



# 2009 PRODUCT GUIDE

"It's a whole lot more than just toys!"

**Product:** CitiBlocs 200 Piece Wooden Building Set

**MSRP:** \$49.95 USD

**Company URL:** <http://www.citiblocs.com>

**RATING:** ★★★★★

anything is possible

## CitiBlocs 200 Piece Wooden Building Set

Evaluated by: Rev. James G.W. Fisher | The Toy Man® - Product Evaluation Specialist

Product Evaluation Summary Date: 08/17/2009

CitiBlocs are the next generation of wooden construction pieces made from renewable pine forests in Vietnam. From pre-school to elementary school to even architecture students, CitiBlocs are an ideal educational toy.



Participating in our **eco-Recognition™ Project** to encourage **greenBusiness™**

Product Type	Release Year	Primary Usage	Target Age / Max. Weight	Target Gender
Building Sets	2009	Consumer	3 years plus	Female/Male

### Product Evaluation Summary Ratings

\* Rating based on scale from 1 to 5, with 5 being the best.

Critical Skills Development	Educational Value	FunFactor™	Innovation Level	Marketing Value	Visual Appeal
5	5	5	3	5	3

### Trade Industry Sales Types

Wholesale  Retail  Reseller  Online

### Safety / Quality Classifications

<b>CE Marked</b> (Not Applicable)	<b>UL Approved</b> (Not Applicable)	<b>JPMA Certified</b> (Not Applicable)
<b>ASTM Compliant</b> (Not Applicable)	<b>Eco-friendly</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Eco-conscious</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

<b>Independent Lab Tested</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Confirmed</b>	<b>Independent Lab Name</b> Living Richly, Inc.	
<b>Lead Level</b> <i>(Complies with 16CFR 1303 Regulation)</i> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Lead &amp; Other Heavy Metals Level</b> <i>(Complies with ASTM F963)</i> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Phthalates Level</b> <i>(Complies with CA Phthalates Regulation - 6 Types)</i> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Flammability - Solids</b> <i>(Complies with 16 CFR 1500.44)</i> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Flammability - Textiles</b> <i>(Complies with 16 CFR 1610)</i> (Not Applicable)	<b>Mechanical/Physical Tests</b> <i>(Complies with ASTM 1963/16 CFR 1500)</i> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

#### Manufactured In

Vietnam

#### Safety Hazard/Warnings



Not intended for children under 3 years of age

## ***Introducing CitiBlocs Wooden Construction Pieces***

\* SUMMARY CODES: SN - Special Needs    ASC - Autistic Spectrum Conditions    AS - Asberger syndrome

CitiBlocs raise the bar when it comes to quality and greenBusiness™. They are precision cut blocks of wood which are 100% ChildSafe™, green, crafted from renewable pine forests in Vietnam and provide an outstanding skill development medium. From pre-school to elementary school and even architecture professionals, CitiBlocs are an ideal educational toy, which is so simple in design yet is limited only by the imagination.

### **A Stimulating Challenge**

What makes CitiBlocs so special you may ask? I reply to that question with a question: How many toys can you buy that steadily stimulate progressive development of reasoning, problem solving, cause and effect, engineering and improvising skills? No matter what the age, sex, or native language of any individual, these life skills are an inherent need and CitiBlocs provide the experience needed to fulfill that need.

Kids need only imagination and gravity to build, stack and create their own fun with CitiBlocs. The simplistic shape and design of the blocks makes them ideal for solo play or a family fun session. Through interactive family play with these blocks, a stronger bond can be made while at the same time gaining an educational experience which never stops, even after the interactive family play ends. The further skill development which an individual gains from playing with CitiBlocs is later applied in circumstances or tasks where reasoning, problem solving, cause and effect, and improvising skills are needed most!

### ***Building Developmental Skills And Concepts With Endless Possibilities.***

Building developmental skills and Concepts with endless possibilities; the perfect definition of what CitiBlocs is all about. Just imagine that all of the pieces are the same size and shape. This stimulates creative thinking development in a way which allows anyone to take their creative design concepts and bring them to reality! A creation can be a simple train or take it to the extreme and design a complex building. A person can literally create anything they might imagine, (*if you have enough pieces to complete the build*), but then again you can always buy more kits to realize your goal.

