

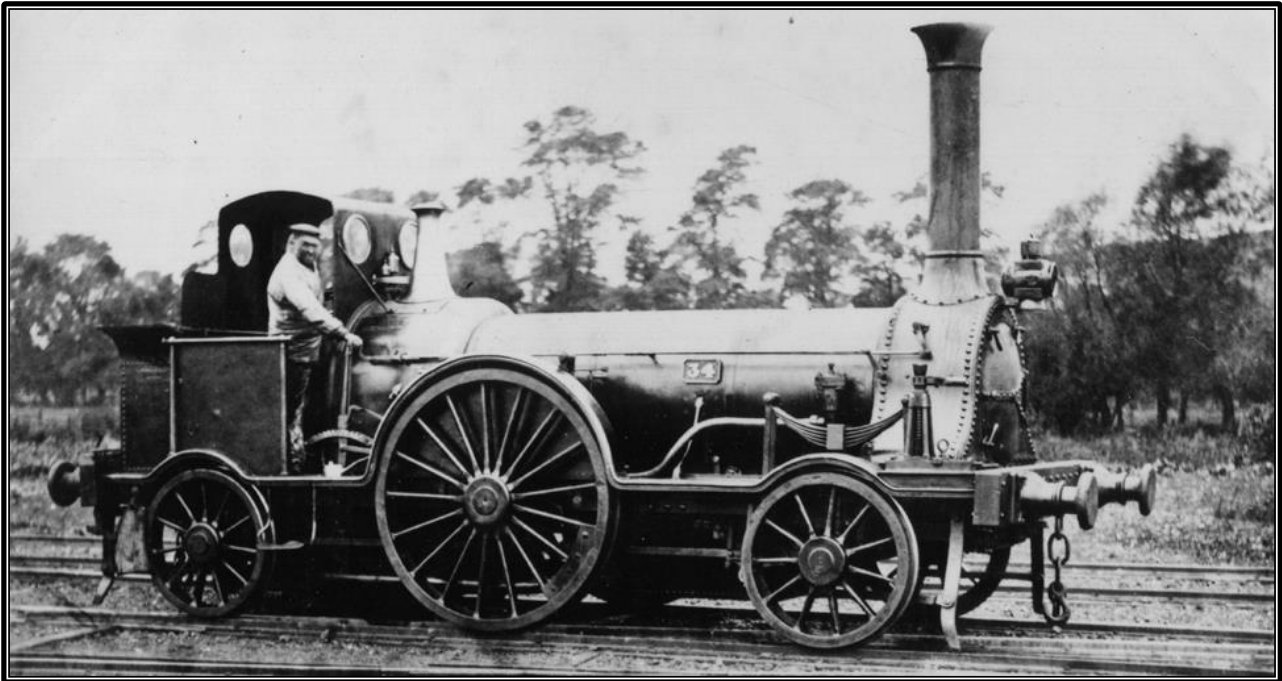


WSRHT Gauge Museum Education Service



# Celebrating 200 Years of Rail Travel

## A Lesson Pack for Schools



**KS1 STEM Investigation:  
Brunel's Broad Gauge Challenge**



## What is Railway 200?

The Stockton & Darlington Railway opened on September 27, 1825, connecting places, people, communities and ideas and ultimately transforming the world.

Railway 200 is a year-long nationwide partnership-led campaign to celebrate 200 years of the modern railway and inspire a new generation of young pioneering talent to choose a career in rail. It invites community, rail and other groups to get involved.

From January this year, a wide variety of activities and events have been planned to celebrate rail's remarkable past, its role today, and its importance to a sustainable future.

Born in Britain, rail quickly spread across the globe. Railway 200 will showcase how the railway shaped and continues to shape national life.

For further information about the history of the UK's railways, visit the Rail 200 Website:

[History of rail – Railway 200](#)

The West Somerset Railway is proud to be part of the Rail 200 celebrations. As a part of the former Great Western Railway, the WSR is unique in being one of the few remaining lines where evidence of Brunel's broad-gauge design can still be found. This resource has been designed to encourage schools to explore the science and engineering behind this almost forgotten innovation.

## Background Information

The Great Western Railway was designed by famous Victorian engineer Isambard Kingdom Brunel to carry passengers from London to Bristol. The West Somerset Railway is an extension of that line, linking the market town of Taunton to the seaside at Minehead. In his original design, Brunel intended both the GWR and the WSR to run as a broad-gauge railway.

