

# LEGO® EXHIBITORS DISPLAY GUIDE (V. 2)

A Useful Guide to entering the world of LEGO® Exhibition from  
Community Events to Large Conventions.

*Exhibiting at LEGO  
Displays – Tips and  
Tricks*

Written by  
Ben TOMLINS  
Southern Bricks LUG  
South Australia INC.

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## **Exhibitors Display Guide**

For the novice and expert alike, we have compiled some tips and tricks and some things you may not know about displaying LEGO® at an event, especially if it is your first time. This guide is designed to try and answer questions you may have, along with providing some advice on things you may not have thought about.

First and foremost! ENJOY. You may be worried what people think about your build, but we are happy that we got you out of the house to share your display. Everyone at a LEGO® display generally likes LEGO®, that's why they're here – if you are displaying LEGO® then they'll be pretty interested to see what you have made – they may even want to talk to you about it! Smile and say 'hello' to people, it helps start a conversation and makes the visitor feel welcomed. Displays are a great way to promote the LEGO® User Group (LUG), help attract new members to join and meet new friends!

Don't forget to include a sign with the name of your MOC\* (My Own Creation) and roughly how many parts it is. The organisers of larger events will normally provide the display card as part of your registration pack as a template. You fill in the details and then print it, bring it with you and place it in the stand provided. There is no reason that you can't make your own signs and use your own frame either!

If you want to provide some more information about your MOC, consider a small laminated poster with some facts or a story about what you have built, or perhaps an A-frame sign. Try not to distract too much from your actual build.

Start small! Not everyone has the resources to build MASSIVE LEGO® models from the start. You also don't need to fill 5 tables on your first display. It is better to concentrate on doing smaller displays to a high quality than do a larger display with poor quality or look like you ran out of time. A lot of fans build displays that they add to over following shows and increase the size of the MOCs, or build a collection of MOCs that they display together with a common theme.

Displays vary in size from small community halls and libraries with a handful of exhibitors, to larger events in convention facilities with several hundred or thousand square metres with hundreds of exhibitors. It is good to get some experience at a smaller event on what to expect and build towards displaying at a larger event. This will help with keeping a tab on stress levels during the build, on the way to the event and while you are on site. You will know what you are getting yourself in to and this can help calm some of the nerves.

While you are at the event, talk to other AFOLs/TFOLs and KFOLs (Adult/Teen/Kid Fans of LEGO®) to get to know people and build friendships. If you are worried you don't have anything in common, you both like LEGO® as a start! Some very solid friendships have been started with LEGO® Groups that last for years!

Let's get started looking at some specifics...

## **Presentation**

When presenting a piece for display, consider what you are preparing. Are you using old bricks or new bricks, or a combination of both? Are your old bricks dirty or has the kit been sitting on the shelf for two years and covered in dust? Presenting a nice clean model shows that you care about your display and shows the public that you are proud of what you have produced. Consider breaking the build down, use warm water and detergent to clean your parts, rinse and dry and then rebuild! You get the enjoyment of building a second (or third....or fourth) time!

Your display piece may not be that dirty but may need a light dusting, consider makeup brushes with soft bristles or a can of compressed air. Darker colours of LEGO® show dust quite a lot. Even if you clean it prior to an event it may still attract dust in the days leading up to the show and may need another once over before the opening.

**TIP** – Bring a small kit of tools and accessories – brushes/lube/orange oil/jewellers screwdrivers/Isopropyl Alcohol to clean train track for example. Depending on what you exhibit you may need different items but have a think about what you may need during the exhibition.

## **First time? Bring a helper**

If you have never displayed before and are doing a setup for the first time it pays to bring either a friend or family member to assist you.

This extra person can be helpful in getting your items to and from your vehicle and they can cut down the time it takes to put your display together. This person can also be trusted to look after your display if you need to go to the toilet or bring you food and drink from outside.

