Group's Decorating Places™

Group
Real. Bold. Love.

DECORATING ROCKY RAILWAY

Step-by-Step Instructions

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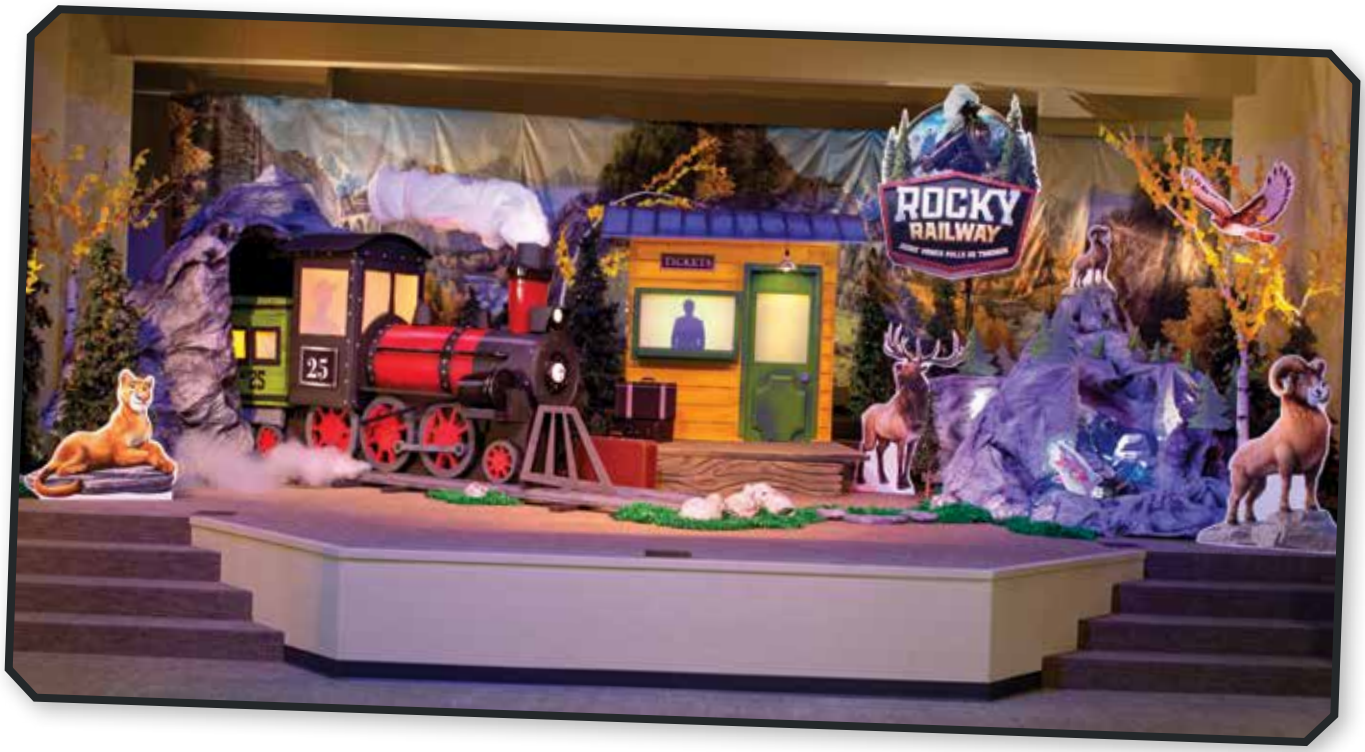


General Information & Tips

Preparing to Build

Get ready for tons of imagination as you create your set for Rocky Railway! We'll help get the decorating gears turning with set-building ideas to transform your space into a train in the Rocky Mountains! You and your volunteers will have a blast as you create this fun VBS set!

- **Read through the instructions first, and plan your projects.** As you prepare to build your set, think about how much space you need to fill and consider your available budget—you can make some or all parts of these projects, go simpler or more elaborate, and size the set pieces to fit your space. Use our set ideas as a springboard, and just have fun!
- **Recruit volunteers.** Many hands make light work...and this is never truer than when building your VBS set! Enlist some handy church members who can help build the large set pieces, and don't overlook your church's youth group. Teens can help cut and tape craft paper, cut crepe paper leaves, and add the paint that will bring your set to life.
- **Calculate the amount of supplies needed.** The supply list provides you with a *general guideline*, since your set might be larger or smaller than the one we created for our field test. The size of the depot you create, for example, will affect the quantity of supplies, such as 2x4s, foam core, and paint, so we can't tell you exactly how much to purchase for your set.

Sheets of white rigid foam insulation, also called insulation panels, are available at building supply stores, such as Home Depot, Lowe's, or Menard's, in different thicknesses. We used 2-inch thickness for the Depot and Train, as well as 1-inch. If your local store doesn't carry the foam insulation panels, you should be able to place an order. Be aware there may be large minimum requirements for an order, so you may want to connect with other churches in your area and place an order together. Another option is to check with insulation and shipping companies.

You can also simply hang the Rocky Railway Fabric Backdrop and Giant Train Poster Pack, available from Group Publishing or your Group VBS supplier, and add fun, random supplies from around your building or home, such as plants, trees, and colorful string lights. Easy!

- **Set up your work area.** It's helpful to have separate stations for cutting and painting. Protect your areas by laying large plastic tarps or dropcloths on the floor. For safety, wear heavy gloves when using the hot knife. Be sure to wear latex gloves when using the Great Stuff foam adhesive; it's very important to avoid getting foam on bare skin. Wear safety goggles to protect your eyes. Use a pair of sawhorses to cut the foam sheets with the hot knife; it's easier on your back, and it protects the floor. Never use your leg to prop foam or wood while you cut it!
- **Watch the Decorating Places: Rocky Railway DVD.** The DVD is included in the Rocky Railway Ultimate Starter Kit. You'll get more tips and helpful advice from our design expert, Bruce Barry.

Techniques

- Muddling—Bring two or more colors of paint together by using a little bit of one shade of paint, spraying the paint with a little water, and then adding another shade of paint. Then crosshatch (make X's to blend) the paint on the foam. This technique gives a more natural look.
- Using Great Stuff—Available in different size cans, Great Stuff is a sprayable insulating foam that can be used as an adhesive for foam and cardboard. To use, hold the can upside down with the nozzle pointing downward. After the foam has been applied, it expands, so to avoid having a gap between items being glued together, place a heavy weight on top until the Great Stuff dries. If foam oozes out around the edges, wait until it dries and then remove it with a straight-edge utility blade.

Paint:

(The following are colors from Valspar interior latex flat, but you can use any similar colors.)

- Fabulous Red, 1011-2
- Mountain Lake, 4006-8B
- Simply Purple, 4004-10B
- Merlin, 4002-6B
- Purple Frenzy, 4004-10C
- Shallow Valley, 6011-9
- New Black, 4011-1
- Valspar White

(The following are from Sherwin-Williams. Again, you can use any similar colors.)

