

# Brick Crews – home edition

A **Brick Crew** is a **playclub**, that was developed within the project **CollaboLearn** by researchers at Aarhus University, specialized psychologists, consultants, and special ed. teachers & pedagogues.

**Brick Crews** create highly motivating learning environments that give kids an opportunity to build **social experience** and with this experience develop **social strategies** that are meaningful for **each** child. The club is designed for kids on the spectrum, but we've seen that **all kids** gain from **Brick Crews**.

This PDF contains a '**home** edition' of **Brick Crew** activities, which we've made freely available during COVID19. We're still developing the material, and we truly appreciate any feedback and comments.

More information: <https://interactingminds.au.dk/projects/collabolearn/collabolearn-og-klub-klods/>  
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This PDF contains 4 different types of text:

Background information for kids & adults: What is a **Brick Crew**?

How to structure the activities: How do you play in a **Brick Crew**?

How to play, step-by-step's: What do you play in a **Brick Crew**?

A guidebook for adults: Why are **Brick Crews** helpful for kids?

# Brick Crews – what are they?

While our days are not what they usually are, it would be great:

- if we learn something new
- if we enjoy ourselves

One way **to enjoy yourself** while you **learn something new** is to start up your own **Brick Crew**.

In a **Brick Crew**, you build **LEGO models** in groups of two or more (kids & adults) using specific ways to **play** and **reflect** together.

When you follow the **Brick Crew** way to play, you learn a lot about how **to collaborate** - and then you become a **first-class crew**.



# Explore, learn & laugh in a **Brick Crew**

It is not easy to build engaging and stimulating **social learning environments**. The **Brick Crew** may inspire you to find enjoyable and meaningful ways to play together in small groups of kids and adults while you systematically practice collaboration skills (= **social learning**).

A **Brick Crew** is an easy and structured opportunity for kids & adults to:

- ✓ **laugh** together
- ✓ **collaborate** in meaningful ways
- ✓ have **eureka-moments**: Parents and teachers have told us that they learnt new and surprising things about the kids in **Brick Crews**.

In a **Brick Crew**, the adult is responsible for **the structure** (the time and framework), but you all create **the content** together. It is an opportunity For the adult to sit back and take their time to **carefully notice**:

***What happens? What engages the kids? Which ideas and suggestions do the kids have?***

Kids use more than words to talk: stay attentive to **their actions**. Don't forget to **share** your thoughts & ideas. Try to create **an equal space** where nobody is an expert. Try to - **truly** - play together.

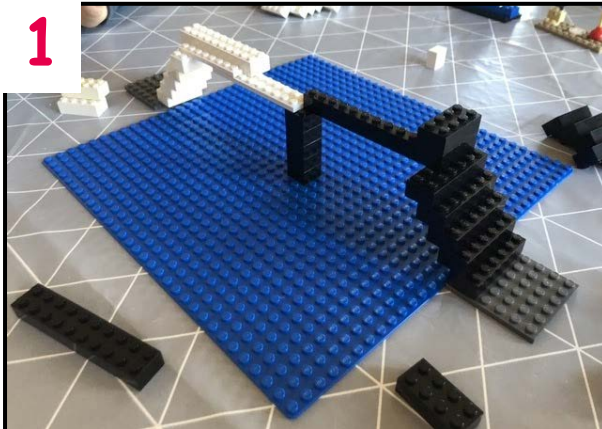




# Brick Crews – the play activities

A **Brick Crew** has 3 basic activities that may be combined and layered to scaffold children's social development. Begin with activity **1** and try that out. When you **together** find a way to do **1**, then expand and add activity **2**. When **1** and **2** work for your crew, then add activity **3** (examples follow).

**1**



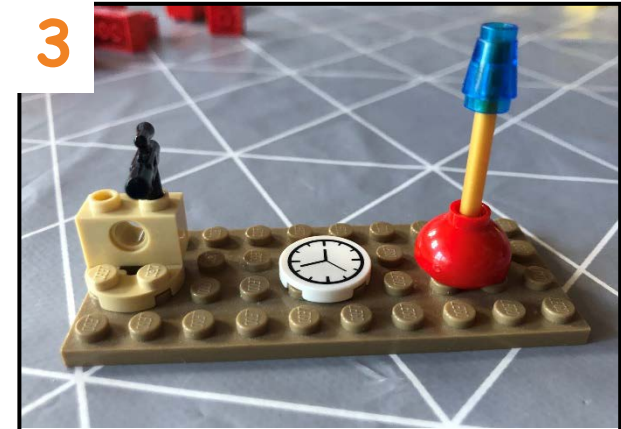
**Construct-together:** The crew builds a construction (e.g. a tower or a bridge) together and in the process, we are made interdependent by easy rules (e.g. We each use one color bricks).