CitiBlocs 200 Piece Wooden Building Set you have the luxury of no glue, no screws, no mess! It serves as the ideal product which mothers will appreciate especially. This is especially true in respect to young children. Designed with a very strong pine wood which is eco-friendly, durable enough to handle serious abuse from young children, and 100% ChildSafe, a mother couldn't possibly buy a better solution for her child or children to have a perfect combination of Play and Development all in one product. The CitiBlocs 200 Piece Wooden Building Set encourages development of discovery interest, independent creativity, and skill development while also crossing into disciplines of art, science, math and design.

For "*special needs*" or SN kids, the CitiBlocs accommodate the need safe educational development tools. When you look at the price point for many of the educational development solutions for these children, you will find yourself quick to find that CitiBlocs sweep the floor clean with the affordable price point and level of functionality they can deliver. Fun, creative play for these kids can be a whole new experience to explore with CitiBlocs.

### ***Come One, Come All - (Unless you are under 3 years of age)***

Who can play with CitiBlocs? They're actually designed for children ages 3+. Although the CitiBlocs 200 Piece Wooden Building Set as well as the rest of the kits available are best used with teachers, church leaders, camp leaders, and local community centers where there is responsible supervision with groups. In group application the individuals will have an exciting experience of manipulating, touching, and discovery.

### **Okay, What's The Downside?**

As with anything else in life you are always going to have a downside to the good point of a product, service, or situation...well I'm sorry but that rule doesn't apply to any of the CitiBlocs Wooden Building Sets. You are just going to have to put up with a product that does exactly what it was designed for...and then some!

## ***Independent Evaluator Reports***

### Obtaining An Independent Perspective...

In this section we will cover "*CitiBlocs 200 Piece Wooden Building Set*" from the perspectives of multiple top level professional. To accomplish that task we have called upon the assistance of three top industry professionals who know their stuff and have the credentials to prove it.

Our professional and independent evaluators have formed their own opinions from extensive analysis and produced detailed, in-depth reports connected with their study and evaluation of CitiBlocs 200 Piece Wooden Building Set. The information to follow is comprised of excerpts from those same reports which have been paraphrased in order to encapsulate the primary points being conveyed in each report. This approach provides completely independent perspectives in the evaluation of CitiBlocs 200 Piece Wooden Building Set.

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PLEASE NOTE: The names of our independent evaluators are not disclosed to protect the privacy of these individuals upon their request. Their labors are provided at no charge to assist us in providing a well-balanced and qualified product evaluation summary. Their title is provided to clarify for our readers the specific type of specialist from which the information provided has been included in each product evaluation summary.

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### **PRODUCT: CitiBlocs 200 Piece Wooden Building Set**

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#### Wood Design Engineer

*"The CitiBlocs 200 Piece Wooden Building Set is an open-ended construction set in which each piece has been carefully crafted to be in an identical size and shape of design. All pieces of the set have a very durable and absolutely smooth surface finish which will ensure that each piece has no sharp corners or edges and is safe for toddlers and children to explore a creative experience in building and design. The building set provides a stimulating play experience which will children and adults to push themselves out of their normal familiar daily routine and begin to use their creative imagination."*

*"This building set is provides an opportunity of unique play which will stimulate and develop perceptual, motor, and language skills, and scientific / mathematical thinking and awareness. It serves as a very strong catalyst to encourage children to explore their creative capabilities and begin to draw on their skill to invent unique new expressions of their personal feelings through the creations they build and also destroy."*

*"The building set provides a neutral foundation of organic elements from which children can build. Each child has a different learning style from another in their relational concepts formed in their design. It is unique to them yet the neutral foundation almost eliminates development of selfish pride from being able to make a comparative analysis of skills between another child and themselves."*