- Goldfinch, 6905
- Fireweed, 6328
- Gecko, 6719

TRAIN

- two 61-gallon fiber drums with lids
- four 2"x4"x8's
- two 16" lengths of 2x4s
- four 4" wood screws
- 3" screws
- 4" screws
- drill
- jigsaw
- hot knife
- utility knife
- circular saw
- hot glue gun
- 3 sheets of 2-inch foam
- 1-inch foam (we used the scrap from the Depot)
- 2 cardboard dryer boxes with protective corners (TIP: Ask at appliance stores for the protective corners.)
- four 20x16x20 cardboard boxes
- 1 roll of corobuff
- approx. 60 metal bottlecaps
- matte black spray paint for plastic
- two 32x40 sheets of black foam core
- 1" PVC pipe (one 10' piece)
- three 90-degree PVC elbows
- two 5-gallon buckets with lids
- sandpaper
- "25" sign from group.com/vbsTools
- bag of 90x101 batting
- 14"-diameter, 20" tall flower pot
- 10"-diameter concrete form tube (cut to 32" tall)
- 3 can lights with LED bulbs
- 5-gallon bucket lid
- push light
- frosted vellum
- 15 finish nails
- 3" screws
- one 6" spike
- 2 cans Great Stuff foam
- heavy-duty spray adhesive
- packing tape
- four 10' lengths of gutters
- flat indoor latex paint (gray and black)
- paintbrushes/rollers
- red paint
- black paint
- green paint
- 1 roll of black bulletin board paper
- small box for light
- dropcloth
- black marker
- red duct tape
- T pins
- Cowcatcher template from group.com/vbsTools
- Conductor Silhouette template from group.com/vbsTools
- Wheel templates from group.com/vbsTools
- Coupling Rod template from group.com/vbsTools

*available from group.com

For your Train engine, start by joining the bottoms of two large fiber drums together, using 4" wood screws and two 16"-long 2x4s. These will be the barrel of the engine. Set four large boxes (16x20x20) a couple of feet apart on a dropcloth. Trace partway around the lid of one of the drums on foam to make four cradles for the drums to sit in (the drums will lie on their sides). Our cradles were 9" high and 34" (one piece) wide and 21" (three pieces) wide. Paint the cradles and cardboard boxes black. When the paint is dry, attach two cradles each to two of the cardboard boxes with Great Stuff foam, at opposite ends of the boxes. The longer cradle will need to go at the front. Lay the joined drums on their sides in the cradles to help the Great Stuff set, spaced so that one cardboard box is near the end of each drum.

Paint the concrete form tube black, and set it in the flower pot. Cut a 10" circular hole (or to dimensions of your flower pot) in the front drum to set the smokestack in. Wedge the flower pot into the hole.

For the cab of the engine, turn a dryer box upside down and use spray adhesive to cover it in black craft paper. Cut the protective corner supports to fit around the edges of what is now the top of the box, and attach them with 2" screws to the top of the box. Cut three arch supports from foam, and space these along the top of the protective corner supports, attaching with Great Stuff foam. Use a box knife to cut windows in the front and side (whichever side will be facing the audience) of the box. The side window is 20x20. (Front window template available on group.com/vbsTools.) Back the windows with frosted vellum.

Place one black-painted cardboard box behind the barrel of the engine, and set the cab on top of this box, with the front of the cab touching the end of the barrel. Place the conductor silhouette behind the side window. Put one of the can lights inside the cab to backlight the silhouette.

The remaining black-painted cardboard box will hold the passenger car, which is made from a dryer box laid on its side and painted green. For the passenger car, cut two small windows 12" high and 14" wide, backed with frosted vellum. The trim around the windows is 1" foam painted black. The trim along the top and bottom of the box is also 1" foam painted black. Use the stencil provided on group.com/vbsTools to add No. 25 to the side of the passenger car. Use a can light inside the box to illuminate the windows.

The train tracks are gray gutter set on top of black-painted 4'-long 2x4s, which are spaced approximately 4 feet apart.

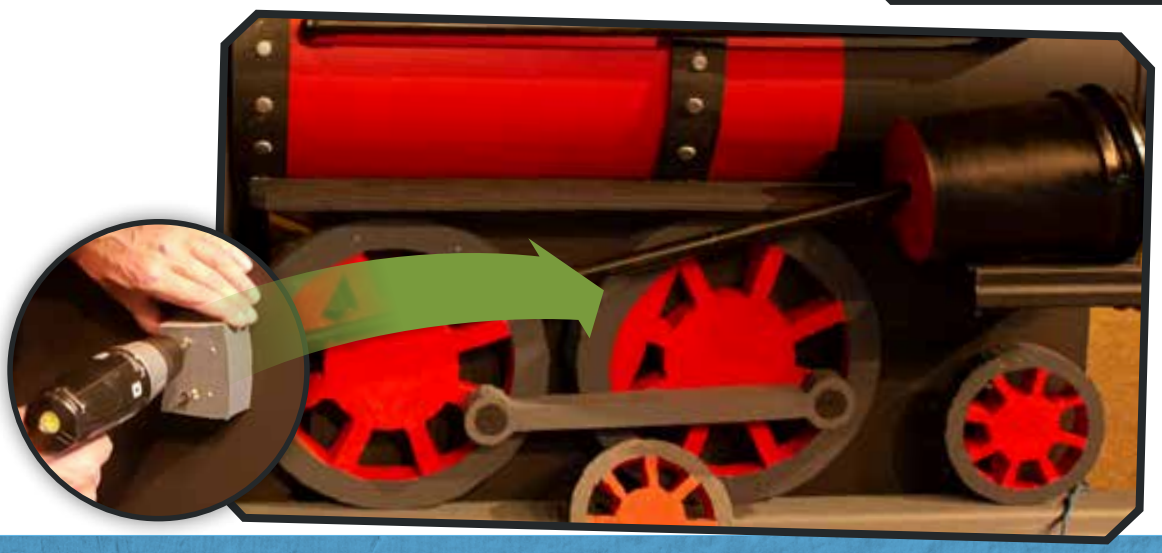
Once you have the engine set up, with the cardboard boxes placed on the railroad ties, attach black foam core lengthwise below the barrel, cab, and passenger car. These will be behind the wheels to cover the holes between the boxes.

Paint the engine barrel red from the cab to about 1/3 of the second barrel. Paint the rest of the second barrel black. Also paint the lid of the front barrel black for the front of the train. Paint a 5-gallon bucket lid, and place it in the center of the front, screwing on with 2" screws. Place the push light in the center, hanging with another screw. Cut two strips of corobuff 4" wide and long enough to go around the barrels. Paint them black, and then attach them around the barrel with hot glue. Use hot glue to attach bottle caps as desired as rivets on the black strips.