It can also make you feel less intimidated by others you may not know if you have someone you are comfortable with standing with you. This person can also help with answering questions from the public about the display when it gets busy and you are talking with somebody else

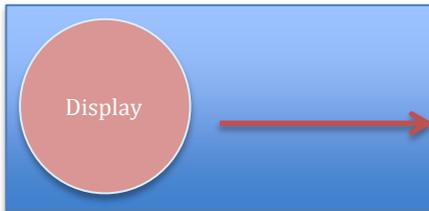
## **Volunteering Vs. Building**

The LUG will always call for volunteers to look after a table at an event for a timeframe and sometimes the event organisers will also look for volunteers to help organise and run the setup and sessions. Be on the lookout during the lead up to the event when emails and social media posts ask for volunteer staff. It is an important job being a volunteer and the event does not happen without them! If you are looking at exhibiting for an event that is Community run, maybe other members of your family can help with duties during the event – thing like free play tables and marshalling people are some things that they could do.

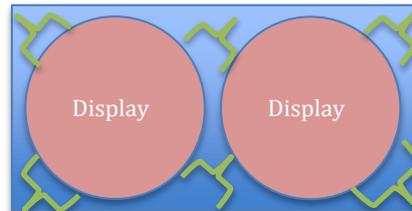
## Packing

There are many methods people use to pack LEGO® for transport depending on the scale and complexity of the piece. A popular favourite is using glad wrap (or similar) and covering the piece to make sure parts don't fall off and get lost. Bubble wrap also can do the same thing and is re-useable if you cut sticky tape carefully when removing it.

When packing sections or several models into boxes, take care of the size of the box being used and try to not leave too much vacant space around the model leaving gaps to the edge of the box. Pieces will slide and hit the side of the box and each impact will increase the chance of damage to the display.



Example 1 (too much space in box)



Example 2 – packing pieces together and using bubble wrap to limit movement

## The Box of Tricks

Most exhibitors bring some sort of Tool box/ storage box(es) for spare parts and keeping parts in. You may want to consider things like sticky tape, storage of brushes, batteries for controllers, charge cords for phones etc.

Keep in mind that if you are bringing electrical items like chargers/ laptops they will need to be tag tested to be able to be used in the venue. Some venues will arrange this prior to the event starting (during setup) but will sometimes come at a cost. This ensures that your item is safe to be used in the venue and does not pose a safety risk to others.

Go over the setup in your head the night before, think about if you need a small screwdriver or another specific item as part of the setup and make sure you pack it your box of tricks ready for the next day!

**TIP** – Double sided tape under minifigures on tiles or streets helps them not to fall over if tables are bumped and using plumbers tape under feet on a stud helps increase clutch power!

## **Insurance Cover**

As a LUG, Southern Bricks has cover for its volunteers displaying at events to cover injuries and accidents. Any injury **MUST** be reported to the Event Coordinator and recorded for Insurance. **DO NOT shrug it off and think 'I'll be right'**, let the Coordinator know. If it is a large event at a Convention Facility with multiple LUGs and other exhibitors also let your Ambassador or a member of the Committee know that you have injured yourself.

LUG Insurance does **NOT** cover your LEGO® at the venue. Larger venues will normally provide security to look after the centre and displays overnight, but smaller venues will have an 'at your own risk' arrangement.

**TIP** – Check your home contents insurance with your Insurer to see whether your contents cover extends to contents **outside** of your home.

**BONUS TIP** – Double check with your insurer to see if you have to 'specify' your collection for coverage (especially if you have quite a large one). Some insurers will ask for an inventory or photos.

(\*These statements are of a generic nature and do not constitute insurance 'advice', coverage of contents will vary with Insurer, **check your policy covers your particular circumstances and seek professional advice.**)

## **Make It Modular!**

Many people attempt large displays that introduce some extra factors to consider. Logistics of moving a large piece include access through doorways to move both in and out of the display area, the size of the vehicle required to transport and the weight of the piece requiring more than one person for setup and pack up. By introduce a combination of modules, the display can be broken down into sections and each module can be packed in smaller boxes and assembled on site for the display. This can also apply to long displays to reduce the need for a long vehicle or trailer / truck hire.

