

# DESERT MODELER

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## Introduction

I decided to start this missive to communicate within the division about new happenings in the world of the AP program. Hope you like it.

## What is the AP?

It is a way of challenging yourself in various ways. There are a dozen awards that you can earn for various plateaus:

### Golden Spike

Usually one of the first earned, no evaluation is necessary! Just display some structures, cars and a bit of track. Get one member to witness

Go to the NMRA website for more information, click here:  
[NMRA Golden Spike](#)

While you are there, check out some of the other certificates available. I'll discuss them later.

## Your part

Nobody can tell you what you need or want to do. It is yours to decide. We are here to help you grow in your direction.



## What's wrong with this town?

While this was NOT done for the AP program, this town existed on the PebbleCreek Club's layout when it was dismantled. There is a lot of detail in the diorama: people, cars, the baseball game. But IMPORTANT details are missing.

For example, there are no outhouses nor plumbing vents. Ok,

## Scratch building tools

It has been decreed that any tools used to scratch build an item going into a model are to be evaluated on who manipulated the tool, not what the tool is.

So, for example, if you draw the part in a CAD program and import that to a 3D printer, it is scratch built. If someone else manipulates the software along the way, it is not. It does not depend upon your owning the printer, or pressing the start button. Whomever designed the software "built" the part. The printer or automated cutter or whatever is just a tool, like a saw.

## Nut, bolt & washer

There has been some confusion about the rules regarding nut, bolt & washer (NBW) castings.

These useful detail parts can be confusing. Since they are not "basic shapes," it is easy to say that they detract from the scratch built score. For example, if you have a trestle with 500 pieces of wood and 500 NBWs, there is an argument for the structure to be only 50% scratch built.

This has been recently clarified by national. They are EXEMPT.

Of course, you could always make them on a 3D printer, as discussed above, and really run the scratch built content up!

where do the people go to go?

Also, there are power poles without any wires and no drops to the houses. Come to think of it, there are no electrical feeds or meters.

Other than chimneys, there is no roof detail: air conditioning, electrical conduits, TV antennas, etc. Some of these are very easy to add and pick up a few points.

Think about the details when you are building a structure. What does it need to function? Also, unless it was built yesterday, there are items that will surround a building: trash, trash cans, yard tools, toys, car parts, railroad junk, ties, etc.

## Remote evaluation

In these days of Covid-19, lots of folks are doing a lot of modeling. How can they participate in the AP while social distancing?

Many certificates can be evaluated remotely, via FaceTime, Zoom, etc. Photos, write-ups and videos can be sent to the evaluation team ahead of time and discussed in a group call.

Ok, what qualifies? While the rules are changing as we learn more, here is what Frank Koch, the national AP manager, reported in March:

- Structures and cars that score over 100 points can be evaluated remotely. It is hard to get consistent results in the tests that have been performed with models that earn 70 to 100 points.
- There is a way to remotely evaluate 7 of the 11 categories, only Motive Power, Structures and Cars require in-person evaluation.

If you have any questions, contact me at the eMail address in the masthead to discuss YOUR situation.

## August tip:

When you earn your first Merit Award or certificate, start a 3-ring binder with all of them in one place. That makes putting your MMR together easier. Use page protectors instead of punching your awards, if you prefer.