Use the wheel template on group.com/vbsTools to create three large wheels and two small wheels from 2" foam. You'll trace the template onto foam and then use a hot knife to cut out the wheels. Paint the outer circle of the wheels gray, and paint the rest of the wheels red. Position the train's wheels on top of track. You will need to cut part of the wheel that goes under the cab in order for it to rest on the track.

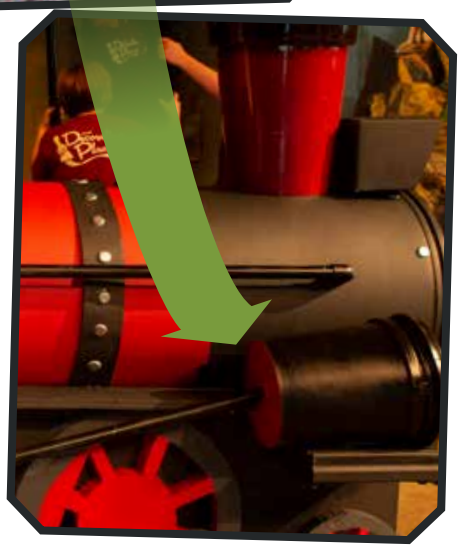
Attach scrap 2" foam as spacers between the foam core and the wheel so the wheel will sit properly on the gutter track. Once the paint has dried, use screws to attach the wheels to the spacers. There will be one small wheel at the very front of the engine, then three large wheels, and then the second small wheel.

Use the template on group.com/vbsTools to make a coupling rod from foam core. Paint the coupling rod gray, and, once dry, attach it to the first and second large wheels.



Paint two 5-gallon buckets and their lids black, and use a jigsaw to cut a 1" hole in the center of the bottom of one of the buckets (this bucket will go on the visible side of the train). Use protective corner supports to make a rectangular holder for the buckets to sit on. The support will be 12x43. Paint this black and set it between the two front cradles, on top of the black-painted box and under the barrel. Lay one bucket on its side on the rectangular holder on each side of the barrel. The bucket with the hole should be on the front (visible) side, with the hole pointing toward the back of the train.

You will need two 4' lengths of 1" PVC pipe and three 90-degree PVC bends. Rough up the PVC with sandpaper and then spray paint with matte black. For the piston rod, attach a 90-degree bend to one end of one of the 4' lengths, and insert the other end into the hole in the 5-gallon bucket. Attach the 90-degree bend to the far side of the middle large wheel with 3" screws.

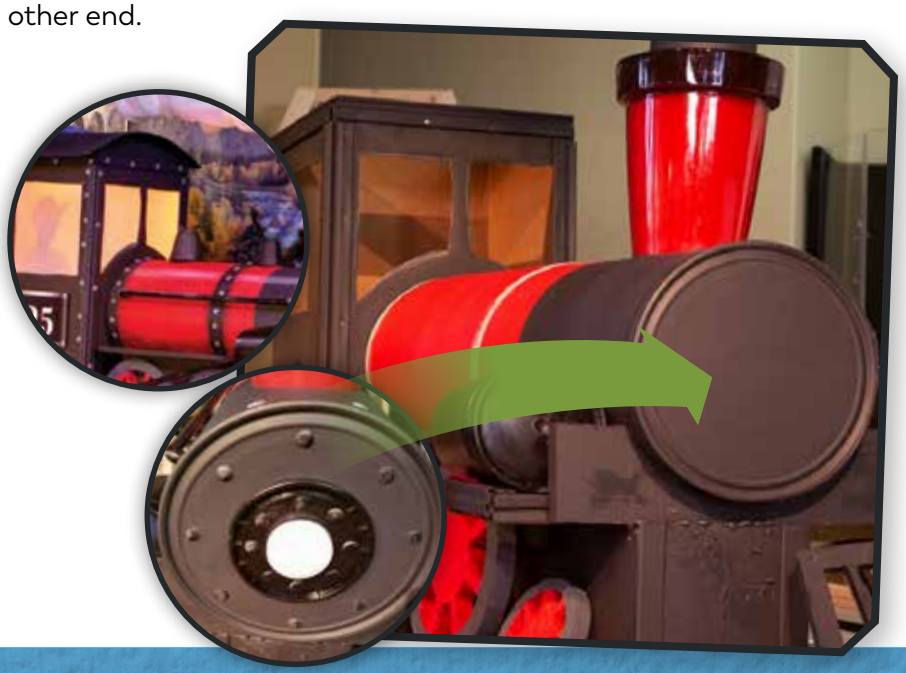


Attach the other two 90-degree bends to the ends of the second 4' length of PVC pipe. Attach to the train barrel lengthwise about halfway up on the barrel.

Use the template on group.com/vbsTools to create a cowcatcher out of 2" foam or cardboard. Cut 45-degree angles into the foam to stick them together with Great Stuff and 2" nails. Paint this black and attach it to the front of the train. We used a 6" spike to hold the cowcatcher up off the ground.

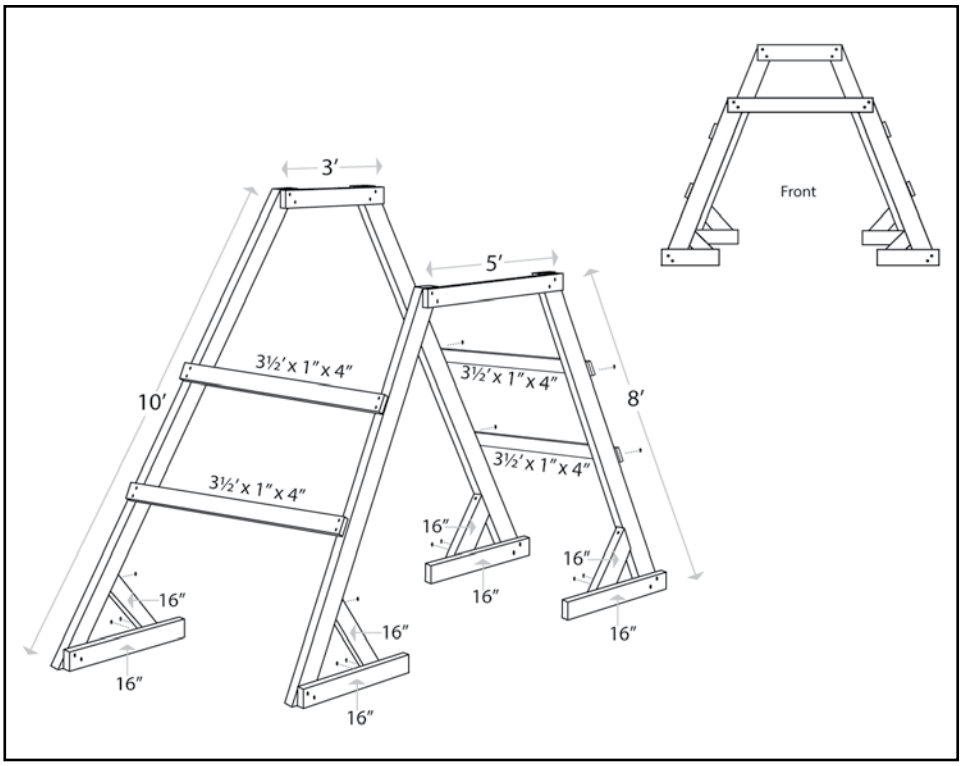
Attach bottlecap rivets to the front of train and cab with hot glue. You can paint some of the rivets black if desired. Add a cross made of red duct tape to the push light.