Modular builds also introduce a fantastic opportunity for collaborative building! Groups can build modules of a particular format (a crowd favourite is the Great Ball Contraptions –GBC) and participants can build just one module or as many as they like to increase the size of the overall display. Collaborative builds can introduce you to new people with the similar tastes!

Modules can also allow you flexibility with your build and many builders sometimes bring sections of a build to different shows. Some may build a castle complex, consisting of the main castle, then the village nearby with an extended battleground for example. Each section of the build can also form a mini-display in itself, with the battleground making for just one exhibit in smaller shows, to the whole build featuring in larger shows.

For a great modular design check out Michael Kalkwarf's modular castle here and viewable on Flickr [here](#) and YouTube [here](#)

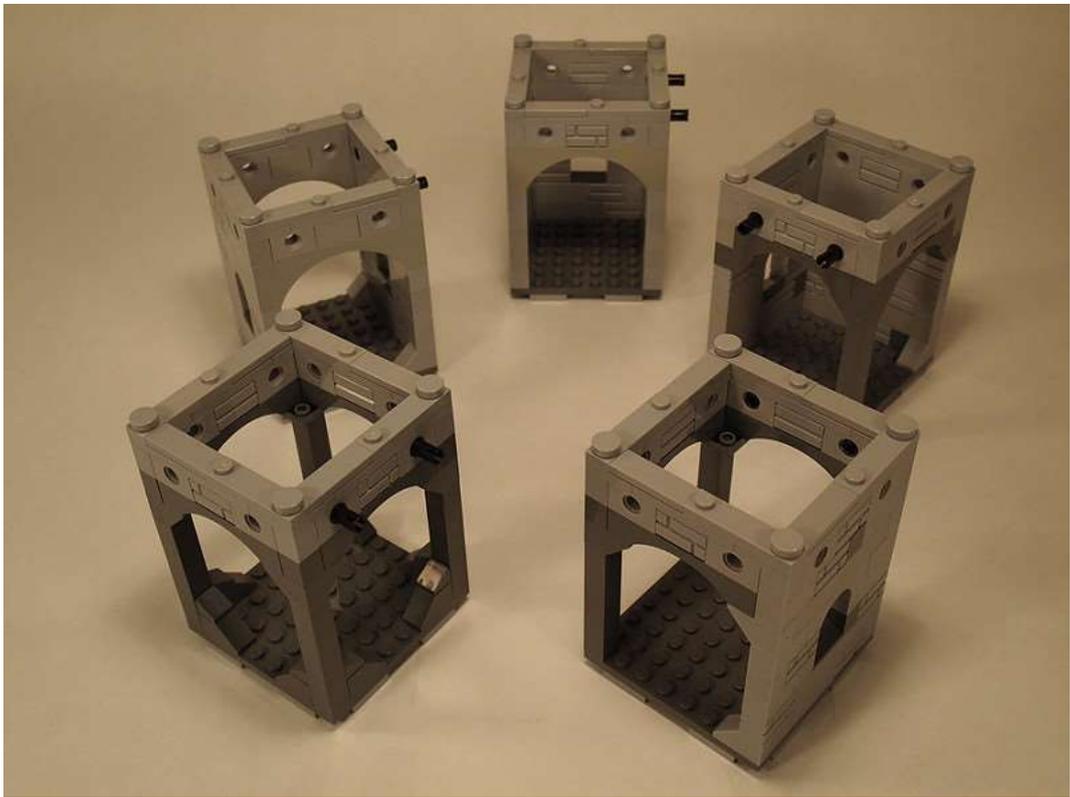


Figure 1 - [Castle Modules courtesy of Michael Kalkwarf \(Eurobricks.com\)](#)



Figure 2 - [Castle Modules courtesy of Michael Kalkwarf \(Eurobricks.com\)](#)

## Moving / Unloading your Exhibit

Purchasing some sort of trolley for carting or a rolling board/dolly can really assist with setup of larger exhibits or heavy pieces. It can also save your back from carrying in lots of boxes.

