

Making a Waterfall

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A mountainous scene with waterfalls and rushing water is probably one of the most dramatic things you can do on a model railroad layout. There is something about this kind of model train scenery that is always exciting. I guess just the fact that you can create such a spectacle of nature so realistically on your layout is amazing to me. You should try to add at least one waterfall to your model train scenery if you have any mountainous or rocky terrain areas in which to do so.

If you already have a rocky area with a flat rock that extends out over the rock wall below it, you're all set. You want to be sure the waterfall has a straight fall down. Other than the *slight* natural curve that occurs at the top of the falls, there should be no angle to the falls as the water drops.

You should have a riverbed or lake prepared both at the top of the falls and at the bottom. Remember that the water has to come from somewhere and go somewhere even if the place where it's going is off the edge of the layout; at least there should be a *suggestion* that there is somewhere for the water to go beyond the confines of the model scenery.

Making a waterfall is a simple one-hour project that adds to the visual variety of a layout and provides a strong focal point for visitors.

The waterfall should be several inches above the surrounding terrain. Higher is better because it looks more dramatic.

Build a rock face with one outcropping perpendicular to the others, providing a shelf for the water to run over. Stack the rocks so they look as water has worn them away. At the base of the falls, place a handful of boulders and spread them away with a large brush. They should look like water has pushed them into position. Hold them in place with matte medium spray.

Build the waterfall

Make the base for the falling water from strips of *.015" clear styrene sheet*. Cut the styrene into strips of varying width as long as the height of the falls.

Randomly score each strip parallel with the edges. The scored lines help establish the look of rapidly running water. Streak the backs of the strips with a thinned application of cerulean blue acrylic paint. Go easy: a little color is better than a lot. You just want to tint the backs of the strips.

Glue each strip to the front edge of the overhanging rock lip with white glue or 5 minute epoxy. Hold them in place until the glue sets. They must hang straight

down. After the epoxy dries, in order to give the clear plastic strength, coat the front of the falls with another coating of 5 minute epoxy. Brush the epoxy over the strips and allow the excess to run over the rocks.

After the first application, brush on a second layer of 5 minute epoxy from top to bottom until the strips are strong enough to be self supporting without sagging. Smooth out the epoxy that runs into the rocks at the base of the falls to eliminate any puddles of epoxy.

After 30 minutes, the epoxy will have cured enough for you to finish the walls on one of several ways.

The easiest is apply acrylic gloss medium or gloss gel onto the front of the sticks with a stiff brush. Rake the wet acrylic from top to bottom with the brush or an old comb to produce parallel grooves.

- Liquitex Matte Gel Medium #00618-1015 Heavy body, matte sheen
- Liquitex Gloss Medium & Varnish #00618-1017 gloss sheen
- Liquitex Matte Medium #00618-009 matte sheen

Use a wooden stick or toothpick to blend and feather these strips of gel together, so that you end up with a textured finish with an irregular vertical pattern simulating a waterfall. If you end up with a little extra gel at the bottom, that's okay, because you need to use that for the base of the falls.

Use your stick or a stiff small brush to stipple the acrylic gel at the base of the falls where it hits the water. The gel should look agitated here with a thick irregular foamy appearance. (Use reference photos if you need to.)

At the top of the falls streak the acrylic gel over the rocks, blending it into the gel at the top. If you have already prepared a riverbed at the top of the rocks, then extend the gel into the base of the riverbed to form rapids for a few centimeters or more into the riverbed.

After you have completed the water for the top and bottom streams, streak the falls with titanium white acrylic paint and finally seal the color with more gloss medium.