

1. Introduction

In the history of railroads, we see clear epochs emerge which are defined by technical developments and changes in socio-economic structures. These epochs are distinguished by the type of construction and the colors and markings of vehicles, buildings and signs. Vehicles and accessories are linked to a defined epoch. For model layouts it is advisable to assign an epoch corresponding to the general theme and configuration.

2. Classification of epochs

For European railroads, there are six epochs which can be distinguished, although a clear line cannot always be drawn. There are overlaps, sometimes specific to particular regions or topics.

A number of changes also happen within these epochs, by which **periods** can be distinguished, so it is not possible to standardize across countries because of the different rate of development of each country or administration. This standard specifies the bigger time frame (epochs).

The more specific limitations of the epochs and periods by country, as well as the more precise description of their characteristics are subject to country-specific annexes, which are classified as recommendations.

3. Description and use

The epochs are identified by Roman numerals, the periods are marked by lower case suffix letters (e.g. "Epoch IVb").

An epoch without a suffix is supposed to refer to one period marked by an asterisk (*). If models relate to a different period, a suffix letter must be used.

Recommendation is made to manufacturers of railway models and accessories to aim for epoch-related products and to specify the epochs of each product in their catalogues.

4. Overview of epochs

		1920 - 1925		1945 - 1950		1965 - 1970		1985 - 1990		2005 - 2010	
Epoch I											
Epoch II											
Epoch III											
Epoch IV											
Epoch V											
Epoch VI											

5. Characteristics of European epochs

- Epoch I: Construction of the first railways, development of steam locomotives, private railway companies with different rolling stock.
- Epoch II: Intensive unification of construction and operating regulations, partly covering several countries (RIV, RIC), introduction of electric traction and occasional of color light signaling.
- Epoch III: Reconstruction after the war and development of a modern traction fleet / rolling stock, transition of traction following the expansion of electric and diesel traction.
- Epoch IV: Completion of the change of traction system, introduction of a scheme for international labeling of rolling stock.
- Epoch V: Construction of high-speed lines, modern color schemes, beginning liberalization of networks, transformation of state-owned railways into shareholding companies, separation of infrastructure and traction companies, for passenger traffic and goods traffic resp., including operating outside their own network.
- Epoch VI: In addition to traditional railways, new open access operators with their own traction equipment but now own infrastructure are established and operating national and international passenger and freight services. Improvement of UIC numbering with a 12-digit scheme. Replacement of the existing international agreements (RIC, RIV, etc.) by new ones meeting European requirements (OTIF, TSI). End of the shared management of freight wagons (EUROP and OPW). National high-speed lines reserved for passenger traffic only develop into an international network. Reduction of freight traffic, demolition of smaller facilities and marshalling yards. Fixed formation and reversible multiple unit passenger trains predominate passenger transport, freight traffic is mostly train-load.