

Trains

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Barriers

- Sneak around, there's usually always hidden entrances to the platform outside the building, even if it involves walking a 100 meters down the track (cover face to avoid trespassing fine) look at Liberate for city specific details.
- Flash a fake ticket to a guard.
- If there is somebody behind you "validate" your ticket, and when it doesn't work pretend not to notice, head forward and wait for the person behind you to validate his ticket.
- Sometimes barriers close slowly and you can pretend to validate your ticket and quickly walk through.
- Jump over, only do this if there's no guards or you have friends who can avert the attention of any present, cover your face too.
- Go through the turnstile 2 at a time, press up together and do it discreetly.

If you really are trapped out pay for a ticket to the nearest station and ride to the end of the line using the techniques in passenger trains. If you're trapped in at the other end, tell a guard you dropped your ticket on the tracks, they will obviously smell a rat but may let you through under grumbles (or possibly give you a fine for not having a ticket, don't pay it! nobody's been taken to court over train fines, they're not legal), if you wish to avoid this say you just came from the nearest station and there was no conductor on the train, he'll charge you and let you through. If you know you're going to a station built up like a fortress pay for a single ticket going from the station nearest to the end station going to the end station from a ticket machine before you travel.

Passenger trains

Hopping passenger trains is a careful art of deceit

- Watch through the doors for the conductor coming, when he gets close, duck into the toilet. Sometimes smaller toilets at ends of the train that are less frequently used.
- Leave it unlocked and the conductor won't think anyone's in there but you have to quietly get in and out fast as you can because a passenger going to use the toilet who finds you in there will certainly draw attention to you.
- Lock it and you risk uptight conductors checking and even using a toilet key to open it up. If you hear this key act like your washing your hands. One person i know was painting his nails when the guy came in and got out of paying for a ticket by giving a sob story about not wanting people see him paint his nails because he was gay.
- Pretend to be asleep, usually the conductor will come along saying anyone from previous station name, if you act like your in a really deep sleep he/she'll think you cant possibly have fallen asleep so fast and he/she must have already checked your ticket. A good act to pull is head back, mouth open, empty can of special brew and a book on the fold out table. You may get poked or shaken but just keep sleeping. If on the very minuscule chance they call the cops tell them you have narcolepsy.
- Start an in depth conversation with a stranger, better if you blend in with a group.
- Look for tickets left behind on seats you can use, often their cleared up but some are tucked away for just such use.
- Finally there is the forged interrail ticket talked about under hushed voices on a friend of a friends hard drive.
- Amtrak (US) uses small paper tags with the three letter code of the station, wedged above the seats (by the baggage compartments), and does not check tickets other than the first time getting on the train (and not even religiously then). You can either bring a Sharpie marker and write a much farther destination on the tag at your own seat, or switch seats at some point when another passenger leaves for the dining car or their stop. The conductor will ask where you are going, make sure you know the code for it or can read the code for the tag you snatched.
- DO NOT try this on a train that crosses the Amerikan-Canuckistani border: the corpgov pigs have a list of who should be on the train, and anyone on the train but not the list is a terrorist.
- This also works on the return trip: if you "miss" your stop (i.e. have a ticket from a long way behind you to a shorter way behind you) they tend to be helpful and will sometimes give you a ticket on the next train (which can be 12-24 hours later) back to where you were supposed to go. If you are only making a quick trip, you can use this to your advantage very easily.

If all else fails or you don't want to be hassled, buy a ticket for 2 or more stops ahead, there's no way the conductor can remember what stop everyone on the train is getting off at, but if you say the next stop he might be watching to see if you do. Make yourself a new seat tag for your desired destination and enjoy the long ride.

Abusing Open Returns

In some cases Open Returns (tickets in two parts that allow outward travel on the day of issue and return travel within a month) are only a few pence more (or in some cases, cheaper) than the equivalent single and what's more can provide unlimited travel on the return leg for that month. The trick is not getting the return part dated either by a ticket barrier or by the stamp of a Revenue Protection Officer (Ticket Inspector). If you achieve this you can potentially save hundreds of pounds by reusing the return segment of the ticket for the full month of validity.

To avoid getting the ticket dated by an automated ticket gate insert it once or twice times with the metallic strip facing upward so that 'Seek Assistance' is displayed on the barriers LED display, then, acting confused, approach the Inspector supervising the gate, pass them your ticket for cursory glance and they should allow you on to the train. Do similarly at your destination station.