Use 2" foam to create a "skeleton" for your smoke. Cover the foam with batting, using T pins and nails. Put one end in the smokestack, and use a stand to hold up the other end.



TUNNEL

- two 10'-long 2x4s
- two 8'-long 2x4s
- four 1x4s
- 3" wood screws
- 2 rolls of gray paper (4' wide)
- black paint
- white paint
- spray bottle
- heavy-duty stapler and staples
- regular stapler and staples
- tape
- schematics from group.com/vbsTools



Build the A-frame lumber structure according to the schematics.

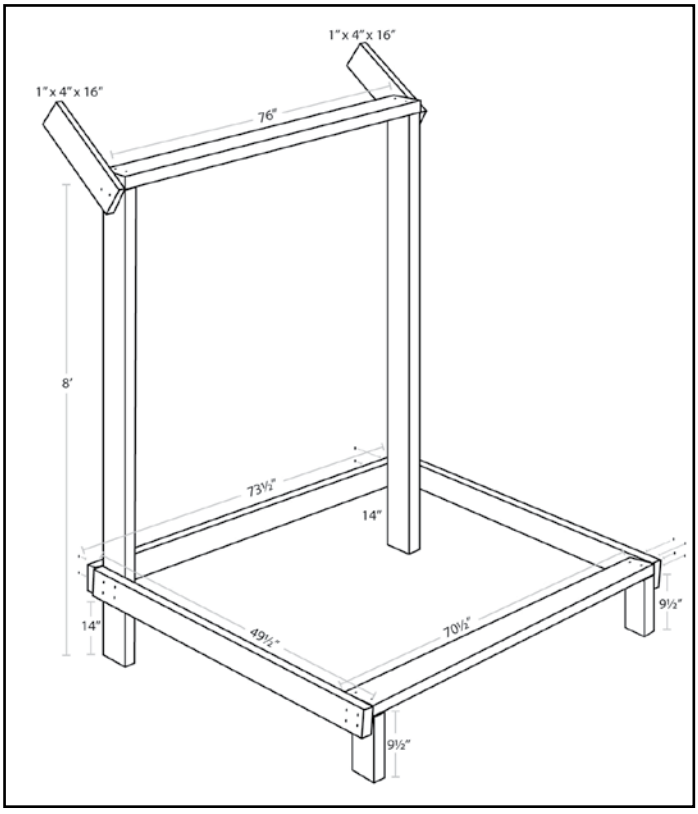
Crumple long strips (12- to 8-foot lengths) of gray paper to give them a rocky look. Attach the paper to the A-frame with a heavy-duty stapler, coming from the top of the structure. Use a regular stapler and tape to attach the strips of paper to each other so there are no holes. Thickness and bulk can be added by simply crumpling and adding more paper.

If you'd like to make your tunnel look bigger, you can put a chair underneath the paper on the side of the structure. Make sure the paper covers the chair.

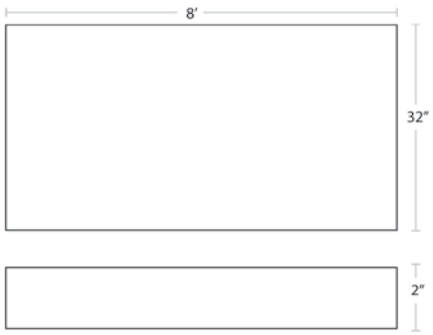
Mix white and black paint to make about a cup of dark gray paint. Dilute dark gray paint in a spray bottle by mixing 2 parts water to 1 part paint. (TIP: If it doesn't come out of the bottle easily, add more water.) To created depth and texture, spray gray paint on the crumpled paper using the mist setting on the spray bottle.

DEPOT

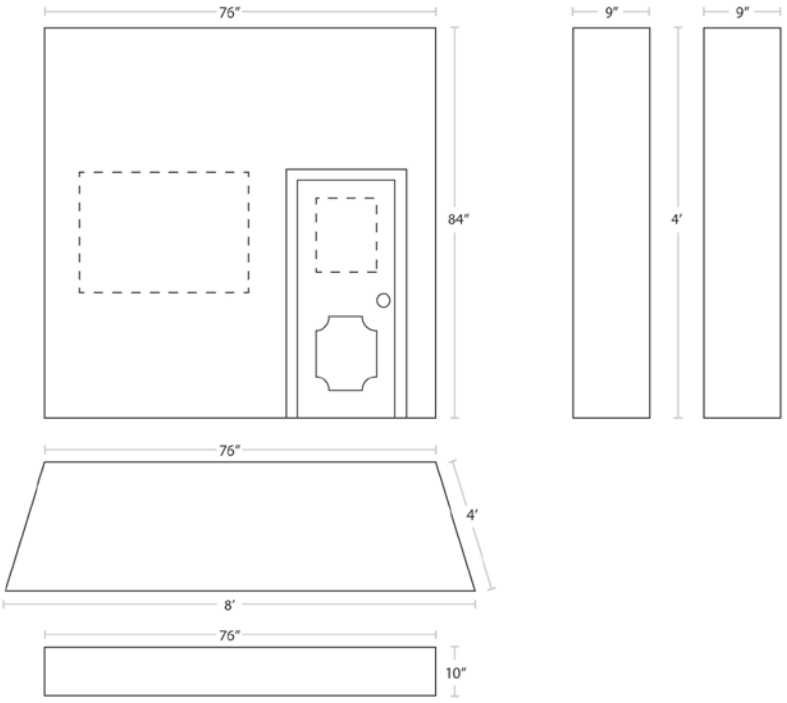
- two 1x4s (16" long)
- eight 2x4s
- fifty 3" screws
- circular saw
- square
- tape measure
- yardstick or straight edge
- 3 sheets of 2" foam
- 1 sheet of 1" foam
- duct tape
- hot knife
- frosted vellum
- flat-screen TV
- paint: yellow, green, brown, and gray
- 2" sponge paintbrush
- paint roller
- Depot schematics from group.com/vbsTools
- marker
- drill
- Great Stuff foam



Depot 1" foam pieces



Depot 2" foam pieces



Build the 2x4 frame for the depot, using the Depot templates. Note that the back floor of the depot porch is elevated slightly to create forced perspective.