The 'Gauge' of a railway refers to the width of the rails that the trains run on. A broad-gauge railway, therefore, has much wider tracks than a standard gauge railway. Brunel chose broad-gauge for three main reasons:

- The broader tracks meant that locomotives could run faster, making them more efficient.
- They also offered a smoother ride, giving GWR passengers a much more comfortable journey.
- The broader base made the trains much safer, with less potential for derailing.

Unfortunately, the rest of the UK's railways had been designed as standard gauge, which meant that transferring rolling stock from one to the other was just too complicated. Even though Brunel's design was better, it was decided that converting the rest of the country to broad-gauge was both too expensive and too time consuming, so it was decided that the GWR had to change to standard gauge.

Remarkably, the transition took just two days. After careful preparation, the Great Western Railway managed the switch in a weekend. It sent its last broad-gauge train out from London Paddington on a Friday evening and by Monday morning, was running entirely on standard gauge.

## **Brunel's Broad-Gauge Challenge**

Please read the following information through thoroughly as, in addition to the resources provided here, there are several further resources required for this session that you will need to provide in advance. We hope you and your class enjoy the challenge!

The following STEM investigation consists of two different challenges. The first is a maths-based investigation, while the second consists of a design and make challenge followed by a science investigation. The PowerPoint provided is designed to walk you and your class through the session step by step and we strongly advise you to read it through carefully before completing with your class. There are also several resources that you will need to prepare in advance.

### **Challenge 1: Maths Investigation**

#### **Resources Needed:**

- A roll of masking or electrical tape to lay out 'rails'
- A collection of non-standard units of measurement (Lego, multilink etc)
- Tape measures
- Copies of the maths task cards – these come in three different levels
- A way for children to record their answers/discoveries

Before the lesson, mark out two sets of 'rails' in the space where you plan to deliver the session. One should have a width of 143.5cm – this represents the standard gauge, while the other should have a width of 167.6cm – this represents the broad gauge.

## **Challenge 2: Design and Make/Science Challenge**

### **Resources Needed:**

- Each 'team' will need
  - 2 straws
  - 8 bottle tops
  - 4 skewers
  - 1 wide and 1 narrow piece of card
  - 2 cut-out train shapes (template provided)
  - Scissors and tape
  - A copy of the science task card
  - A STEM record sheet - optional
- For the science investigation, you will need a small, sloped ramp for the children to test their models on and a set of tape measures or non-standard units as appropriate.

The level of support that you give to the children during the design and make task is entirely up to you. For a greater challenge, you could leave out the task cards and encourage the children to work out for themselves how to build the two train models.

**Please note that the science task cards come in two reading levels.**

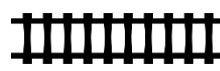


## Spicy Maths Challenge



Can you find the difference between broad gauge and standard gauge?

First you need to measure the two tracks.  
Choose a unit of measurement.



Lay your measures neatly between both tracks and count how many you need for each one.

Now look at both lines of measures. How many **more** does the broad-gauge track have than the standard one?



## Hot Maths Challenge



Can you find the difference between broad gauge and standard gauge?

First you need to measure the two tracks.  
Choose a unit of measurement.



Lay your measures neatly between both tracks and count how many you need for each one.

Now look at both lines of measures. Can you write a number sentence to work out the difference between each of the two tracks?

Broad Gauge	
Standard Gauge	?

Which symbols will you use? - + =

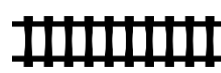


## Volcanic Maths Challenge

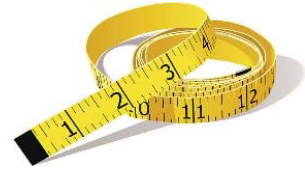


Can you find the difference between broad gauge and standard gauge?

First you need to measure the two tracks.



Use a tape measure to find the width of each in cm.



Can you write a number sentence to work out the difference between each of the two tracks?

Broad Gauge	
Standard Gauge	?