Larger convention venues will normally have a loading dock area with some sort of trolleys available, but if you rely on using their equipment you may also have to wait your turn to unpack for resources to become available. If you have your own trolley you can get straight into it. Make sure to find out if you have an access ramp or you have to navigate steps to enter the venue!

Smaller venues may not have a trolley to borrow so if you think you may need one then it is best to make sure you have one yourself so you don't get caught out.

Most AFOLs will always be willing to lend a hand to a fellow exhibitor and can normally see when first timers are at a venue. Don't be afraid to accept help and it's also a great way to make new friends and break the ice. If you are experienced then it can also be a huge help to offer assistance to someone else if you can see they need it.

Look for people in hi-vis vests at larger venues or organised meets as they will provide direction and instruction. Most venues with a loading bay will make you also wear hi-vis safety vests in busy loading dock areas with vehicles moving around.

Some exhibitors also build custom trolleys and racking to help load and unload their displays, including fold up wheels (stretcher style) to allow loaded travel in the vehicle or shelved racks to hold multiple display sections.

Custom Transport cases (either manufactured or DIY) can also be a great way to transport your display. Remember to cater for the size of your car and don't get something too big that you can't pack!

**TIP** - The use of a heavy board (thick enough to minimise flex) helps if you can't modularise the display and have to move as a single larger piece.

**BONUS TIP** – When using baseplates, find a box that fits the baseplate snugly and cut open the SIDE of the box to assist with sliding the baseplate off the table into the box!



Figure 3 - The Modra Modular Railway Rack

## **Bump In / Bump Out**

Keep in mind that the venue can allow you to '**Bump In**' (unload and setup) from about 10am on set up day. If you come in early you have the option to leave and come back later, you can also hang around and meet people and help out. Your choice (remember there may be two to three full days ahead!) Also bear in mind that the last day will include '**Bump Out**' (pack up) after the event and can be a long day if you start early.

Venues with loading dock areas normally get people to book in times to access the loading dock so that everyone does not turn up at the same time and cause chaos. Lots of cars moving around and exhibits getting moved can get very messy very quickly and highest level of care has to be given to Workplace Health and Safety (WHS).

Normally you will be provided with an 'Exhibitor Pack' which will contain information such as what number to call to reach the Event Coordinator, Loading Dock Manager or Site Security. It will also provide you with details on what to do on arrival, a map of where to register, and a process that you should go through. The pack should also provide a template to print out with the display details that you are producing. You fill in the blanks, print it and bring along the next day to place in a holder (normally provided). The Event Coordinator will advise your table number on the day and give you direction to find it. It will then be up to you to arrange all your display pieces to be moved in and set up for display.

The venue/event may offer you discounted car parking if you park in their facility, or you may wish to take your car back home and then bus it in later. Most venues are located near public transport facilities and if you only have a relatively small display you may just want to walk it in.

While displays are normally on tables, mosaic builds are sometimes presented on artist easels or more solid wooden frames. Any vertical mounting needs to be safe for both the exhibitors and the public to be around without any safety issues and will need to be approved by the venue and Event Coordinator. If you intend to build 'off table' you will need to note this in your Exhibitor Application for the event.

Other options include shared table displays (e.g. a kids table, Southern Bricks table) where a few exhibitors would get together and exhibit. Similar to a collaborative build, but each person may build completely separate models of a similar theme or just a scattering of random MOCS. Southern Bricks would normally have its own table and members are welcome to put work onto the LUG table to display. The LUG would normally ask for volunteers to look after the table and answer questions about the LUG from the public. There may be a formal roster system in place or it may be a loose 'come and stay as long as you like' practice.