Cover the 2x4 structure wall with 2" foam. Measure and mark window cutouts and where the door trim will go. Note: On the Decorating Places video, you will see that the door is a separate piece. To make your Depot more durable and easier to share among churches, and to save on foam, simply add trim pieces to create the illusion of a door.

Measure and mark the deck piece and the front deck plank onto 2" foam.

Note that that scrap from the window cutout creates the window ledge. The scrap from the door window creates the detail of the lower part of the door.

Measure and mark the roof piece onto 1" foam.

Use a hot knife to cut out the Depot pieces.

Cut the remaining 1" foam piece into 2" strips for the trim pieces.

Use a piece of scrap foam to create a doorknob.

Carve all the wood detail, angles, and grooves into the foam. (The Decorating Places video is a great source for carving techniques.)

Paint the depot pieces.

Screw large depot panels and pieces in place on the wood frame using 3” screws.

Use screws and Great Stuff to hold the door detail, window ledge, trim pieces, and doorknob in place.

Add the roof and 9"x4' side panels to help hide that the Depot is not really 3D.

Attach frosted vellum behind the window and the door.

Add the ticket sign to the outside of the Depot and a flat-screen TV behind the window to show the video of the conductor.

Finish with a hanging light and luggage.

STREAM

- an imagination
- 2 large appliance boxes (we used dishwasher boxes)
- 4x8 sheet of cardboard
- utility knife
- large 4-foot roll of gray paper 4'x 250' (we found ours online)
- paper stapler
- masking tape
- hot glue gun
- spray bottle
- black paint
- water
- ladder
- 2 rolls blue cellophane
- water fabric
- boxes
- 1" foam
- hot knife
- green paint
- dark gray paint (mix black and white to make dark gray)
- tissue grass mats
- water light (optional)
- T pins
- tree template

Determine where you want the stream and what direction the water will flow.

Cut large boxes diagonally in half. Set the boxes and the ladder and stacked chairs in the path from high to low that you want the stream to flow. Our path was a little wider at the top and got narrower at the bottom.

Cut a slit in one of the dishwasher boxes about 30 inches up and a second slit 20 inches up across from the first to slide flat cardboard into. Trim the flat cardboard to be a little wider than the width of the stream. Then make slits like fringe to bend down the edge of the cardboard. Fit the flat cardboard into the slits in the box.

It is a good idea to step back and make sure you have enough height in the stream so that it can be seen from where your crews will sit.

Crumple and cover the structure you have built with gray paper using staplers and tape.

Dilute dark gray paint in a spray bottle by mixing 2 parts water to 1 part paint. (TIP: If it doesn't come out of the bottle easily, add more water.)

Spray paper with spray bottle set to mist to give it a rock texture.

Add water fabric and blue cellophane to the stream bed. Use a water light in the stream to create movement.

Use a hot knife to cut rocks out of scrap 1" or 2" foam and paint them gray. Use Great Stuff to attach rocks together, or stack them in the stream as desired.

Use tree template on 1" foam to make several trees. Paint trees green and attach from small to large. Use hot glue on a low setting to attach trees, then use T pins to steady them.

TREES

- sturdy tube 3'-4' tall
- spray adhesive (1 can)
- newsprint or white bulletin board paper
- white spray paint
- scissors
- black paint
- sponge paintbrush
- Aspen leaf template from vbsTools.com
- sturdy, real tree branches
- Glue Dots

Spray paint tree branches white, and allow them to dry. Tear pieces of newsprint about 2 feet long, crumple, spray with spray adhesive, and press on to the tube. Cover the entire tube this way.

Cut leaves out of crepe paper by folding the crepe paper to the size of the template, tracing the leaf pattern on the crepe paper, and cutting out like a paper doll. Wrap chains of leaves around the branches, securing with Glue Dots.

Paint black details on the trunk of the tree by putting horizontal marks of paint here and there.

Secure the trunk to a stand. Add the branches by fitting one end of each branch into the hole in the top of the tube. Add paper around the top of the tube and onto the bottom of the branches to create a seamless look, securing the paper with spray adhesive. Add paint detail to this as well.

LOGO & FINISHING TOUCHES

Logo

You have several options for the logo. You can buy the Logo Display and hang it above your set.

Or you can use the logo provided in the Giant Decorating Poster Pack or have a print shop print it to the desired size from the Rocky Railway Clip Art & Resources CD. Here's how to prep the logo:

1. Attach the poster to a sheet of foam core using spray adhesive. To splice foam core sections, hot glue strips of foam core (or alternatively could use lath) at the seams on the back.
2. Spray the front side of the foam core, position the logo, and work out any air bubbles, working from the center out. Use a utility knife to carefully cut around the outlines of the logo.
3. If you are hanging the logo from a light bar or other ceiling fixture, hot glue and duct tape a length of 1" PVC to the back of the logo near the top.
4. Run heavy-duty fishing line through the PVC, adjust the height of the logo above your set, and tie the ends of the fishing line securely.

Bible Memory Buddy Cutouts

1. Use spray adhesive to attach the Bible Memory Buddies from the Giant Bible Memory Buddy Poster Pack to sheets of foam core. Spray the front side of the foam core, position the Buddy, and work out any air bubbles, working from the center out. Use a utility knife to carefully cut around the outlines of the Buddy.
2. To stand the Buddy upright, cut a wedge-shaped piece of foam core, and duct tape it to the back of the Buddy.

