

HOW TO USE THE TCA X-CHANGE “AD SEARCH”

What’s the number one problem I hear from members who are unsuccessfully trying to use our search feature? They enter a search query like “Lionel Bascule bridge” into our **Keyword Search** box and get too many results. I just entered that search query, and it came back with 2309 matching ads. The main problem is that our Keyword Search is set up to work effectively with **only one** Keyword entered, and not an entire string (note it’s “Keyword Search” and not “Keywords Search”). The easiest way to describe this is that it’s an “**or**” search—Entering “Lionel Bascule Bridge” returns any ad that includes “Lionel” **OR** “Bascule” **OR** “bridge.”

With most items you are trying to find, there is a **single keyword** that would most specifically describe the item. In this case, that word would be “**bascule**,” since you don’t want to enter “Lionel” and return all Lionel items or “bridge” and return all bridge items. I just re-ran my Keyword Search using only “Bascule,” and got only 3 results—see printscreen below of my search results:

3 Ads Match							
Page 1 of 1		Click on the Item Number for more details				Show Ads v	
Photo	Manufacturer	Item #	Description	Price	Date	Seller	
	Lionel - 1970 to Present	22972	313 Bascule Bridge	\$240	04/20/14	97-45225	Edit Ph
	Lionel - Prewar	313	BASCULE BRIDGE	\$225	03/11/14	80-14906	Edit Ph
	MTH	40-1014	O-Scale Bascule Bridge	\$30	04/03/14	77-11401	Edit Ph

That’s just what I was looking for! Another option is to enter just the **item number** of what you’re trying to find. If I search for just “313,” I get 19 responses. However, some of those are for item number “18313” since it has “313” in the number. Also, any items being listed by TCA members whose TCA numbers contain “313” would be in there—and of over 70,000 possible TCA member numbers, 239 include the text string “313.”

Results are automatically sorted by Manufacturer and then Item Number, but you can choose to sort by “Price” or “Date” as well. Use the “Back” or “Next” buttons to navigate through your results, or “jump to” a certain page if you don’t want to go one page at a time.

Another choice is to use the “**Detail Search**” feature, which is helpful if you know more details about the item you’re seeking. It’s also helpful if you want to browse through only items in certain categories, e.g. only Boxcars, only Items in C-10 mint condition, or some combination of the categories there. Note that, unlike the “Keyword Search” described above, every additional category you add **further restricts** your search results—an “**and**” type of search feature. If you choose “For Sale” items that have “Accessory” as the item type and “Williams” as the manufacturer, you will get only results that are Williams trains **AND** accessories **AND** are “for sale.”

To start using the “Detail Search,” click the “Show Advanced Search Options” link—see printscreen below for what you will see:

Detail Search	
Type of Ad: <input type="text" value="Any"/>	Type of Ad includes For Sale, For Trade, Miscellaneous, and Wanted
Era: <input type="text" value="Any"/>	Era includes Pre-War, Post-War, Modern, and Not Specified
Type of Item: <input type="text" value="Any"/>	Type of Item includes over 40 categories, from “Freight Car - Hopper” to “Paper - Catalogs” and even “Miscellaneous” or “Other Type of Car”
Manufacturer: <input type="text" value="Any"/>	Manufacturer includes nearly 60 manufacturers
Item Number: <input type="text"/>	Item Number has no choices—it’s anything you type in the field
Box/Paper *: <input type="text" value="Any"/>	Box/Paper has all the TCA grading standards for paper items listed
Condition *: <input type="text" value="Any"/>	Condition has all the TCA grading standards listed for all toy trains and toy-train-related accessory items
<input type="checkbox"/> Show Ads with photo's only.	Click on the “Show Ads with photos only” if you want to limit your search results to ads that have photos accompanying the ad
<input type="button" value="Search"/>	
* For a definition of these grading standards click here .	

Happy hunting! Contact me at hqeditor@traincollectors.org or 717-687-8623 x102 if you have any further questions.

Sincerely,

Timothy Stier

TCA Publications Editor (and TCA x-change Administrator)