**2**



**Create-together:** The crew has one big LEGO plate. Together, we agree on a theme (e.g. robots or jungles) to explore. We all build something and we find out how it all fits together.

**3**



**Tell-and-build:** We build one or more LEGO figures that remind us of the problems and the solutions that we experienced together in **1** or **2**, e.g. competition, turn-taking, or shared focus.

# Brick Crews – suggestion no. 1

Here's one way to structure **1: construct-together**:

(sketch up the structure on paper or show it on a tablet)

- ▶ Begin with **team spirit**: We will do this **TOGETHER**
- ▶ Set the frame: **Time** and **meaning**! How much time and why?
- ▶ activity. **1: construct-together**
- ▶ Next steps: What would we like to do next time we play in our **Crew**?
- ▶ Finish with **team spirit**: We did it **TOGETHER**



# 1: construct-together - step by step



**The activity:** We build a tower together (other ideas: a bridge, a house, a dino, a robot, etc).

**Time:** apprx. 15-30 minutes (depending on our motivation and energy).

**Materials:** We need approximately 100 LEGOs or Duplos, arranged by color so that each of us has a pile of bricks in one color. The activity works well with 2-4 participants.

**Instructions:** Our **goal** is to construct a tower **together**:

- Together we discover what the tower looks like.
- Together we explore how to make the tower sturdy, functional, and tall.
- We each have our own pile of bricks. You have the reds, I have the blues, etc.
- Now we construct a super sturdy and grand tower – and we follow 4 rules:
  1. We use all the bricks in our piles.
  2. We use each our own color (you use the reds, I use the blues, etc.)
  3. We never place to bricks of the same color next to or on top of each other.
  4. We take turns at placing bricks.



In this way, we play while we **collaborate**. Ready? Set... **GO!**

# Brick Crews – suggestion no. 2

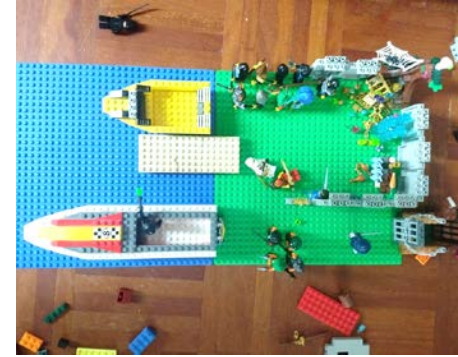
Here's one way to structure **1: construct-together** & **2: create-together**

(sketch up the structure on paper or show it on a tablet)

- ▶ Begin with **team spirit**: We will do this **TOGETHER**
- ▶ Set the frame: **Time** and **meaning**! How much time and why?
- ▶ activity **1: construct-together**
- ▶ activity **2: create-together**
- ▶ Next steps: What would we like to do next time we play in our **Crew**?
- ▶ Finish with **team spirit**: We did it **TOGETHER**



## 2: create-together - step by step



**The activity:** We build together on one big plate within one overall theme (in other **Brick Crews**, we've seen: skyscrapers, robots at the beach, pokemon zoos, and minecraft villages).

**Time:** apprx. 15-30 minutes (depending on our motivation and energy).

**Materials:** We need one big LEGO plate and a box of assorted bricks; basic bricks and more special bricks, e.g. Minecraft or Elves. The activity works well with 2-4 participants.

**Instructions:** Our **goal** is to use our imagination to co-create within one overall theme:

- Together we find a creative and fantastic theme to build within.
- Together we discover how the theme makes us create different things.
- Together we explore how our fantastic creations fit together – and we follow 4 rules:
  1. We each decide what we want to create
  2. We have no rules for how we build
  3. Together we discover where it fits together
  4. If we're not done when the time runs out, we may decide to continue next time.

**Tip!** Make the activity more structured if it works better for you, e.g. you may pre-define a theme to avoid negotiation.