Rocky Railway Fabric Wall Hanging

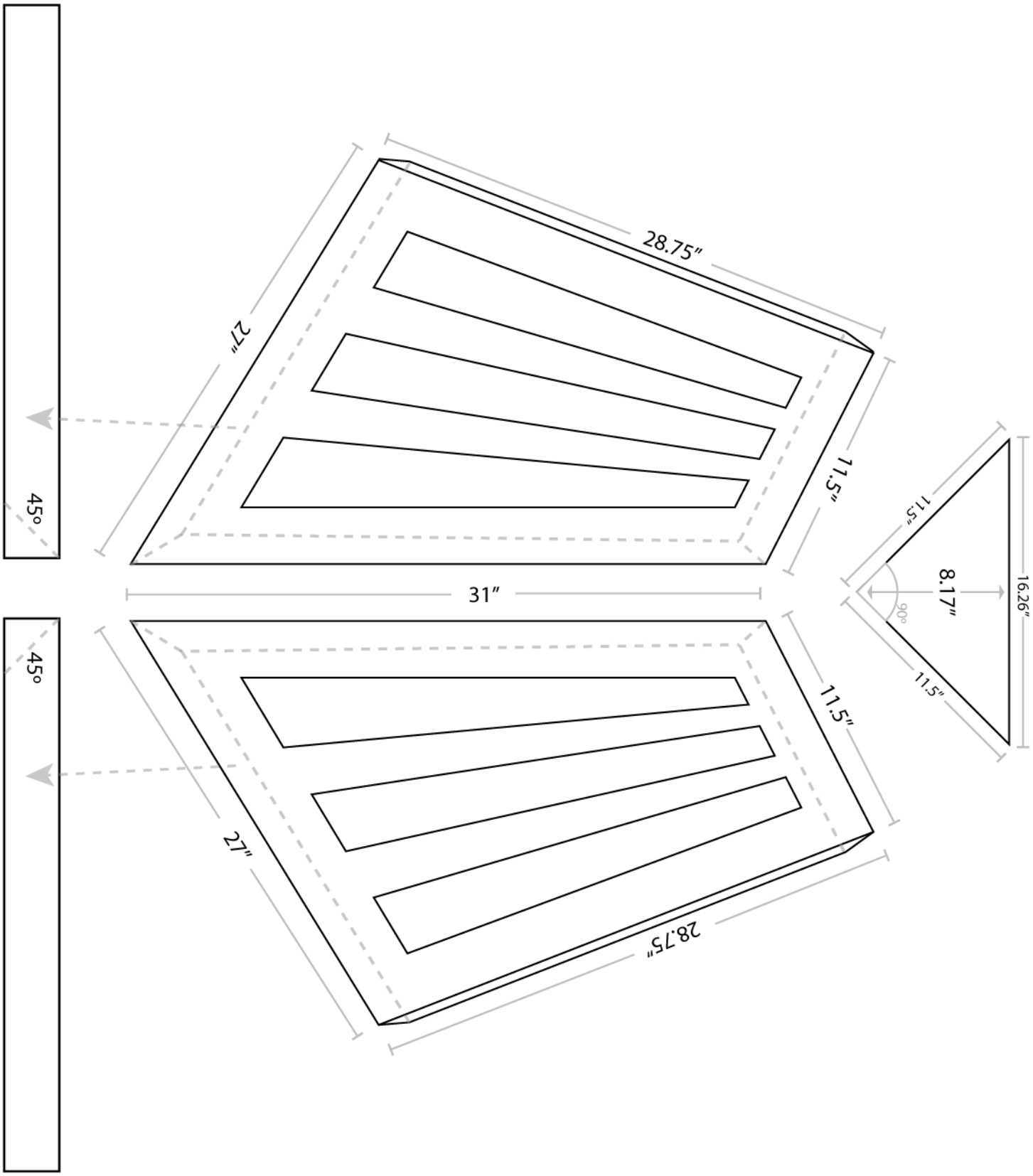
1. Set up the pipe-and-drape system at the back of your set at the length to match the number of panels you are using. Weight the bases with media sandbags to keep the poles from falling over.
2. Use zip ties to hang the backdrop with the buttonholes in the fabric.

Finishing the Set

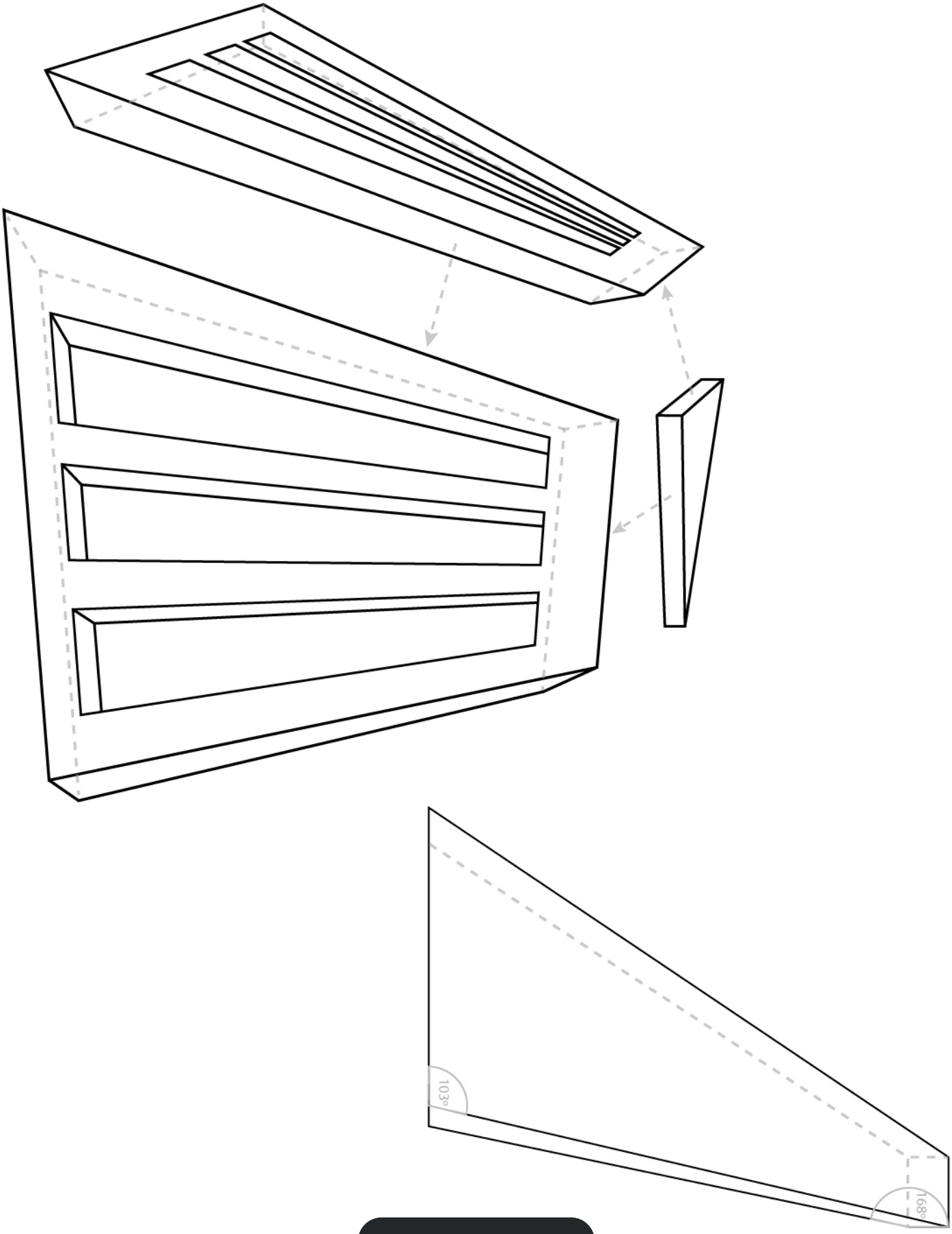
1. Set up the backdrop panels behind the various pieces you've built.
2. Place the plants, greenery, and rocks all around your set.
3. Place the Bible Memory Buddy cutouts where desired around the set.