Which symbols will you use?  $-$   $+$   $=$

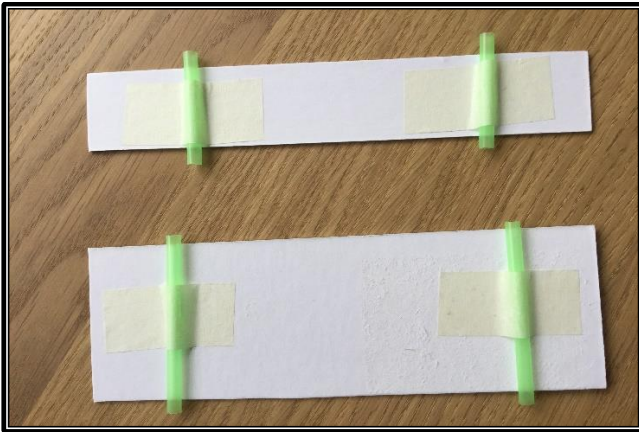
### Challenge:

If you have time, why not measure the broad-gauge tracks using non-standard units. What is the difference between these and your measurement in cm? Which unit of measurement do you think is the best and why?

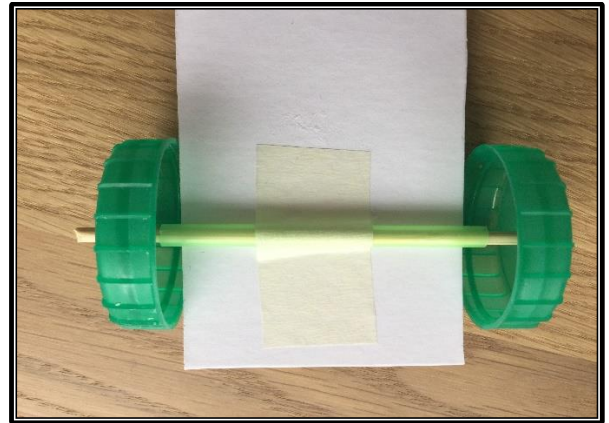
## Science Investigation: Build your Trains

### You will need:

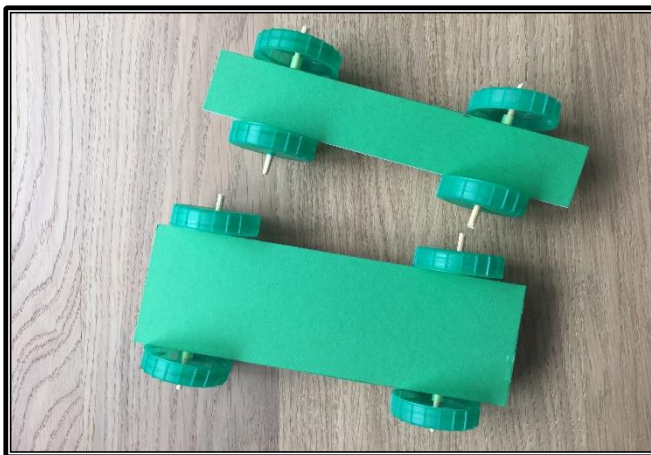
- 2 straws
- 8 bottle tops
- 4 skewers
- 1 wide and 1 narrow piece of card
- 2 train shapes



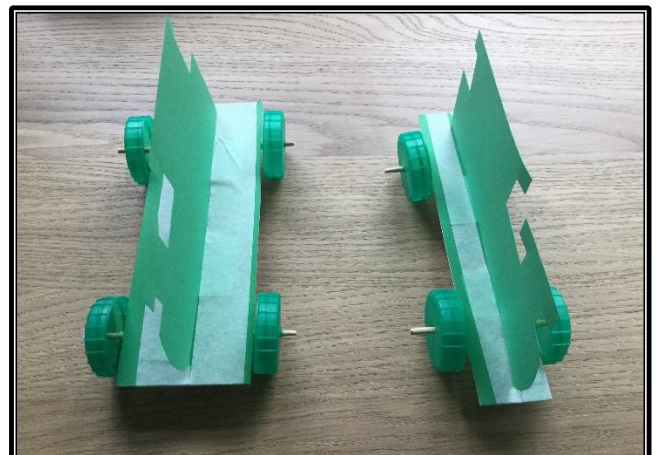
Stick the straws to the bottom of the two pieces of cardboard and trim.



Thread a skewer through each straw and put two bottle top wheels on each end.



Turn your wagons the right way up and test your wheels. They should turn easily.