*"The materials used for the production of the CitiBlocs 200 Piece Wooden Building Set are of the finest quality pine from a source which is easily replenished with no negative impact on ecological concerns. The pieces are comparable to Kapla Building Blocks and can easily be interchanged with them as well, although the CitiBlocs have a more affordable price point."*

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#### Chief of Recreational Therapy and Pediatric Behavioral Study

*"To provide some clarification for your readers of the quotations you select to use from my evaluation report, I work extensively with SN children, many from a wide range of ASC, including AS which is common with several of the children I care for. These conditions impose a more demanding level of care and personal time needed to provide the appropriate attention a child may require."*

*Building sets such as the one provided for my study and evaluation enables me to perform a study with a variety of my SN children. The study will be quite useful in my therapy with the children, to monitor the response and improvement levels of their cognitive, spatial, interpersonal skills and overall developmental*

*improvement during their recreational play."*

*"I selected a group of 10 different children from my group of children who I see for their recreational therapy to take part in my study. The study was conducted with each child's parent(s) or caregiver present as well. In the course of the study I discussed with the parent(s) or caregiver what differences they noticed in the behavior and skills of their child, if any. This was quite useful in the completion of my evaluation report for this product."*

*"The product used in the study, which I will refer to as 'CitiBlocs" served an excellent medium to use with the children due to the fact of the CitiBlocs being a product which created a level evaluation base for all of the children. This allowed for a more accurate identification of behavioral responses and developmental improvements by myself from a clinical level and the parents and caregivers in attendance."*

*"Over the course of my study I found that the CitiBlocs opened up their visual environment which provided each of the children a way to learn through the creation of models made with the wood planks or just basic, fundamental familiarization with each piece with strong stimulation to motor skills development. This was literally invaluable in their progressive development of critical and cognitive skills as well as a stronger encouragement of emotional expression."*

*"The smooth wooden surface of the CitiBlocs served as the ignition switch for each of the children to pick up the CitiBlocs and put their minds into drive on a journey of curiosity and analytical adventure of a sort. More simply put, they begin to draw upon each tactile sensation and visual stimulation which in turn caused their brain to develop analytical processes and formation of classification and relational response."*

*As they picked up each CitiBloc, the children all spent an extended period of time just looking at every facet of each piece then moving onto another. For the AS children, their responses were more aggressive and lacking in any logical pattern of action whereas most of the other children eventually grouped the CitiBlocs in some form of order with two of the children actually creating some course efforts of models to look at and then later destroy, repeating the same actions repeatedly."*

*"In my completion of the study and preparing my evaluation report, I established that there was no question of the improvement in skill levels with all of the children, some more than other obviously yet the overall results demonstrated that even the parents or caregivers noticed some skill development improvements, including their emotional demeanor in play with the CitiBlocs weighed against plush animals and other assisted recreational activities. All of the children demonstrated a sizable difference in their desire for continued play with the CitiBlocs in comparison with the other toys they were given."*

*The most important note of my study was with the group interactive play. There was a clearly defined difference in the emotional and other behavioral action by the children in reference to social-interaction as a group and attention level. With the other toys there was some level of demand in the group play, where one child took aggressive action against another to obtain a toy they wanted. With the CitiBlocs, there was neutral ground and no signs of preference established with three of the children actually interchanging pieces amongst themselves. with a clear reciprocal response being noted."*

*My evaluation results showed that each of the CitiBlocs, each movement and each action altogether with the children in their exposure to CitiBlocs, played a vital role as a one of many key elements responsible development of critical skill development with these children. There was no doubt of progressive skill growth of the children in both individual and group play environments with CitiBlocs. This was confirmed from the feedback responses from all of the parents and caregivers present as well."*

*The results from my study establish that the CitiBlocs appear to be suitable for improvement of developmental skills with any child whether or not an SN child. It would require a much longer period of study though, to validate and outline the full potential of influence that the CitiBlocs 200 Piece Wooden Building Set could create with children in active play with it. "*

## **Consumer Hands-On Evaluation**

Nothing is more powerful than hands-on experience by a consumer with a product when it is being evaluated. Based upon that fact we put every single product we evaluate at the mercy of consumers in a hands-on evaluation where anything goes. Shall we see how "CitiBlocs 200 Piece Wooden Building Set" was seen with consumers?