Woo-hoo! You did it! You're bringing an exciting railway adventure to the kids at your church *and* helping them know that Jesus' power pulls us through!

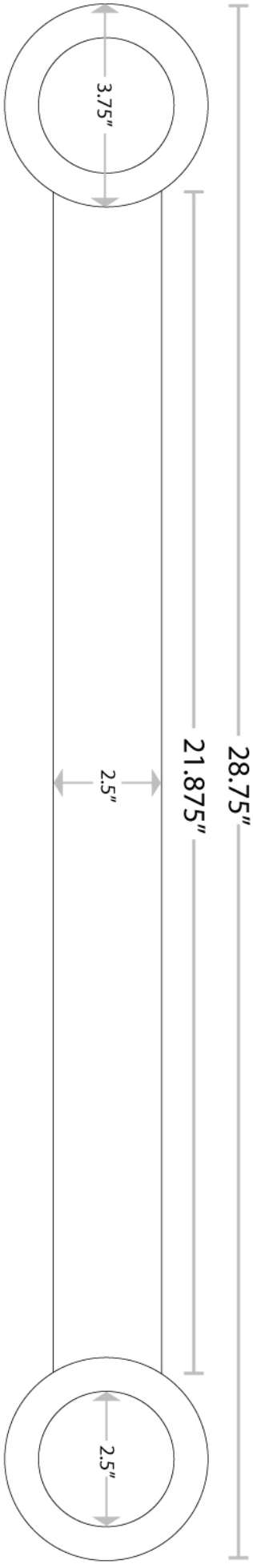
Cow Catcher 1



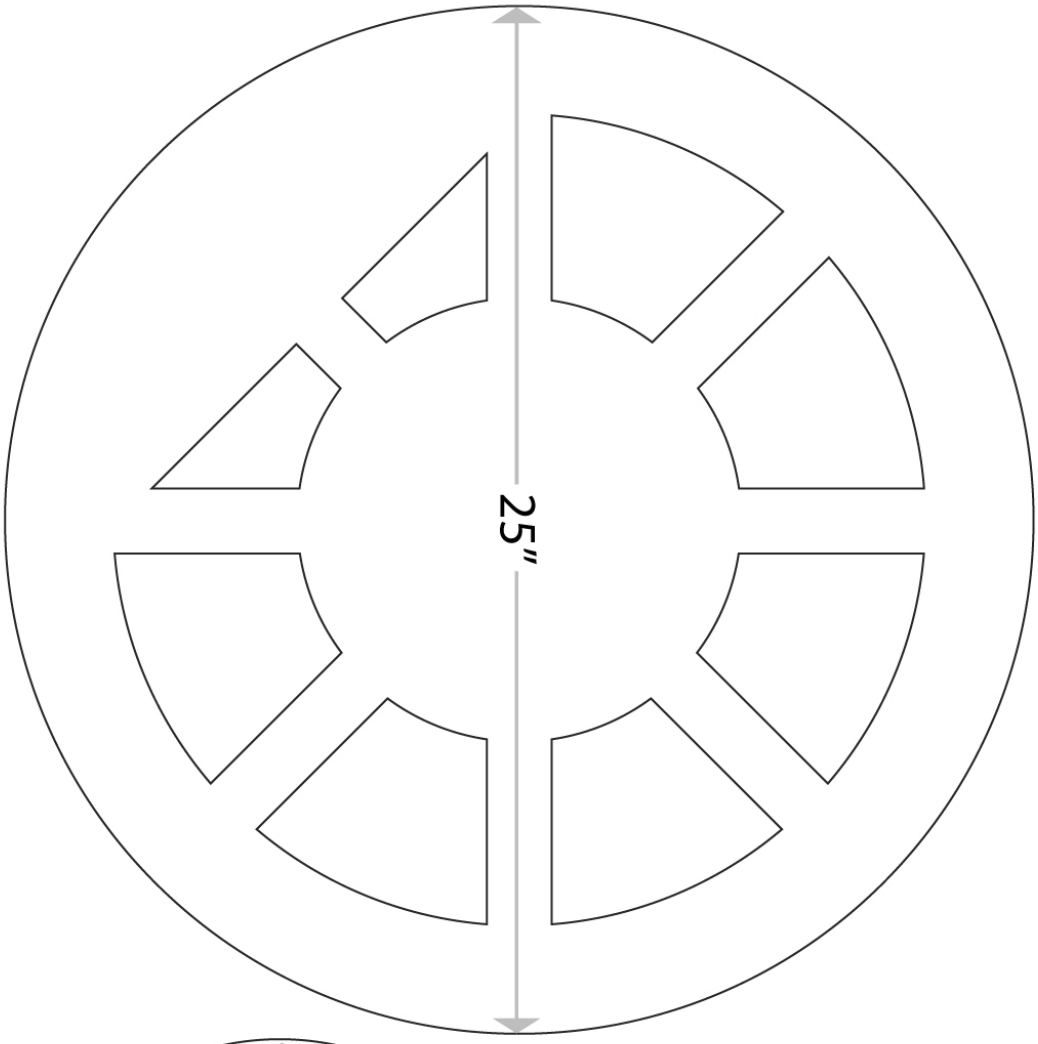
Cow Catcher 2

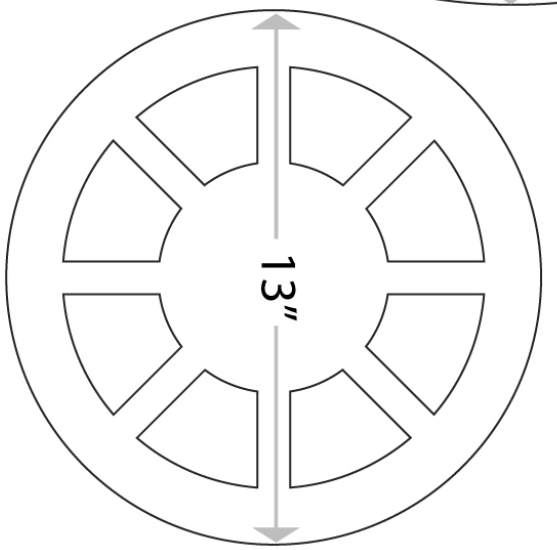