In this way, we play while we **notice** and **listen to** one another. Ready? Set... **GO!**



# Brick Crews – suggestion no. 3

Here's one way to structure **1** & **2** & **3**: **tell-and-build**:

(sketch up the structure on paper or show it on a tablet)

- ▶ Begin with **team spirit**: We will do this **TOGETHER**
- ▶ Set the frame: **Time** and **meaning**! How much time and why?
- ▶ activity **3**: **tell-and-build**: What is our focus today? (may be omitted)
- ▶ activity **1**: **construct-together**
- ▶ activity **3**: **tell-and-build**
- ▶ activity **2**: **create-together**
- ▶ activity **3**: **tell-and-build**
- ▶ Next steps: What would we like to do next time we play in our **Crew**?
- ▶ Finish with **team spirit**: We did it **TOGETHER**



### 3: tell-and-build - step by step



**The activity:** We build figures that remind of us what we learnt together.

**Time:** each figure takes approx. 2-5 minutes (depending on our motivation and energy).

**Materials:** attention to our learning, ideas for little stories and some assorted bricks.

**Instructions:** Our **goal** is to reflect together on the **social learning** that emerged between us.

- Together we discover that we can **share** each other's experiences by **telling stories** about them and by building the stories into **learning figures**.
- Together we build 1-3 learning figures (you may begin by using the examples provided in the next pages) that illustrate some of the basic elements in a collaboration:
  1. We all keep an eye out for the solutions we find when our collaboration is difficult.
  2. Together we find a story/metaphor that reminds us of our solution to the problem.
  3. Together we build a figure that reminds us of our story about our solution.
  4. We use the figure to remind us of our solution when we encounter similar situations.

Don't worry about the looks of the figures; as long as **it reminds you** of one specific problem and the solution you found together. In this way, we play while we learn how **to make abstract learning tangible** so that we can bring it with us to the next situation.

### 3: tell-and-build - 3 examples



Here are 3 examples of learning figures that other kids & adults discovered together in **Brick Crews**. To make **3: tell-and-build** work, you need to – down the line – find **your own** figures.

Don't worry about the looks of your learning figures; the only thing that matters is that they remind you of the problem and the solution that you found together. That makes it possible for you to use the learning figures again in your next **Brick Crew**. And the next. And the next... And who knows, perhaps you will also use them when problems arise outside the **Brick Crew**?

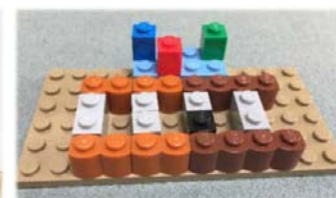
Her er 3 eksempler og en fortælling om figurerne, som i kan bruge til at komme i gang med:

- In our **Brick Crew**, we practice collaboration. Here are some advice from other kids & adults in other **Brick Crews** to get us going. To collaborate, we need to learn how to:
  - ▶ use **the word blaster**, so that we can share our ideas, emotions, and views.
  - ▶ wait patiently by **the train rails**, so that we all get to take part in our project.
  - ▶ learn how to **zoom in** on the others, so that can have joint focus on our project.

**Tip!** Find more examples of learning figures in [this PDF](https://autismepotentiale.dk/klub-klods) at [autismepotentiale.dk/klub-klods](https://autismepotentiale.dk/klub-klods)



the word blaster



the train rails



zoom in

### 3: tell-and-build – a way to evaluate



**The activity:** We use our learning figures to evaluate our collaboration when we're done.

Evaluating a process is an efficient way **to reflect together** on our learning.

- Did we use many explanation words and did we blast each other with words?
- Did we succeed in being patient and wait for each other at the train rails?
- Did we zoom in on each other and shared our focus on the project we worked on?

**Questions like these are often demotivating, and they risk killing the playful vibe!**

Let's try **to play** our evaluation instead: One way is to **show** our answers to our questions using mini figures or learning figures (use colors: **green** = good, yellow = ok, **red** = not so good).



