

THE OFF DUTY KIDS ISSUE | GEAR & GADGETS



REV-EVERENTIAL
The 1:8 scale Lego Bugatti Chiron is stacked with a W16 engine like Bugatti's full-size model.

LEGO/TECHNIC/BUGATTI CHIRON

RUMBLE SEAT / DAN NEIL



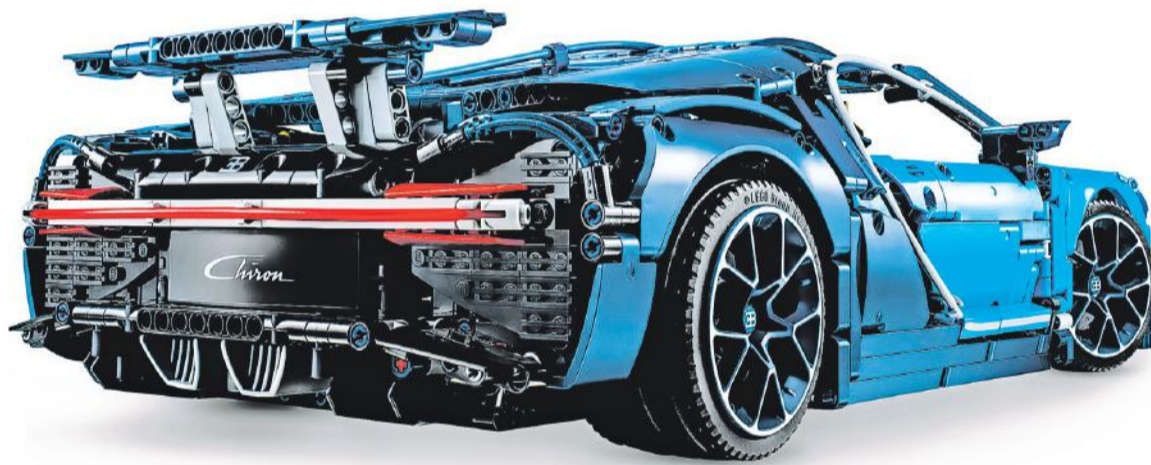
A Big Kid Builds a Bugatti Chiron on His Coffee Table

For our Kids Issue, Dan Neil let his inner 12-year-old write his column.

I DON'T NEED to tell you what's lame about Legos. You spend all this time putting a zillion little blocky-whatzits together, and your parents spend all this money they never shut up about, and when you're finished the thing just sits there, all done and everything. It's not like you can play with it. Oh, this one time my cousin stepped on this kid's *Millennium Falcon*. He was so mad....

A lot of Lego kits are for babies. I used to be into Ninjago dragons and MechWarriors but not anymore. I have a trash bag full of them in my closet if you want them. Some Legos are cool. Have you seen the Technic series? They are super-hard, bro. And I thought, with school out because of coronavirus and all, and I had a lot of time to kill and my family is driving me crazy anyway, a Technic kit might be fun—just to see if I could do it. They are for older kids, but Mom says it's OK because I'm accelerated.

On Saturday a big box from France arrived. It was a huge Technic kit! Something called a Bugatti Chiron. I dunno. They say it's a car but it looks like it could fly. Mom looked it up on the interwebs and saw it was new and hard to get; it costs \$350 from Lego.com and \$399 from Amazon; and it's mad complicated. The box says "3,599 pieces" but I had about 40 left over



HELL ON PLASTIC WHEELS Each of Lego's Bugatti Chiron sets comes with 3,599 tiny pieces and is crafted with an authentic interior, retractable rear wing and a unique serial number stamped under the hood. \$350, lego.com

so that must be wrong.

The box was awesome, and heavy! Five smaller boxes were inside. The blue-metallic wheels were displayed face up in their own box in four neat cutouts. Inside each of the boxes were bags and bags of parts, including hundreds of black, red, blue, short and long connectors. The bags are numbered in a way that you might think you would use up each bag, before moving on; but many times the part you need is in the next bag. It's like a meme.

