

Requirement 2a Study Guide

1) Explain the purpose and formation of Amtrak.

2) Explain, by the use of a timetable, a plan for making a trip by rail between two cities at least 500 miles apart. List the times of departure and arrival at your destination, the train number, and the type of service that you want.



Requirement 2a is best accomplished using the Internet. Due to the time it will take to complete this requirement, and a lack of Internet access at our railroad facilities, scouts should complete it and have it filled out

The Formation of Amtrak

You can read more about the [formation of Amtrak](#) on Wikipedia.

Many of the large railroads used to provide passenger services, as well as freight services. Unfortunately, when the automobile became commonplace, many people could drive to work, or take nearby trips on the weekends, and local passenger service ridership dropped. When airline travel costs started to drop, many folks found that it was faster to take an airplane than a train, and the long-distance passenger ridership also started to drop. The result was that the railroads were no longer making a profit for most of their passenger routes, and the railroads wanted to stop running some passenger services.

If the railroads stopped their passenger services, many smaller towns would no longer have railroad service. Since these small towns usually did not have an airport nearby, it would mean that the people in the towns would need to drive their car, or take a bus, to a city farther away to reach an airport, if they needed to travel longer distances. Many rural communities in the central states were not happy about this prospect, and they wrote their congress people, urging the government to make the railroads continue to provide the train services.

However, you can't make laws to make companies do something that loses money. The railroads told the government that they should try to run their own passenger services. After many years, Amtrak was created. Part of the early years was led the government to ask each of the large railroads to sell their passenger cars to the railroad, at a good price, and let the new Amtrak railroad use the tracks. [In return, the Government would let the big railroads stop serving the passengers, and Amtrak would take over their routes.](#)

In the beginning, it was expected that Amtrak would need financial help, until it had built up the ridership, and the government provided funds. Amtrak continues to need financial support, even today. With regularity, government will threaten to cut off the funding, Amtrak will say that it will have to stop service on many small routes, and people continue to write their Congress person, and then funding is agreed upon before the trains need to stop running.

Planning a trip of at least 500 miles by train

Due to the distance, you will probably need to use the [Amtrak website](#) to plan your trip. You can either pick your cities, or you can use the **Timetables** pages to look for trains in other parts of the country.

- *Most of the **Named Routes** on the timetable are the popular long-distance trains from the old railroads. You can search the web for more historic information on some of these old routes.*
- *Notice that these long-distance trains do not stop at ALL of the stations along their route! That is what helps them make better time along the route. You may need to take a local train to a larger station, and catch the long-distance train there. You may also need another local train at far end of the local train, to reach your final destination.*

You do NOT have to buy tickets, but going through the exercise of planning a trip, and selecting the services you would want will help you with this requirement. Remember what you need to list for this part;

Departure City Destination City:
(The two cities must be more than 500 miles apart.)

The Departure date and time:

The Arrival date and time:

The Train Number(s):
(If you connect with other trains or buses, make a note about them.)

Any services you would order, besides basic seating:

Remember, this can be a dream trip, where money isn't an obstacle. Think about the amount of time that you will be on the train. If the trip might take a day or two, you may want to arrange for sleeping accommodations. (What are your choices? What are the costs?) You may also want to arrange for meals on the train. (Will you pack food that will last without a refrigerator, or will you pay for food on the train? What options are offered?)