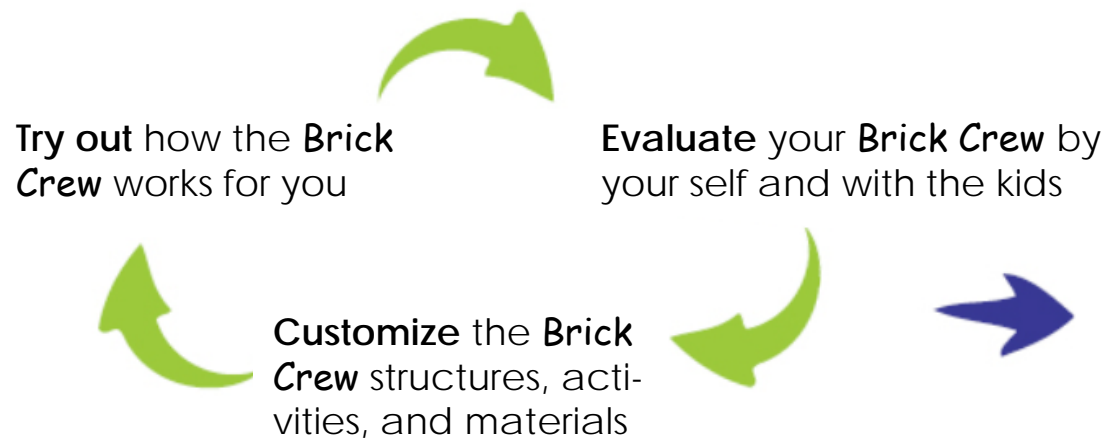


# Brick Crews – a guide: repetitions

Our suggestions for structures and activities are guidelines. You need to constantly customize the **time**, **structure**, and **difficulty** to the kids & adults in your **Brick Crew** – and to your form on the day.

**Brick Crews** may be set up with just 1 child & 1 adult, or it may be set up with 2-4 kids & 1-2 adults. What matters is that you repeat the activities – daily, weekly, or whatever fits your schedule. You need to **repeat the same activities** with little variations. It is through repetition and iteration that each kid gets a change to develop their social competence – little by little over time.

Your **Brick Crew** emerges through this **formula for repetition**:



After a ton of try-outs and repetitions, you will have co-developed a social learning environment that is meaningful for you. You can call it a **Brick Crew** – or something else entirely. It is **yours**.

# Brick Crews – a guide: customization

To customize a **Brick Crew** to the resources and interests of **your** crew, take the time to ask yourself:

- Did we negotiate during the play? Were our interactions meaningful and successful?
- Were the kids motivated to engage? What else can I do to meet each child's personal interests?

The line below is a tool that gives you the opportunity to explore the interaction that occurred:

- Were we **overwhelmed** by the activities? Do we need more structure? (move left on the line)
- Did the structures **constrain** us as we played? Could we open it more? (move right on the line)

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## Games

...have clear rules that control the interaction  
 ...have a clear ending, that you navigate towards  
 Pros: Easy to navigate in a situation  
 Cons: Rules can make it tedious over time

## Free play

...needs to be negotiated as it progresses  
 ...is open-ended, which stimulates creativity  
 Pros: Negotiation gives social experience  
 Cons: can be chaotic and overwhelming

You can choose to see **Brick Crews** as **an opportunity to reflect** on the social learning environment that you & the kids create more generally. In your day-to-day interactionc, what do the kids learn? You can use the **Brick Crew** activities as a way to give your social habits a '**service check**'.

# Klub Klods – a guide: how it works

Goal: Together we try to move our play activities right on the line - little by little over time →

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## Free play

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 Cons: Can be chaotic and overwhelming



**Brick Crews** are designed to scaffold **social learning**. Our goal is to support and nurture that kids feel comfortable participating in **Free play**. Autistic children tend to prefer **Games** over free play due to the highly structured nature of games. Our goal is to – over time – **move right** on the line by calibrating play activities so that they are as open-ended as possible without becoming overwhelming. In other words, we aim to always find **the right balance** between ‘just enough structure’ and ‘as open as possible’. Don’t forget: ‘moving right’ *in the long run* sometimes means ‘moving left’ *today*.

# Document & share(?) your **Brick Crew**



It is a good idea to document what happens in your play club. That gives you something to talk about when you reflect together.

Your photos may be a source of inspiration to others. If you would like to share, please send your photos to [klubklods@gmail.com](mailto:klubklods@gmail.com). We will upload them to the **Brick Crew** wall at [www.autismepotentiale.dk](http://www.autismepotentiale.dk)

We would also really appreciate it if you use **#BrickCrews**, when you share photos on SoMe like Instagram, twitter, facebook, or LinkedIn.

We are grateful if you share your successes and frustrations, your challenges and barriers, and your good ideas with us - please don't hesitate to get in touch with us: [klubklods@gmail.com](mailto:klubklods@gmail.com)



Feedback is valuable to us because we are still in the process of developing and improving our **Brick Crew** activities and guides. In our **CollaboLearn** project, we collaborate with our kid & adult users to develop, validate, and implement **Brick Crews**. This user-collaboration is the beating heart of the project – that's what makes it meaningful...