On shorter trains that normally have inspectors look out the window or listen to music and avoid surrendering your ticket when they ask for all tickets from your station. However on longer trains plying inner suburban routes where inspectors are not guaranteed, RPOs effectively 'sweep' the train from back to front in the direction of travel. Get on as near to the back of the train as possible. Also travel early in the morning or late at night when Revenue Inspectors are less likely to be on the network.

If a transfer is required between terminals DON'T use your return segment in the Tube machines as again this will date your ticket. Use the same method as at the destination and original stations by presenting your ticket to the attendant RPOs for a cursory glance and they should open the gates for you.

Freighting

Just like most "free" methods of travel talked about in STB, train-hopping is more difficult due to the post 9-11 war on information - including railroad schedules. There is also an increase in security due to taggers painting railroad cars and the potential liability of a hobo casualty. A hobo leaves nothing but maybe some garbage and only endangers himself, a tagger causes lasting unwanted evidence which yard managers can't ignore, they have to assume all trespassers are there to tag or steal.

To start, leave with someone who knows what they're doing. It will help you stay safe, calm your nerves, and learn their tricks to avoid many problems with rail hopping. If you do leave by yourself, don't try to hop any moving trains until you know what you're doing.

Types of Rides

There are two types of trains, Inter Modal (IM) and General Manifest (GM). Slang terms for these are Hotshots and Junk, respectively. There are separate yards for IMs, but they will still work in GM yards. Both of these categories can be broken down further into types of cars.

Intermodal

Hotshots are the quickest ride you can catch (hence the name). When two trains are going down the same length of track, one train will have to side for the other at a 2 mile, a length of track where it splits into 2 tracks than goes back, or one will side in a yard. Hotshots only have to side for Amtracks and specialty trains like the Florida Juice train. They also seem to go a lot faster. Hotshots are made up of shipping containers and semi trailers for people like UPS and chain stores. They have tighter security than junk trains because people like to jack shit from the containers.

- **Pigs** - "Pig" is slang for a semi trailer. You will have either trailers on flat cars (TOFC) or pigs in buckets. A pig in a bucket is a trailer set into a Container well. Riding a TOFC, you can hide in between the wheels reasonably well, but a bucket is better. One advantage of the Pig is you have shade.
- **Wells** - Well cars are 5 foot tall or so buckets that shipping containers get dropped in to. Wells come in different lengths, as do the containers. You want to try for a 48 container dropped into a 52 well. You can ride in the leftover space between the container and the front of the well. The problem with this is it's harder to find wells with floors these days. Wells without floors are called "Suicides" for obvious reasons. They either have a pattern of triangles cut out of the floor, or just steel diagonal beams running the length. A Suicide can be ridden on the 1 foot or so ledge that runs the perimeter with your feet resting on a crossbeam but you can't really sleep unless you sleep on the upper porch where you are visible.

General Manifest

Junk trains are the trains everyone pictures when they think of freight trains. There's a lot of different types of cars, but only some are rideable.

- **The Romanticized Boxcar** - Boxcars are really nice to ride; shade, well hidden, usually something comfortable to sleep on. They are a lot harder to hop in and out of because there isn't a ladder, so it's 5 feet instead of 2 and you have to pull yourself up with upper body strength. A boxcar with two open doors is best. Boxcar doors can't be opened from the inside. Before you get in, grab a rail spike and jam it into the track of the door, or whatever else you can find.
- **Grainer** - A Grainer is sort of shaped like an upside down trapezoid, with "porches" on either end, and metal walk ways across the tops. They carry things like sand and laundry detergent. When riding a Grainer, you ride the porch. You want to get on the side without the brake equipment on it, and it's nicer to be on the back. Riding on the front is a lot colder (so nice in the summer) and you get whatever shit is on the porch in front of you in your mouth in eyes. Riding on the front is called "riding dirty faced", for obvious reasons. Some Grainers have little short walls running the perimeter of the porch. These are called "Cadillacs" and they're straight pimpin'. Grainers have holes cut into the sides, so when you need to hide you can crawl inside.
- **Flat Cars** - Terrible. Completely visible, and there's no shade.
- **Tankers** - Unrideable.
- **Gondolas** - Gondolas are big buckets. They get filled with all kinds of things, like scrap metal, wire spools, etc. You shouldn't ever ride a loaded Gondola; use your best judgment. The shorter ones are the only ones worth riding.

