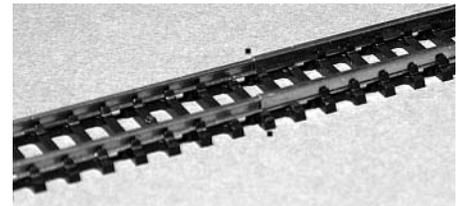
ballast will hold the track in place. One caveat though, make sure the pins are not pushing down on the ties and pulling the rails together, tightening the gauge.

### **Märklin**

Märklin, the originator of Z-scale, makes 6.5mm gauge straight sectional track in 6 lengths from 25mm to 220mm,



*Märklin straight sectional track*



*Märklin sectional adjustable track*

as well as an adjustable track section with a variable length from 100 to 120mm (part number 8592.) This adjustable track section is used to connect modules together and allow a bit of adjustment if needed.

**T**here is also a 660mm-long straight track section which is compatible with their line of sectional track. In addition to these, they offer three special electrical function tracks for connecting circuit feeders, isolating track sections, or activating remote devices, as well as an uncoupler track for operating the Märklin uncoupler. (This will **not** operate MicroTrains Nn3 couplers.) Märklin makes curved sectional track in four different radii: 145mm, 195mm, 220mm and 490mm. The Märklin track products also include a 13-degree crossing. Their 6.5mm track is made of nickel-silver rail in injection