

# PROJECT SECTION



DREAMWORKS

This 6½ - by 6½ -foot O gauge track plan evokes magical holiday memories, similar to those depicted in *The Polar Express* animated film.

## THREE TIMES around the tree

by Neil Besougloff

**W**E ALL SAW THE MOVIE *The Polar Express*, right? In one scene, the *Polar Express* passenger train spirals up a mountain peak like a red stripe around a barber pole.

Here's an O gauge track plan in which a train spirals up and down a white slope beneath the boughs of a Christmas tree. The track plan you see here features O-42 tubular track curves, a tunnel, and a 45-degree crossing. It all fits in a 6½-by-6½-foot space.

Elevation plays a key role in this plan. One of the three loops is flat but at a height 5½ inches above the base of the layout. The other two loops are split between climbing to the upper level of the layout and descending to its base.

The best way to build this layout is by using the "cookie-cutter method." First, fit pieces of plywood together to create a 6½-foot square. Then set down your track, and use a marker trace its roadbed path (about 1 inch to the left and 1 inch to the right of the ties) on the plywood.

Next, where the track climbs or descends, use a saber saw to cut those lines. Don't, however, completely cut out those pieces. Lastly, use shims below the cut sections to raise the track roadbed to the necessary height.

If you are still confused, look at the diagram on the next page, which shows how the cookie-cutter method works for a figure-8 layout.

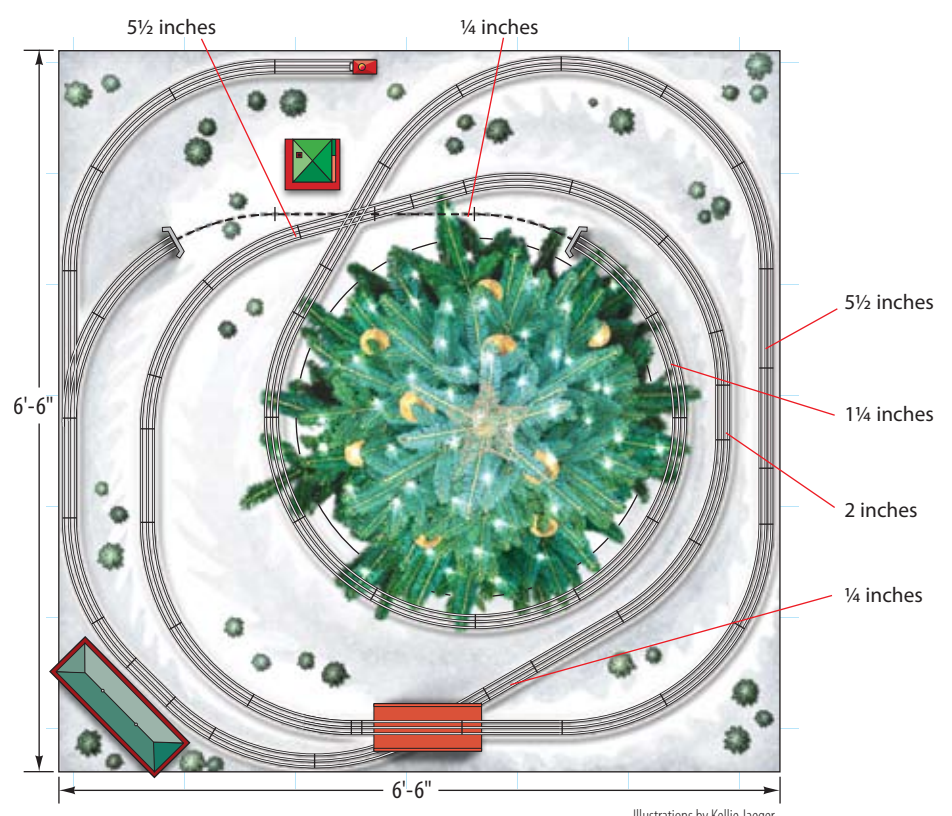
If you're not into cutting cookies, you can use Lionel or MTH graduated tres-

ties to create your grades, or simply elevate appropriate sections of track with blocks of wood draped with a white cloth to represent snow.

