

What Is Slot Car Racing?

Slot car racing is a miniature form of motorsport where scale model cars are raced around a prepared track. The cars are powered by electric motors and guided by a slot in the track they follow.

The first slot car tracks were developed in the early 1900s, and racing became popular in the United States in the 1950s. Today, there are clubs and competitions all over the world.

If you are interested in getting started in slot car racing, you will need a few things. First, you will need a track. Tracks can be bought pre-built, or you can build your own.

You will also need some cars. Again, these can be bought ready-made, or you can build your own from kits.

Finally, you will need a power source to run the cars. This can be anything from batteries to mains electricity.

In the beginning, almost 60 years ago, these cars were very limited and came in only a few scale variations. The early cars were mostly Indy-type and several different variations were offered.

What Are The Different Types of Slot Car Sets?

Today, the modern SLOT CAR era, there are two main types of car sets: analog and digital.

Analog sets are the simplest and most common type. The cars are controlled by a trigger-type hand controller, which regulates the speed of the cars. These cars run side by side and in their own discreet lane.

Digital sets are more complex and use a chip in the car to control its speed. This allows for features such as braking and changing lanes. Digital sets are typically more expensive than analog sets, but you get what you pay for.

Which type of set you choose will depend on your budget and how serious you are about racing. An analog set is a good option if you are just starting out. A digital set may be a better choice if you are more experienced or looking to race competitively.

The number of Analog cars racing depends on the amount of lanes in the layout...one competitor per lane.

Digital systems allow up to 6 competitors on 2 lanes of track, each with his/her own controller. A pair of "ghosts" can be placed on the circuit and these two cars run independent to all other cars.

Analog Slot Cars

The slot cars you will find on the market are basically divided into categories based on the limitations of their specific technology. The two basic types you will find are conventional or analog slot cars and the more modern digital kind.

Conventional or analog slot cars are based on the traditional slot car racing system. In this system, hobbyists race electric-powered cars on wooden or plastic tracks. These cars feature a motor directly connected to the guide.

The guide, in turn, is attached to the car's chassis. The guide is hinged to one of the parallel rails on the racetrack. The purpose of the rails is to keep the cars on the track no matter the speed. The racer handles the car with a device called a controller, which the racer uses to supply power to the car.

Each analog car races only in one lane and cannot change lanes during the race. Consequently, if there are only 4 lanes on a track, there can only be 4 cars racing against each other.

To compensate for these limitations, hobbyists often divide races into heats in which the drivers can switch between lanes. This equalizes any disadvantage a race may have in any particular lane.

For home use, the HO gauge (1/64) analog slot car sets were very popular. There were literally thousands of styles, models and designs over the years.

Digital Slot Cars

Digital slot cars are a more recent development. Unlike their older counterparts, digital slot cars allow cars to race simultaneously on as few as two lanes. This is similar to what you would see on any regular racetrack.

Newer technologies have allowed digital slot cars to be less dependent on the guide to keep them hinged to one side of the racetrack. In addition, the electronic circuits of digital models allow drivers to have full control over the speed and maneuvering of the car.

Digital slot cars are generally more expensive than older models. In addition, some hobbyists find them harder to drive than conventional models. This is because digital slot car drivers must learn how to control the speed of the car and how to switch lanes without veering off the track.

The digital component is not limited to the car. The track conditions, controlled speeds and braking demands can be programmed using a "track program system". Laps, speeds, times can all be displayed on your mobile phone. The track controller can sense when a car has left the race track, place the circuit under YELLOW or STOP the racing all-together.

These features literally make this racing life style a truly miniature application. It can be addicting, but one thing, it is fun.

Slot Cars In General

Slot cars are simply scaled-down models of real cars. Some are just tiny mock-ups built for miniature racing. Others are made as copies of actual cars. Some even copy the actual car's performance capacity.

Most hobbyists race with slot cars mass produced by manufacturers such as **Scalextric, Johnny Lightning, and Carrera**. Most of these cars can be modified to enhance performance.

Some enthusiasts buy motorized static models, while others build cars completely from scratch. They create them from store-brought spare parts and build true-to-life models of the cars they copy. This level of modeling becomes intense as builders fashion brass tubular chassis, utilizing SLOT PIN steering arms that control the front wheels. They scale their cars in ounces and grams, then add weight at the four corners to gain traction.

The History of slotted racecars...

On June 16, 1912, Englishman Fred Francis created a miniature electric car powered by a battery. This was the first slot car ever invented.

Slot cars were originally designed as toys for children. However, it wasn't until much later that they became popular among adults as a racing hobby. In the 1950s, slot cars became a popular pastime for young adults in America. As a result, the first commercial slot car tracks were built in the 1960s.

Several electric toy manufacturers marketed slot car tracks, including Lionel and American Flyer back in the late 50's and 60's.

Today's slot car systems are used for scaled versions of racing. Children and adults alike can compete and race slot cars. Commercial racetracks have been built specifically for slot car racing. These tracks can be found in hobby shops and malls.

Some tracks are even large enough to be used for professional races. These tracks often have electronic timing systems to keep track of lap times and speeds.

You need a track, a power source, controllers, and cars to race slot cars. The track is where the cars race. It is usually made of plastic or wood and has raised sides to keep the cars on the track. The power source is usually a transformer that plugs into an electrical outlet.

The controller is a hand-held device that supplies power to the car. The driver uses the controller to make the car go faster or slower. The cars themselves are usually made of plastic or metal and have small electric motors.

To race, each car is placed in its own lane on the track. The drivers then use their controllers to make the cars go around the track as fast as they can. The first person to cross the finish line wins the race.

If you want to race slot cars, you will need to find a track. You can buy one at a hobby shop or online. You will also need to purchase a power source, controller, and car. Once you have all of these things, you are ready to race!

Is Digital or Analog Slot Car Racing Better?

This is a matter of personal preference. Some people prefer digital racing because it is more realistic. In addition, digital tracks allow for multiple cars to race at the same time and make different sounds as they speed around the track.

Analog racing is more old-fashioned and simpler. These tracks usually only allow one car to race at a time.

Both digital and analog slot car racing can be fun. It really just depends on what you are looking for in a racing experience.

Final Summary

Regardless of the level of interest, all slot car hobbyists have one thing in common: a love for racing. Slot cars provide an opportunity to race without leaving the comfort of your home.

They also present a challenge, as drivers must learn how to control the speed and maneuvering of the car; for some, this is part of the appeal.

If you desire to look into this scaled down motorsport phenomenon, I suggest you contact a local hobby store. There are several on-line retailers, but find someone locally who has already ironed out the bumps for you. It will save you money and certainly start you on the right path to having "slot car" fun.

Look through this website...the pictures the articles available and the videos we have uploaded for you to watch. Keep in mind we raced "stock cars" for several years. Gary has attempted to create as much fun on a table top as we all had competing on both asphalt and dirt tracks throughout Western Pennsylvania. You will see Gary's daughters are no stranger to racing with parents, friends and even Grampo...

Have fun!

Portions of this article were inspired by a post found on www.importedautomobile.com

