

Riding the Rails



switch signals

When these rails move back and forth, they make the train go straight or to the right.

A train travels only where the tracks lead. To change a train from one track to another, a railroad worker moves short pieces of the rail called **switches**. Signals beside the switches tell the engineer which way the train will go.

A train travels on a railroad track. The track is made up of two steel rails fastened to wooden or concrete crosspieces called **ties**. The ties lie on a bed of gravel or crushed rocks.

Train wheels are steel and have **rims** on them. The rims guide the wheels along the track.



rims



A railroad car is locked to the next car by a link called a **coupler**. Each railroad car has a coupler at each end. When two couplers are pushed together, they snap in place.



The train engineer watches for **signals** above or beside the tracks. They tell the engineer how fast he can go and when it is necessary to stop the train.



Lots of curves in the track slow a train down. Sometimes a tunnel is built so that trains can go through the mountains instead of curving around them. Trains go across rivers on special bridges built just for them.



All aboard!