The instruction manual is broken into two books, covering 970 steps, a total of 620 pages of illustrations. The first book takes you up to the

point "at which the full carbon fibre monocoque and the rear-end containing the engine and the gearbox come together." The book calls this the "marriage" which is weird and gross.

The second book goes back to front, starting with the big rear wing (raised and lowered with a little turnkey you also build) and ending with the model's front end, which takes several hours and bags of aqua-blue blades and fenders. Some of these have to be snapped together behind other little parts, which is hard because I have big fingers for a kid my age.

The books tell all about the Bugatti Chiron. It's made in Molsheim, France. I guess that's why there's English and French writing. It also explains why so many bags of parts. The Chiron has a lot of parts in real life, too, including a quad-turbo 16-cylinder engine, seven-speed dual clutch gearbox, and four-wheel drive. And each little cylinder has its own block (gray), piston (yellow), con-rod (gray), crankshaft (red). After a sorting of the first several bags, tiny gears and sprockets piled up like poker chips.

In real life the car has these crazy C shapes, inside and out. The Lego kit uses these bendy vinyl rods to make these curves, like the cocktail straws my Uncle

Melvin leaves around.

Oh, bro, I almost forgot to tell you! Do not attempt to assemble this or really any Lego kit when the parental units are asleep. The plastic bags are hard to open and the crinkling is super loud. So not epic! It sounds like when hail hits our roof. Even our dog had to leave the room.

I got off to a good start but slowed down once I came to the gearbox ...which was the first thing. I spent two hours on Saturday pulling apart a huge hunk of stuff I just put together, to replace a wrong-sized piece. You know those tests they give you at school to judge spatial reasoning, I think they call it, where you have to be

Some Legos are cool. Have you seen the Technic series? That's what I used. They are super-hard, bro.

able to turn something over and around in your imagination? That's the thing about Technic kits and, I guess, why they are so fun. Don't take your eyes off those illos, yo!

And don't do what I did, using the coffee table for a work table. Ours is black, which made finding black parts harder. It's also smooth and just the right height for the dogs' tail to sweep bits onto the Persian carpet, which is like camo for Legos. Use a blanket.

Anyway, I got it built. It took me four days. At the end I had to dig into my trash bag of old Legos because I was missing four stupid little connectors—how can they let that happen?—but now, I have to admit, I'm glad I finished it.

And kind of sorry, too, you know? It's going to be a long summer.

First Day on the Job

Goofing off can be fun, but here's why gobs of kids prefer toying around with adult careers

WHY ARE TOYS that let children mimic the quotidian chores of adult careers—such as counting cash like a bank teller or peering through microscope slides like a yawning researcher—so appealing to little ones? You'd think they'd have better things to do.

But in their first five years of life, "Kids are absolutely fascinated by imitating adults to see whether or not they have that skill set," said Dr. Isabelle Cherney, dean of the School of Education and Social Policy at Merrimack College in Massachusetts.

Many kids' favorite examples of such toys, from fossil kits and rock polishers to Easy-Bake Ovens, have been passed down by parents who want to wistfully recall their own industrious childhoods.

But it's not just monkey see, monkey do. Practicing these skills helps kids with a concept called sequencing, which allows them to recog-

nize patterns that make the world more accessible.

Picture a child with a model rocket. Before blast off, she has to construct the craft in order, understanding how each piece, from nose to fin to the parachute inside, plays a role. She learns how to wire up the engine. And if there's a failure to launch, she has to start from square one.

"Children will ask questions—why is this, how is this," said Dr. Cherney. You can actually help kids further by pretending you're as mystified as they are and letting them figure it out and teach you, she added.

Still, just because your child gravitates toward a coin-counting machine doesn't mean she'll end up as a cutthroat stockbroker. In the end, it's all just child's play. —Ashley Mateo

Estes Rocket Science Starter Set, \$35, estesrockets.com

Teacher's Choice Digital Coin Counter, \$25, amazon.com

National Geographic Hobby Tumbler, \$70, target.com

Dig it Up! Fossils & Minerals plus Excavation Kit, \$26, mindware.orientaltrading.com

AmScope 40X-1000X Glass Optics Student Compound Microscope, \$178, amscope.com

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JESSIE MANELOS WEINER (5)