

# TCA GRADING STANDARDS



TCA's Standards Committee was formed in February of 1981 to establish a common set of criteria for grading the condition of an item. We need a member in Portland, Oregon, to know what to expect from a train or train accessory purchased from a member in Portland, Maine!

The Standards Committee updated the original Grading Standards in 2004–2005, and then added “Restored/Refinished” standards in 2006. In 2009, the Standards Committee added “Paper/Box” standards, and have now added “Operational Standards” in 2020. Condition and Grading Standards are subjective, and are intended to act as a guide. It is important and logical that wishful thinking not be allowed to influence the choice of grade.

## CONDITION/GRADING STANDARDS

**Revised in 2005**

<b>C-10</b>	<b>Mint—Brand New:</b> all original; unused and unblemished.
<b>C-9</b>	<b>Factory New—Brand New:</b> all original; unused; may evidence factory rubs and the slightest evidence of handling, shipping and having been test run at the factory.
<b>C-8</b>	<b>Like New—Complete all original:</b> no rust, no missing parts; may show effects of being on display and/or age; may have been run.
<b>C-7</b>	<b>Excellent—all original:</b> minute scratches and paint nicks; no rust and no missing parts; no distortion of component parts.
<b>C-6</b>	<b>Very Good:</b> Minor scratches and paint nicks, minor spots of surface rust, free of dents. May have minor parts replaced.
<b>C-5</b>	<b>Good—Sign of play wear:</b> scratches and minor paint loss. Small dents, minor surface rust. Evidence of heavy use.
<b>C-4</b>	<b>Fair:</b> Scratched, moderate paint loss, dented missing parts, surface rust. Evidence of heavy use.
<b>C-3</b>	<b>Poor—Requires major body repair:</b> Heavily scratched, major rust and missing parts. Restoration candidate.
<b>C-2</b>	Restoration required.
<b>C-1</b>	Junk—parts value only.

## RESTORED/REFINISHED ITEMS STANDARDS

**Revised in 2006**

Restored or refinished toy train and related accessory items must continue to be marked as such using pressure-sensitive labels (Ident Tags) available from TCA. The Association provides these labels through members of the Standards Committee or through the National Business Office. All replacement parts considered “major component parts” (such as an engine frame, boiler or cab) that have been used in the restoration of an item must include the required identification marks of the manufacturer.

<b>R-5</b>	<b>Professional Grade—Restored in all aspects of finish and detail as when manufactured:</b> Finished in correct type of paint, color, texture and gloss. All wiring exactly matches the original. All trim in correct finish or plating. Virtually identical to the original. No surface imperfections in the metal work. No wear or evidence of use present. Authentic in all aspects.
<b>R-4</b>	<b>Very Good—Restored to a general high standard:</b> However, noticeable differences exist particularly with respect to the color, finish, (R-4, cont'd) and texture of paint when compared to an original piece.
<b>R-3</b>	<b>Good—A restored piece that has signs of play wear with minor dents and scratches.</b>
<b>R-2</b>	<b>Fair—A non-professional restoration:</b> Color, texture and finish clearly different from the original. Other items, such as non-authentic wiring are also evident.
<b>R-1</b>	<b>Poor—A poorly constructed restoration in all respects:</b> May be a candidate for restoration. Includes dents or rust pitting under the finish.

# TCA GRADING STANDARDS (CONTINUED)



## PAPER/BOX GRADING STANDARDS

**Revised in 2009**

<b>P-10</b>	<b>MINT—BRAND NEW:</b> Complete and all original as manufactured and unused.
<b>P-9</b>	<b>STORE NEW:</b> Complete and all original and unused. May have merchant additions such as store stamps, price tags et al. Boxes must have inner liner/s, if appropriate.
<b>P-8</b>	<b>LIKE NEW:</b> Complete and all original. Evidence of light use and aging, additional notations since leaving publisher or manufacturer. Contents of box may be missing.
<b>P-7</b>	<b>EXCELLENT:</b> Complete and all original. Handling indentations, minute edge wear, small creases.
<b>P-6</b>	<b>VERY GOOD:</b> Complete and all original. Minor abrasions, creases and/or folds. Small tears, slight color changes, minor soiling. Box may have inner liner/s missing.
<i>NOTE: Any paper or box that has been repaired can be graded no higher than P-5.</i>	
<b>P-5</b>	<b>GOOD:</b> Items show substantial wear. Moderate abrasions, creases and/or folds; moderate tears and losses. Moderate color changes, staples may be rusty or replaced. May have been repaired with archival tissue and adhesive.*
<b>P-4</b>	<b>FAIR:</b> Heavy damage but generally legible. May or may not have been repaired. Paper may be brittle. Boxes may have inner flaps missing.
<b>P-3</b>	<b>POOR:</b> Incomplete, may be very brittle, significant deterioration. Extensive amateur repairs. (Scotch Tape® or equivalent).

*\*Archival tissues are Japanese tissue papers used for paper conservation. Archival adhesives include starch pastes, methyl cellulose pastes and archival heat-set tissues such as Crompton-coated tissues. Pressure-sensitive 'archival' tapes have been shown to be problematic in conservation testing, therefore take this into account should you consider using it.*

## OPERATIONAL STANDARDS

**New in 2020**

Modern Era items now have electronics and other unique mechanisms that may have been neglected in previous TCA Grading Standards. After careful consideration, your Standards Committee developed a set of Operational Standards that cover the sophisticated operation of current trains but can also be used for all toy trains.

As used here, the term “operational component” is understood to refer to “an aspect of a piece (locomotive, accessory, operating car, switch, etc.) that produces, provides or causes to happen some measurable operation of that piece.” The “aspect of a piece” can be a truck, a coupler, a motor, a set of drive wheels on a locomotive, a forward-and-reverse control, lights or lamps, an E-unit, a chuff-chuff function on a steam locomotive, a whistle/horn/sound system, a smoke unit, a pick-up assembly, an electrical mechanism, a conveyor belt, a hand-turned crank wheel, and so on.

<b>O-5</b>	<b>FULL OPERABILITY:</b> All operational components of the piece function as described by the manufacturer or as found in available documentation.
<b>O-4</b>	<b>LIMITED OPERABILITY:</b> All operational components of the piece function, but there is a limited, intermittent, or sluggish condition noticeable; adjustment, cleaning, lubrication or maintenance is required to bring the piece to <b>FULL OPERABILITY</b> .
<b>O-3</b>	<b>PARTIAL OPERABILITY:</b> One or more than one operational component of the piece do not function; replacement of parts, either mechanical or electrical, is required in order to restore operability; at least one operational component in the piece must be functioning properly to be described as <b>PARTIAL OPERABILITY</b> .
<b>O-2</b>	<b>NO OPERABILITY:</b> None of the operational components of the piece function properly; might be relegated to “parts only.”
<b>O-1</b>	<b>UNKNOWN OPERABILITY:</b> The operation of the piece is not known; the current owner either has no way in which to test it or is unfamiliar with proper operational characteristics.