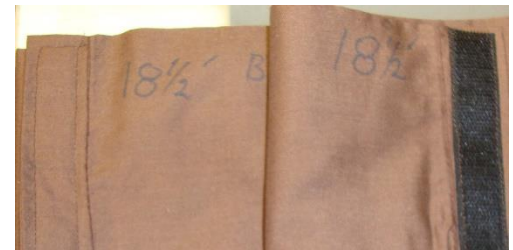


**Alternatives for NTRAK Layout Skirting**

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The proper skirting can really make a layout look great. NTRAK specs suggest that each module owner should provide skirting for his/her module. That means, when put together, the skirting of a loop or layout will contain a variety of styles, colors, fabrics, and textures. Some skirting will go all the way to the floor, other sections may be several inches off the ground, and there are often gaps where one section of skirting ends and the next begins. The basic goals of hiding what is under the modules and of discouraging the public from trying to duck under is accomplished, but the visual effect is that of a patchwork quilt.

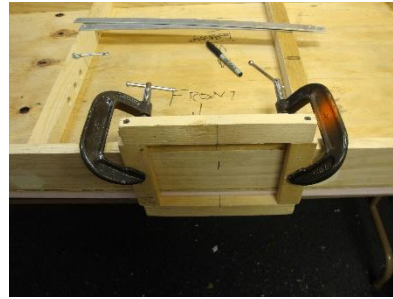
My N-Trak club (the NEONS, NorthEast Oklahoma N-Scalers) decided that the club would provide all skirting for loops in which the club and/or its members provided most of the modules. By doing this, our layout's skirting has consistency and provides visual continuity — and it looks much better (at least to us!). We bought bolts of inexpensive 45" wide fabric and cut the fabric to various lengths of 12', 16', 20', 24' and 30'. Four and a half inches of fabric was turned under on both the top and bottom to make a hem and reduce the width of the material to 36". A slim hem was sewn down each end of the lengths. The length of each piece of skirting was written on both top back sides with a fabric marker. (Figures 1 -3)



Figures 1 & 2 – Skirting in place  
Figure 3 – Length label

We explored using Velcro to attach the skirting to the modules but found that Velcro ran up the costs quickly. As an alternative, we chose to tack the skirting to the modules with push pins. If you've ever tried to insert a push pin into a hardwood fascia board, you will soon see that it is difficult and often results in a bent pin that falls out.

Our solution to that problem was to use a router with a 1/2" rabbet bit to rout a 2" long, 1/2" deep cavity in the fascia board of each module every two feet. A 4' module would have two cavities (at the 1' and 3' marks), a 6' module would have three cavities (at the 1', 3' and 5' marks), and a corner would have one on each side and one on the 45. We built a jig for the router so that all we had to do was clamp on the jig, turn on the router, plunge the bit in and drag it along the jig. The horizontal centerline of the cavities is 3 1/4" below the module surface to which the track's cork roadbed is glued. (Figures 4-8)



Figures 4 & 5 – Jig clamped in position



Figure 6 – Router in jig

Figure 7 – Router making cavity

Figure 8 – Completed cavity

Next we took scraps of 1/2" Homasote and cut them into 1/2" wide strips making 1/2" x 1/2" bars. We then chopped the bars off every 2 inches to make 1/2" x 1/2" x 2" plugs. Since the routed cavities have rounded ends, we nipped off the four corners of the plugs so they would fit and glued them in place with white glue. (Figures 9-13) Once the fascia boards were re-painted, the plugs were nearly invisible, and we had a place every two feet around the loop to easily attach the skirting using push pins. With the top of the skirting about 2 1/2" below the 40" high top of the module, and with a 36" length, the bottom of the skirting is about 1 1/2" off the floor.



Figure 9 – Plug blanks



Figure 10 – Trimming plug



e 11 – Trimmed plug



Figure 12 - Plug glued into cavity



Figure 13 – Painted plug

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A couple of years later, we added one additional feature. On the left front side of each section of skirting we sewed an 18" vertical strip of Velcro loops and on the right back side we sewed an 18" vertical strip of Velcro hooks. This allows us to connect the lengths of skirting to form one continuous piece of fabric, plus it minimizes any gaps between the sections and allows us to stretch the skirting tightly as we pin it to the modules. (Figures 14-15)



Figure 14 – Velcro strips



Figure 15 – Connected and stretched skirt sections

With a variety of skirting section lengths and a little planning, we can pick the correct sections of skirting that, when “Velcro’d” together, will surround our loop with the minimum of excess. The excess we do have is easily handled by looping the extra material behind itself at a pin. When we have a module in our loop that doesn’t have the Homosote plugs, we try to place it between two of our modules and simply stretch the fabric across that module.

### Author

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