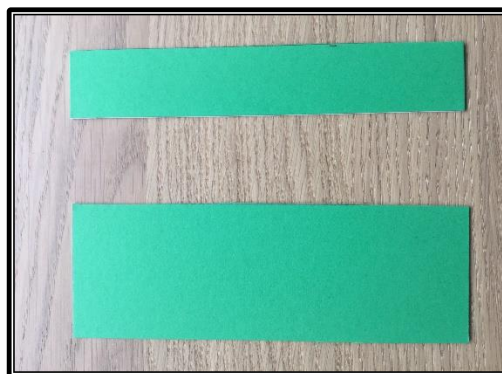


Stick your train shapes onto your wagons. Now you are ready to go!

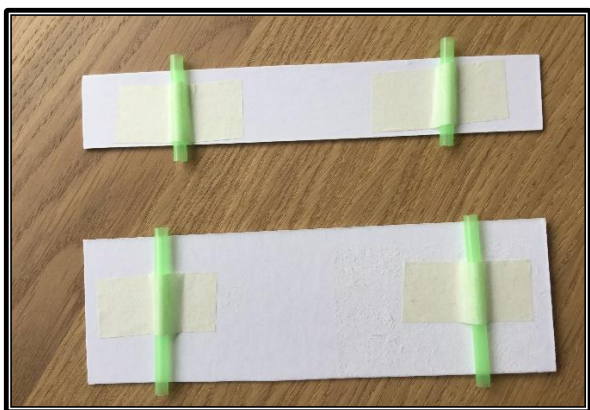
## Science Investigation: Build your Trains

### You will need:

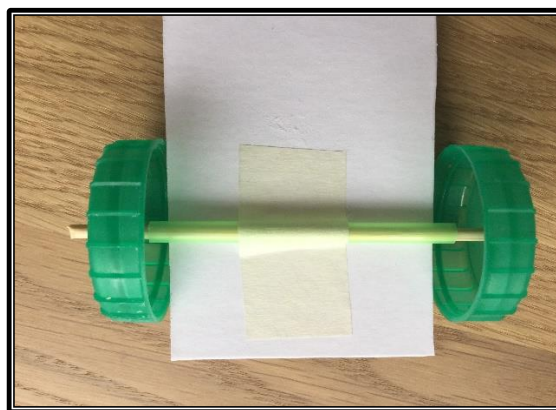
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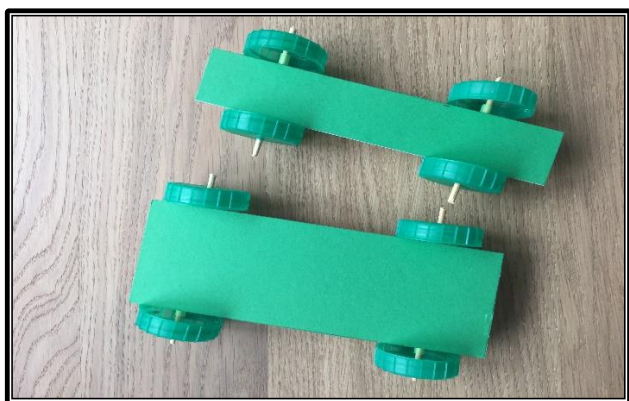
Measure your card. You will need one piece 6cm wide and one piece 3cm wide.



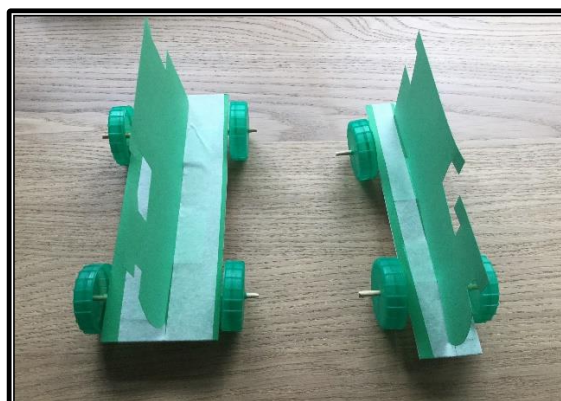
Create axles by sticking the straws to the base of each piece of card. Trim to size.



Thread the pointy end of your skewer through one of your bottle tops, then through the straw. Attach the second bottle top to the other end of the skewer and trim.



Turn your wagons the right way up and test your wheels. They should turn easily. If they don't, you may need to loosen the wheels a little.



Stick your train shapes onto your wagons. Now you are ready to conduct your experiment.



# STEM Challenge

Today my challenge is \_\_\_\_\_

What problem do I need to solve?

What supplies will I use?

What is my plan?

What went really well?

What did not work for me?

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