**TIP** – Use similar containers for similar sections of the build assists with packing/unpacking of a display. Sections of a low flat battlefield may all go into separate square flat white containers, while sections of a castle may be in larger size black tubs. It helps to identify what is what when you get it all home later too!

## Tables

Most venues will provide some sort of trestle or rigid tables for displaying your MOC and will provide a tablecloth ('skirting'/'scrimmage') for the table. Trestle tables are normally an average of around 1800x750 but can vary between facilities. Make sure you get the size of the tables and build accordingly. 99% of locations will have a variance in table heights (where the table may be warped or bowed) or have dips in the floors. DIY adjustable table plans are available within some groups and most people are happy to share ideas.

It pays to not cover the WHOLE table in LEGO® and leaving a buffer around the front and side edge of the table allows for small hands to not reach the display – or alternatively build a switch or button to operate something and place it on the edge where the kids can reach it!

Quality building does NOT always need to be large. Several builders are well known for making smaller pieces spread out neatly over the table with space in between for distinct separation and this can be used to draw more attention to individual pieces rather than clumped together on large built up baseplates.

Make sure you brush your table off after unpacking so that any dust/scrap paper/food crumbs have been cleared off and your display space looks tip top!

**TIP** - It pays to have some cardboard scrap that you can pack under the table legs to even them up.

**BONUS TIP** – use a piece of plywood under your exhibit to place your baseplates on to help even the surface!

**BONUS TIP #2** – Magnets can be used to attach any signage to front skirts!

## Social Events

Most display events will have some element of social activities planned. Brick-a-laide is known to have an official VIP party on setup night, sometimes exhibitors will plan a casual dinner on the second night. It is an open invitation and anyone is welcome to attend.

BrickGambier arranged Pizza for exhibitors on the setup night and this is a great chance to sit around and talk to new people and make new friends. It is very common for casual dinners to occur at LEGO® Events and plans can normally be made at the drop of a hat.

## Event Bricks

Registering to display at an event, you will normally be given an 'Exhibitors Pack' which will sometimes include an Event T-Shirt, some guides to the venue and a schedule of session times and also an 'Event Brick'. This is normally a 1x 8 brick with a printed front with Event Name. Many regular exhibitors will create a 'Brick Badge' with a magnetic back plate that they will pin onto their event shirt and wear, showing all the events that they have attended. **WARNING** – Brick Badges can get quite big if you display regularly! The magnetic back pieces are not supplied at every event but some members may have some spares or the Ambassador may have some available.

## **The Four S's – Sleep, Stress, Snacks and Support**

**SLEEP** - Leading up to a build, sleep can be something that we all lose a bit of especially if we are not finished and we burn the midnight oil. Sleep can also affect our ability to drive safely to the event, it means we can be cranky when unpacking and leads to an increase in STRESS. Try and get as much sleep as possible before an event and improve your experience of participating in a display.

**STRESS** – We are all worried about getting our displays setup and STRESS plays a major part in us attending an exhibition. Try and take a breath, slowly work through problems when they arise and leave yourself plenty of time in planning your setup so that you are ready for opening. This includes the build schedule in the lead up to the event – if you don't leave enough time to complete it, you will be stressed before the event even begins! If you are having issues, seek out some support from other exhibitors.

Recognising that display events can be stressful, try and take any negative energy from other people with a pinch of salt and realise that these people may also be affected by stress and having a bad setup experience or be running late. Most people settle down once the show is running and they've had a chance to relax a little and get back to their normal self.

**SNACKS** – foods for sustained energy, including a good collection of fruit (or sugars), water and caffeine can help get you through setup, especially if you have had little sleep and can help stabilise your moods. There will normally be many people offering food and drinks or to do a coffee run within the exhibitor group and this can be really helpful especially if you missed breakfast and your morning coffee! You know what you like to eat so remember to pack snacks and drinks to keep your energy up during the day.