Gear

Be sure to pack light and be ready to ditch your pack and water if something goes wrong while jumping aboard. Don't ever carry glass bottles or jars, it is almost impossible to board or unload without breaking them. Bag anything that can leak or get all over the place in Ziploc bags - they will keep your gear organized and waterproof. A gym bag is easier to board with but, since you are likely to walk a bit from your unloading spot, a small backpack is probably better.

Bring plenty of water because the elements and the excess wind will dehydrate you. It sucks to have to get off early in some random town because you ran out of water. Come to the train yard hydrated and carry a gallon jug or several reused 2 liter soft drink bottles strung together with thick twine to bring on the car. It pays off to be carrying several bottles when a jug gets punctured. A Nalgene bottle is as unbreakable as they come, but even a reused liter soft drink bottle will work; Keep it clipped to your belt in case you lose your jugs or pack. Keep your main water supply in your hand and not in your pack when jumping on or off so that if it breaks it will not soak your gear, additionally it is easier to ditch if you have trouble boarding. Stay hydrated! If you avoid drinking until you are thirsty you will drink more and feel like shit, so constantly take small sips. Some dehydration indicators are a dry mouth and dark infrequent urination.

Everybody poops, don't EVER try to take a dump while hanging off the edge on the fly, like pops said go before you leave, if you have a turd emergency squat and use one of your ziplocs so you don't mess up the car you are on, and PEASE don't forget TP for your bunghole.

A sleeping bag, jacket, or blanket keeps the wind off even in summer. Open cars are breezy once they get moving fast, so don't let your gear get blown away. A quality rain poncho may flap a bit in the wind but is well worth the space in a sudden thunderstorm. Poncho's are also a very light way to tent up if you camp for a night. Goggles and sunglasses keep the bugs, sun, and wind out of your eyes. A t-shirt or very large scarf wrapped around your face might make you look like a terrorist, but it will keep the bugs and dirt out of your teeth and the sun off of your face. A stadium pad or sleeping mat

to sit on is smart, the floors are usually hard, cold, and filthy. Remember to tie down your pad and loose gear to a solid support so it won't blow away. If you have a string hammock you can sometimes tie them up in a boxcar, this is probably the most comfortable way to ride short of an Amtrak sleeper car, but hang it low and in a way that you can't roll out the open door, we don't recommend tying up hammock on any other type of car since there is too much danger of falling off a moving train.

Freight cars are filthy and jumping freights is a good way to beat both yourself and your clothing up. Wear gloves, sturdy shoes, a tough jacket, and rip resistant trousers. Anything loose will fall out of your pockets or get left in the car, keep your pack closed and only take things out one at a time when you need them. For example, smokers should tape a lighter to a string and tie it to a clip on their pants.

Sometimes a car will have one uneven wheel, the train will rock and make the worst racket you've ever heard, and it's ten times worse inside a boxcar. Bring ear plugs, or even yard worker earmuff protectors if you think you need them.

Since train jumping is somewhat dangerous some might consider wearing a bike helmet when boarding and unloading.

Tasty and nutritious easy for throwing train food include tuna fish, sardines, cereal, pop tarts, and sacked cookies, cake, trail mix, and granola. Peanut butter in a plastic jar or tube is an excellent thing to bring. Jacking condiment packets before hand will make your train eating experience much more enjoyable. A lot of folks take a metal spoon and bend the end of the handle over a key ring and keep it on a caribiner.

An area or national map book with marked train tracks is required! Although there are good locating signs along most tracks, a cheap GPS can help you keep track of where you are. A compass will just point at a steel train car, so use the sun and stars to determine general direction. Pointing the hour hand of an analog watch at the sun and dividing the angle between it and the 12 will provide the North-South line in the northern hemisphere. Pointing the 12 at the sun and bisecting between the hour hand provides a North-South line in the Southern hemisphere.

Getting on and off

It's always safest to board a stopped train. If it is difficult to get on in the yard, you can sometimes board a car elsewhere. Trains that are being built in a yard have to pick up cars from different tracks. They will pull out past a track, to the switch, then back into the string of cars on the next track. This is called doubling back.

Getting on a moving train is called hopping on the fly and it is the most dangerous part of riding the rails. The horror stories about severed limbs are written about drunks and dumb people, so keep smart and sober before jumping. Hopping on the fly can be preferable at times since you don't have to go in to a yard at all, and you can wait for and catch trains based on their specific tracks. It is much harder to pick a car though, and if you wait too long for a rideable car you might miss a train completely. Knowing whether or not to hop on the fly is an important decision you should make for yourself. Just because someone says you can do it in a certain place, or the person you are with can, doesn't mean you can. The train is going slow enough to be hopped if you can see and count the bolts on the wheels, or if you can run along side and keep up with a ladder. Watch where you put your feet, there is all kinds of debris you can run into or trip over. You want to run along side the train, grab the ladder with one hand, throw your water up with the other, then grab on and throw your feet onto the ladder.

