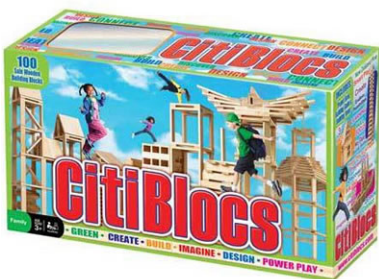




The Babble Review: CitiBlocs



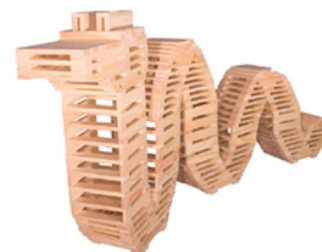
Whether it's LEGO or MEGA, I confess that my kids are foremost fans of snap-together block sets — but sometimes you just need to get back to basics, and when CitiBlocs arrived in my mailbox for a test run last week, it was about that time. As bare-bones as blocks get, CitiBlocs are simple, natural-wood (New Zealand pine, to be exact) rectangles with no lips, grooves, or variations in shape, length or width — just a bare canvas for open-ended play. The kids and I tested the [100-piece set](#), but available sets range from [52](#) to [1,000](#) pieces.

CitiBlocs, Unboxed: Efficiently packed into their rectangular box, CitiBlocs are easily dumped onto the floor so you can start playing right away. Open the shrinkwrap, pop the box top, and you're set. Inside the box, you'll find the blocks themselves as well as a fold-out booklet of ideas for inspiration. There are no step-by-step instructions, however — all projects are shown as finished, and to be honest, a few of them are pretty intimidating. But as I stared at the booklet, wondering how to execute that beautiful train set without glue, connectors or pieces of variable size, the kids had already started putting together their own forts, houses and weirdo geometric shapes. In other words, imagination is more important than instructions with these ones.

Snake made with CitiBlocs (but not by me): DO try this at home.

Playability: Aspirational as CitiBlocs' guidebook is, you're likely to find yourself going much simpler at first with the designs you end up building. That's partly the nature of the blocks: As every piece is the same size and shape (picture a glorified Popsicle stick, but with flat edges), it takes some outside-the-box thinking to come up with more complex designs; and, given that there are no ways to connect CitiBlocs beyond smartly placing them, there's an added challenge just to getting your projects to hold together. (Granted, you could use glue, but that'd sort of limit future play.) For the most part, this wasn't an issue for the kids: They had just as much fun knocking down their constructions as they did assembling the things. Things only got frustrating when little brother decided he was going to pull a Godzilla on his big brothers' newly developed downtown areas — CitiBlocs were no match for the sheer clumsy force of a 3-year-old.

Overall: We'll be revisiting our CitiBlocs again (and as I type this, that's just what the kids are doing). The blocks' simplicity makes for a refreshing, imaginative alternative to many building sets, wooden or otherwise, and the experimentation and engineering challenges they present are welcome additions to playtime. One note to you, however, if you decide to pick up a set after reading this: Get yourself a storage tub, especially if you opt for one of the larger sets. Efficient and waste-minimizing as CitiBlocs' packaging is, there's no good way to get the things back in the box once you've got them on the floor.



Get it Here: The CitiBlocs 100-piece set is available for \$26.18 (regularly \$27.50) from [Amazon](#).