**SUPPORT** – LUG Groups are a fantastic support mechanism. Many people will offer to help with tasks and assist you where you need it, provide guidance, advice and encouragement. Don't be afraid to ask for help and you will normally find multiple people offering to assist. Sometimes people will offer assistance even when they are not asked and suddenly be alongside offering to help with something you are doing. It's just how groups roll, especially Southern Bricks! For first time exhibitors, we'll repeat, it pays to bring a friend or family member to assist you with your display!

### **Prizes**

Prizes are awarded at larger display events and are normally split into categories for Children under 12, a 12-16 (Teenager) and Open category (these can vary between events).

There can also be specialist awards for Best Collaborative Display and some local LUGs can also do internal awards such as Best Southern Bricks Member in Display or a Memorial Award. You will normally be asked your age on application to ensure that you are judged in the appropriate category.

A panel of judges will normally walk around the exhibits; they will perhaps ask you questions about your display and what sort of techniques you have used in building. Be sure to explain anything that you have included that you really want noticed. Competition can be quite high and sometimes the decisions are VERY hard to make. You will want an edge (something different to others) that makes you stand out.

## **Attendance (both YOU and the visitors!)**

Every event has some peaks and troughs with attendance. You will normally need to be there before the first session to ensure your display is ready for the public and you are there to answer any question and stay until the last session is finished. That can make for long days and can be from 8:30 arrival to a 5:00 finish – that is if there are no post event plans for social gatherings which can go longer! As previously mentioned under Support, it is a great idea to have someone exhibit with you just to allow you down time to go outside, get fresh air, have a bite to eat and know that your exhibit is being looked after.

First sessions in the morning are normally busy with attendance and by 10am the venues are normally full to capacity. This will likely last right through until about 2pm when the numbers will normally ease off. It pays to have a packed lunch or snacks if you don't have a chance to get outside and grab something, or at least you have something to see you through until the afternoon 'break'. Some venues will offer a 'break-out' area where you can sometimes either lie on the floor /couch/ bench seat or the really cool ones have bean bags!

Some people will arrange with neighbouring exhibitors to watch over their display while they go and have some time out, maybe even leaving early one day as the next will be busy if it includes the pack up at the end also!

If you get the whole family involved, maybe mum (or carer) and one child do the morning and dad (or other carer,) and another child do the afternoon (with lunch time the whole family is together?) It is important to find a balance as a full setup day at big conventions, followed by a VIP night or activities on day 1 and pack up late on day 3 can really take a lot out of people.

Share the breaks with your co-exhibitors and sometimes it is nice to offer to watch someone else's display and let them have a break if they are running solo.

## **Packing up and recovery tips**

During Bump Out (pack up) there is a general feeling, especially for first timers, of feeling rushed to leave. This can cause you to just throw stuff in boxes, not really care about what is mixed in with what and not really consider how you put your build away.

Looking back at some of the tips, having either a specific style of container (or colour) can help speed up the process and give you some sort of system that also helps when you get home. When you have a mass of boxes/containers, you will know what is in each one. Remembering to take some time and mind your packing techniques as discussed earlier.

## Questions you're likely to get asked by visitors.

Is that a kit?

How many parts are in that?

How long did it take you to build that?

Where do you buy your LEGO® from?

Can you get that set online / Can you buy it as a set?

How much did it cost?

Why did you build it?

What inspired the build?

Why did you let your husband/wife/partner spend so much on LEGO®?

How did you get it all here?

Can you build one for me? / Will you sell it?

Do you glue these /Do you use '**Kraggle**'?

How do you store your LEGO®?

Do you work for LEGO®?

How did you transport it here?

Is this your kid's LEGO®?

How long have you been collecting LEGO®?

Is this **ALL** LEGO®?

How much did it cost?

Where did you get all the part?

Can you give me instructions?

Do you have a room full of LEGO®?

Can I have a turn / play with the trains?

Did you build that once you got here?

