How Many Engineers Does it Take to Build a Starship?

Activity Review: Metal [Earth 3D Metal Model Kits: USS Enterprise 1701-D](http://www.fascinations.com/startrek)

Reviewer: Brenda Bell

I’ve not had a lot of model-building experience, but I know a number of our members are superb model builders, kit bashers, and so on. While on checkout at the local A.C. Moore, I saw these little envelopes, about three-and-a-half inches by about five inches, with *STAR TREK* labeling on them. On further inspection, I found these were stamped and perforated metal sheets with instructions to create small three-dimensional models. At $10 apiece, with a 50%-off coupon, I thought it would be a fun activity for our annual holiday party at Norm’s.

Six of us worked on the model: Alex, Matt, Andy, Dan, Judy, and myself. The kit was not supposed to need any tools other than a tweezer, but we found ourselves in need of metal snips, hemostats, and a straight pin, which Norm provided. A large stand magnifier with built-in light would have also been helpful, but we didn’t have one available.

For all of us, this was our first experience with Metal Earth models.

The kit contains two sheets of metal, about 3.5 x 4.5 inches, and a single page of “illustrated instructions”.

The metal is soft enough that the larger pieces can easily become deformed. Some of this is needed to create the models’ three-dimensionality. Separating the pieces by hand caused one of the thinner, longer pieces (the stand circumference) to break. Using metal snips avoided further breakage.

Soft metal notwithstanding, when it comes down to the almost-microscopic tabs and slots that are used to piece the model together, they are so small that precision tools and firm hands are needed.

We had some issues following the illustrated instructions. We had thought the quadrants were supposed to be read down first, then across. I was surprised that they started with Piece #11. After some missteps, Judy took a look and realized that the instructions were designed to be run top left, top right, lower left, lower right.

We had some issues getting the tabs to stay in the slots, even after bending them. Perhaps we should have twisted some of them (shown in the package illustration) instead.

The model originally didn't want to stand on its own; we had to bow out the sides of the sting to shift the center of weight backwards (and the ship facing about 20 degrees upwards).

It took us about an hour and a half, working together, to complete the model. When I got home to check up the appropriate links for the review, I found that one of the online vendors of this model, [Innovatoys](http://www.innovatoys.com/metal-earth), rated this model, and all of the Metal Earth *STAR TREK* models, as “Challenging” – the most difficult of their ratings for Metal Earth models.

Despite some momentary frustrations, we had a lot of fun putting the model together, and are considering the idea of having a more traditional model-kit building activity for some time in the future.