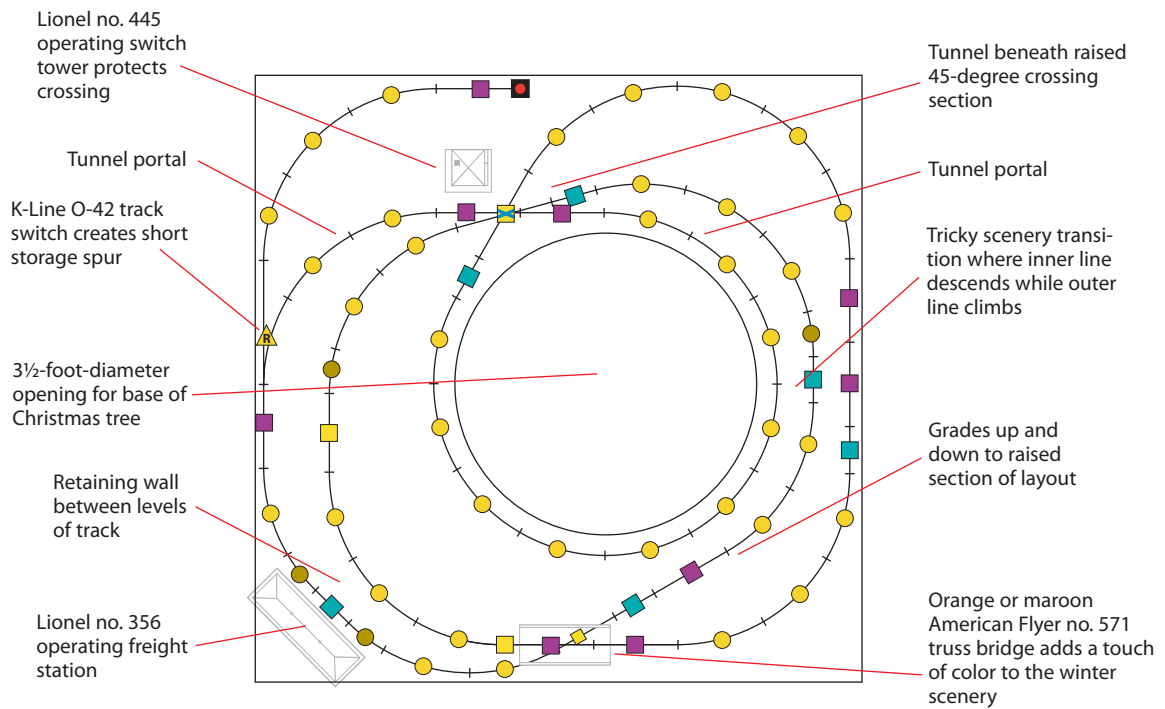
For hands-free operation, use one of the Christmas RailKing starter sets from MTH that come with a cruise-control-equipped locomotive. This electronic

feature will automatically take care of the grades. Atlas O, Lionel, and Weaver also sell locomotives with cruise control that can negotiate O-42 curves.

Regardless of which locomotives you run, this triple-loop layout is designed to raise your Christmas display beyond an ordinary oval of track. **CTT**



Illustrations by Kellie Jaeger



### Suggested accessories

**Lionel**  
**Number/Product**  
 356 operating freight station  
 445 railroad switch tower

**Gilbert**  
**Number/Product**  
 571 truss bridge

### LIONEL O GAUGE TUBULAR TRACK COMPONENTS

| Quantity | Description/Number                            |
|----------|---|
| 6        | ■ half-straight (65505)                       |
| 9        | ■ single straight (65500)                     |
| 3        | ■ custom-cut straight                         |
| 36       | ● O-42 curve (12925)                          |
| 4        | ● O-42 custom-cut curve                       |
| 1        | ▲ K-Line O-42 right-hand track switch (K0374) |
| 1        | ■ 45-degree crossing (65545)                  |
| 1        | ■ track bumper (260)                          |

### "Cookie-cutter method"