## Random Recommendations

Take time to plan out what you are going to do. Think about HOW you are going to display the MOC, will it be one large piece, several smaller pieces, will it go over one table and how will I keep it all level etc.

Dress in layers - some venues are very warm or even very cool. Check the weather in the lead up to the event. It may be warm inside, but if you are going outside it may be cool or raining and you may need a jacket or coat. As you get warmer inside the venue it is easy to slip off a jacket or if the air-con gets turned up you want something handy to stay warm

Take pride in your presentation, make it look professional, keep your table clean and use a bin bag/box for rubbish. Try not to eat over your exhibit and make use of exhibitor facilities to get a break away from the display. Perhaps bring a comfy deck chair rather than use a venue chair.

Stay hydrated, with all the noise and lights it can lead to headaches and nausea if you don't drink enough. Ask a neighbouring exhibitor to keep an eye on your display if you are alone.

If you look after another person's display, make sure you do the right thing and keep an eye on it and don't wander off leaving your display, and theirs, unattended. Think about how you would feel if they did that while you were away.

Engage with the public and ask them questions back, 'how long have you liked LEGO®?', 'Do you still build?' and 'what are you building at the moment?.' Many good conversations happen at exhibitions and people may be interested in joining your LUG or discussing a common theme you like at a later date, you may even live near each other and develop a good friendship.

Look at including an interactive '**Where Is...?**' print out for people looking at your display. It can be filled with minifigures to look for (e.g. Where is Batman?) or questions like "Can you see the sinking boat?" It will hold people at your display for a little longer rather than just a quick walk past. This is particularly popular with younger children who enjoy being engaged with questions and challenges around displays.

**TIP** – Print out a guide to help people identify what the particular minifigures look like with a name and a picture. While you may know every individual name, not everyone will know the names like "Emmet", "Benny" and characters like 'Unicorn Girl'.

## The Good, The Bad and The Ugly

**The GOOD** - displaying your piece in public can be daunting, but also very rewarding. You get feelings of acceptance, admiration and encouragement from those around you admiring your work. Many people have felt intimidated to participate in an event because they think their work is not good enough. Most people feel totally inspired after leaving a display from all the good conversations and discussions around improvements and collecting new ideas and techniques on how to approach things.

**The BAD** - sometimes you will encounter a member of the public who is having a bad day, they will put down your display, maybe say the event is totally overpriced and they've seen better elsewhere. IT HAPPENS. Just smile, perhaps remind them that it is a community event and we are not all Master Builders with massive amounts of money and expertise. Try and remain polite.

**TIP** – If another fan is standing next to them, try and engage with the next person and move on, don't engage in an argument with someone in public. Remember you are also representing your LUG and your Community.

**The UGLY** – on occasion, things will happen (sometimes by accident and sometimes on purpose) and it is HOW you react that makes the difference. Displays can get accidentally knocked when people get too close or have a loose handbag swing around, children can be excited to see LEGO® and want to touch (REGARDLESS OF ANY SIGNS) and at the end of the day they are just kids. Don't be afraid to ask them politely 'not to touch' and if the parent is standing back, a good tip is to engage them with your eyes while saying that and smile also. The parents should pick up the queue and step in to reinforce your message. If the parents start to get angry ask them nicely 'do you mind just helping me out here?' or something similar. Don't get angry that something has broken and react (it happens). Stay calm, collect the pieces that have been moved and gather them near the rear of the display. Rebuild if necessary and then repair the display and replace the items. If the parent carries on and creates a scene, seek support from neighbouring exhibitors or send someone to find the Event Coordinator. Poor behaviour happens and the Event Coordinator is ultimately responsible for solving the issues and also for your own Health and Safety.

## **Acknowledgements**

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As no doubt, there will be revisions, any further ideas can be either emailed to me at bentomlins19@gmail.com or FB PM [www.facebook.com/ben.tomlins.007](https://www.facebook.com/ben.tomlins.007)