Getting off on the fly is much harder than getting on. To decide if it is slow enough, look down and compare how quickly the wooden ties are going past compared to your usual running speed. Most folks throw their pack and water off first and then unload unencumbered, but those traveling light may choose to jump with their packs on. To get off a moving train, stand on the ladder, holding on with one hand and one foot, then while still holding on with one hand, drop your feet and run like hell as soon

as they hit the gravel, once down immediately let go with your hand. You also need to lean backwards a bit and try to run diagonally away from the train. Again, this is difficult the first few times and it is always dangerous. Falling sucks, at a minimum you will tear up your hands on the gravel. Always fall forward, watch out for your head and neck, and always try to fall or roll away from the train.

Miscellaneous

You can use the train to flatten coins and other metal objects by leaving them on an active rail and waiting. Be careful because a fast moving train can really fling this stuff hard, but we have sold necklaces and belly button ring charms made from flattened coins. Rail spikes work as heavy tent pegs. Chopped off bits of rail near a repair are heavy but work great as anvils.

Trains use air brakes, every car has a little compressor on it, and hoses run the length of the train. When a train is about to start, you hear the brakes hiss to let go. When a train is linked together a worker has to go the length and connect all the hoses. If your train is broken up (which can be bad for our now stationary traveler) they must close the valve before and after the break and then disconnect the hose, you can hear them do this if you're close enough. When a train breaks the extra worker in the unit walks the length of the train to break it, he then either rides on a car or gets picked up in a work truck. After a while all the sounds become recognizable, this can help save you from getting stuck at some isolated grain elevator 50 miles from any town.

A train breaks to leave a string of cars at a destination, or pick up more cars. It's easier to break in the middle instead of backing the entire train in. That's because it's a pain in the ass to back a huge train into a yard, or the FRED (light on the end) is a pain in the ass to attach. Because of that, the back is preferable so you don't have to go into the yard when strings get picked up, and you are one of the last cars to get dropped off.

"Crew Change" is a term for when the conductor and company finishes their shift and a new crew gets on. A crew can only legally work somewhere between 8 and 10 hours before switching.

BE CAREFUL! *Never move under cars or over the coupling!* When moving between cars use the ladders. Workers are much more likely to give you shit if you're acting a fool, and less likely to care if you are being as safe as they are. Watch out for hump yards! Hump yards are areas of the yard where there is a big hill with track going down it. A car is taken to the hill and released to slam into another car and join the couplings, this is one method of building trains. At rail yards, warehouses, and factories they will often roll a few cars to join them. These cars sometimes move upwards of 20 mph (30 kph)! They are dark and quiet, so don't let one sneak up and run you over. Some yards also have remote controlled yard engines, which means there is no one to see you before they run you over. If you enter the yard from a normal entrance they have big neon signs telling you it uses remote controlled engines.

Finding the Right Train

There's two ways about getting information - technology and talking to people. In the end, you need intuition, confidence, and to accept it when you get on the wrong train or your train releases pressure and you're stuck outside a cement factory in the middle of nowhere.

- **"U.S. Railroad Traffic Atlas"** - Edited by Harry Ladd and often considered the Bible of American trainwatchers, this is a map of all the freight lines in the USA. It shows trackage rights, how much weight gets moved down each line, crew changes, and yards. The most recent edition was published in 2003 and you can often buy it online for around USA\$30.

- **Google Earth** is a useful and free online program. You can set it to show nothing but roads and train lines. the yards show up as a cluster of black lines and two tracks might just show up as one when they're close together. It's can also be used to find service roads and check directions out of each yard. You can also determine where to wait by following the mainline tracks out of the yard to their destinations and which direction a train is going when traveling geographically or after a split.
- **Touch Trace Numbers** are automated phone lines where you can type in a cars numbers and get information on it. If you have a cell phone, once your train is moving type in the car's numbers and it can tell you the next crew change, train yard and ETA.
- **Bullsheets.com** (<http://www.bullsheets.com/>) and **Skedz.com** (<http://www.skedz.com/>) are both websites with train time tables. Skedz is for commercial shippers so it's times are final drop-off time to make the shipment, not exact times whatsoever. Both sites list the yards each train passes through. Bullsheets is a rail fan site so it's times are more useful, and it lists crew changes, but is not currently updated.
- **"The Crew Change Guide"** (CCG) is an underground publication distributed among train riders. For various reasons, it isn't posted on the internet or sold in stores. You can photocopy one off of somebody (if, and only if, they trust you!) for about USA\$5 in copies but it's the most valuable navigational aid you can get. It is updated every year and lists much of everything you need to know.