Coupling Rod

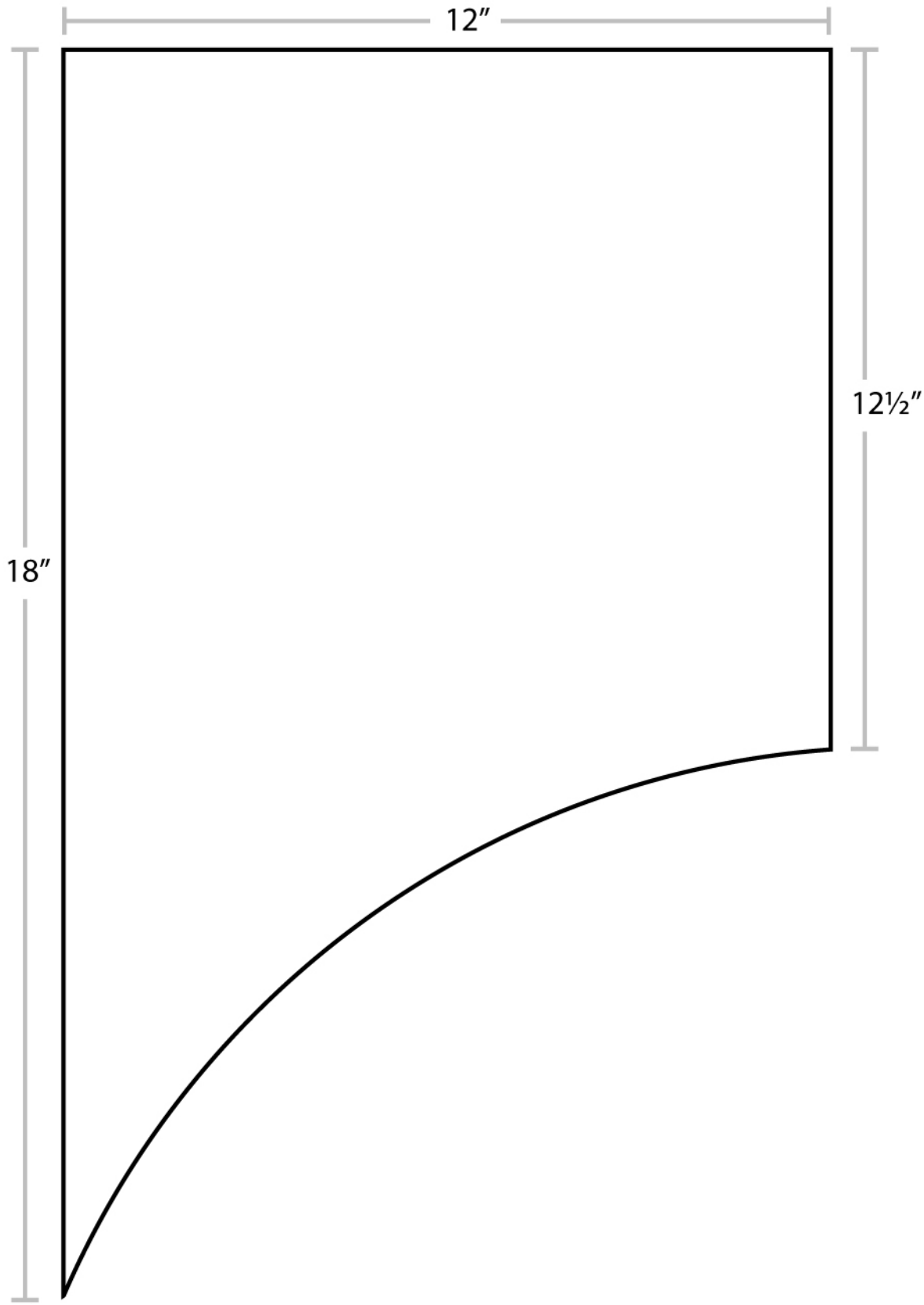


Wheels

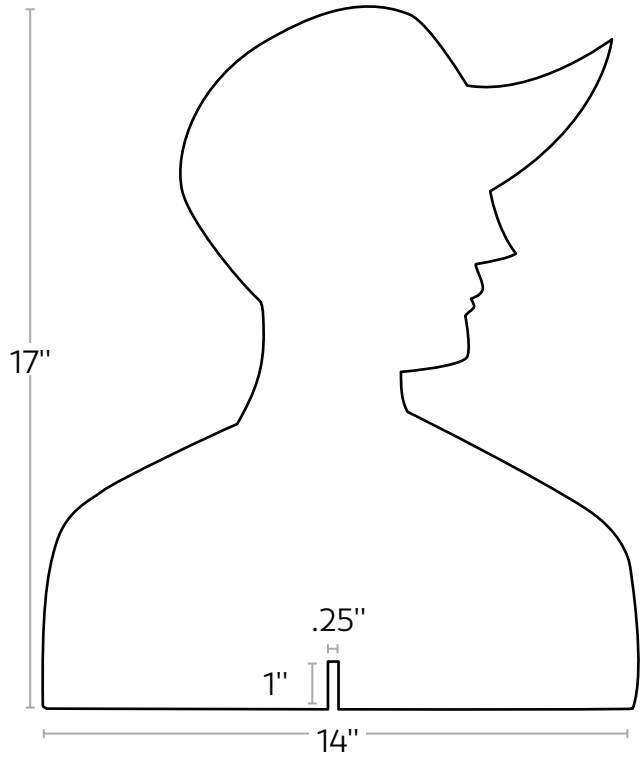




Front Train Window



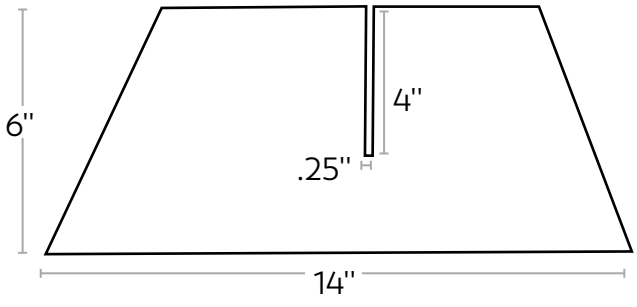
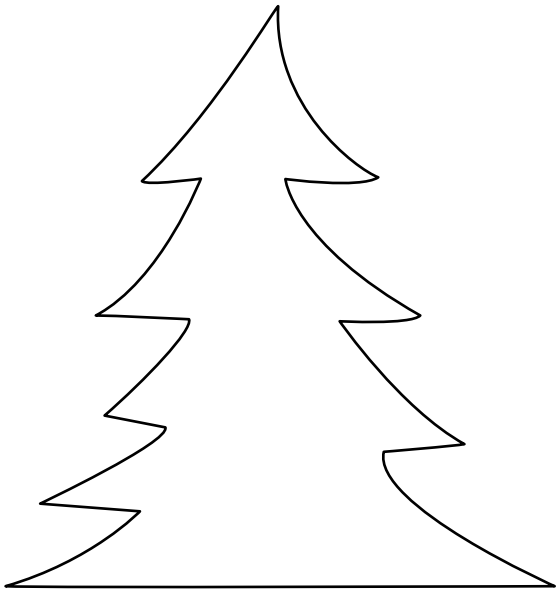
Conductor Silhouette



Silhouette

Stand

Base



Stream Trees