Deciding whether or not to speak to yard workers is entirely up to you. At worst they will call the bull (railroad police) on you. Yard workers are also known to put you on the wrong train, but they are sometimes really helpful and will even radio to ask about your train. The crew generally only knows information about their train. If a worker sees you it's best to wave; you can judge by their reaction if they're liable to call the bull. When talking to workers tell them you're a rail fan, a train enthusiast who just likes watching trains, although this is not likely to work if you have your pack on.

Scanners

Using a scanner is useful if you can understand what the hell the workers are saying.

A 100 channel scanner works fine, 200 is better since the first 100 will be filled with railroad channels, print out a cheat sheet if you have an older scanner and can't put tags on your frequencies with the computer programming cable.

The American Association of Railroads (ARR website: www.arr.org) assigned a range of frequencies to all railroad operations (including bulls) but they are now migrating slowly to 800mhz digital trunked systems. Pick up a copy of *The Compendium of American Railroad Radio Frequencies*, it is considered the master listing of frequencies organised by the railroad company assigned.

Sometimes the railroad will transmit and receive on two channels using a radio repeater but you only listening with a scanner will be able to hear the whole conversation on the repeater output channel. The current VHF frequency range is CH-02-159.810Mhz, To CH-97-161.65Mhz channels are 2 through 97, split in 15 kilohertz increments. Outside the VHF band, the railroads of North America use the frequency 457.9375 megahertz for transmissions from a train's end-of-train EOT or FRED device to the train's lead locomotive, that might be useful in predicting an arriving train, it will be data you hear on this freq, .

Once programmed into the scanner, pressing "Scan" constantly searches through all the AAR Numbers for any communication and stops when it finds something. Workers will sometimes talk and receive

on two separate channels so you need to constantly scan to hear both sides of the conversation. The yard office will generally talk on a different frequency as well, as does the bull. Some scanners are equipped with "close call" (Uniden) or something similar, which picks up any local transmissions, even if they aren't programmed. A scanner is useless if you don't know your train's number (get it on Bullsheets). Workers will either refer to the train by its unit number or the train's number (the train's number is for the train at that time on that route). You can also hear when your train has clearance (is ready to leave) or who it's siding for, among other things. Sometimes Police overlap onto the same frequencies which can be annoying, so get a scanner with a lock out function.

Hobo code of ethics

An ethical code was created by Tourist Union #63 during its 1889 National Hobo Convention in St. Louis, Missouri. This code was voted upon as a concrete set of laws to govern the Nation-wide Hobo Body, it reads this way;

1. Decide your own life, don't let another person run or rule you.
2. When in town, always respect the local law and officials, and try to be a gentleman at all times.
3. Don't take advantage of someone who is in a vulnerable situation, locals or other hobos.
4. Always try to find work, even if temporary, and always seek out jobs nobody wants. By doing so you not only help a business along, but insure employment should you return to that town again.
5. When no employment is available, make your own work by using your added talents at crafts.
6. Do not allow yourself to become a stupid drunk and set a bad example for locals treatment of other hobos.
7. When jungling (camping) in town, respect handouts. Do not wear them out. Another hobo will be coming along who will need them as bad, if not worse than you.
8. Always respect nature. Do not leave garbage where you are jungling.
9. If in a community jungle, always pitch in and help.
10. Try to stay clean, and boil up wherever possible. (Boiling clothing kills lice, bed bugs, and other parasites.)
11. When traveling, ride your train respectfully, take no personal chances, cause no problems with the operating crew or host railroad, act like an extra crew member.
12. Do not cause problems in a train yard. Another hobo will be coming along who will need passage through that yard.
13. Do not allow other hobos to molest children. Expose to authorities all molesters; they are the worst garbage to infest any society.
14. Help all runaway children, and try to induce them to return home.
15. Help your fellow hobos whenever and wherever needed. You may need their help someday.

External Links

WikiHow: How to Become a Hobo - <http://www.wikihow.com/Become-a-Hobo> Using a watch as a compass - <http://www.onebag.com/popups/wcompass.html>



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