The CitiBlocs 200 Piece Wooden Building Set was part of a consumer hands-on evaluation performed in a

busy public area in the Boston, Mass. area, along with multiple other products. Having several products available for consumer evaluation all at once provides a more well balanced and unbiased evaluation of the products. Many of them had two or three copies available to provide a larger base of opportunity for consumer evaluation yet the CitiBlocs 200 Piece Wooden Building Set held its own while also creating a challenge for our staff and volunteers. I am sure you are eager to see the results from the consumers feedback of the CitiBlocs 200 Piece Wooden Building Set.



The CitiBlocs 200 Piece Wooden Building Set was quite the item to provide for consumer hands-on evaluation in a public place. Unlike our the other products we had brought, the CitiBlocs had 200 pieces to be accountable for. I recall one mother who stated that she just assumed these were "*samples*" which were free to take. Her position in the matter was,..."*Isn't that what samples are for, to take home and show other people?*"

On a brighter perspective, when you look at the situation with people trying to walk away with the CitiBlocks, this scenario delivers a message which cannot be questioned. The CitiBlocs were so popular and appealing to the evaluation participants that they would be willing to attempt to steal them just to have but a limited few. Now that is truly validating the popularity and value of this product without a doubt!

As we videotaped the hands on experience for each participant with all of the products we had brought, the CitiBlocs 200 Piece Wooden Building Set provided an added plus we never had expected. It was like a comedy show as we all laughed at the reactions from many of as we had to deal with the CitiBlocs growing legs shall we say. It was hilarious and made our time going over the feedback forms and video tapes an experience which was far from boring!

It was quite fascinating to look at some of the inspirational examples of creative talent waiting to blossom with some of the kids, while at the same time being intrigued over the careful analysis which some of the consumers performed as they carefully created what they envisioned as a masterpiece, only to have another person say, "*What the heck is that? It's so stupid looking.*"

There were also those who were captivated by simply having a pile of CitiBlocs with which they simply placed them end to end in multiple lines, or kept creating piles of the CitiBlocs, tearing the piles down, and then repeating the same action again, and again. These people were absolutely overjoyed from their activity! This was such an outstanding way to demonstrate how CitiBlocs can spark the imagination of kids and adults while they have the strongest level of fun and enjoyment no matter what anyone else may say or think. The CitiBlocs 200 Piece Wooden Building Set provided an impressive as well as comical source of entertainment not just for the consumer evaluation participants, but for all of us evaluating the product as well.

In reviewing the feedback forms which the participants filled out, it was so easy to see how well it was received by the consumers. There was no question of the strongest level of response being shown as well as the highest level of FunFactor™ being expressed in a wide variety of forms. The CitiBlocs 200 Piece Wooden Building Set passed this segment of our evaluation.

### ***A Sampling Of Category Ratings***

A *sampling* of the many individual ratings assigned to each category in our evaluation process for this product are featured here. The categories which have been selected to be featured in this product evaluation summary specify some of the primary points of how and why that specific rating score was reached.

\* If a product is inducted, a product evaluation summary of the complete review is published for public view.

\* If a product scores an overall category evaluation rating average of [2] or lower, it fails the evaluation and is not inducted.

\* Information for products which do not pass our evaluation is confidential and is shared only with the company submitting the product.

The **Featured Category Ratings** for this **Product Evaluation Summary** are listed below.

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**CREATIVE SKILL DEVELOPMENT:** Rating Level - [5] ★★★★★

The CitiBlocs 200 Piece Wooden Building Set demonstrated in active use by consumers, SN children, and independent evaluation reports that it influences a "*substantial*" level of improvement in regard to cognitive, motor, and overall critical skill development. The incredible level of play and skill development was well established and validated. Creative skills and so much more are exercised and encouraged with the active use of the product.

Many of the most important critical skills which we are most concerned about in a child's skill development are all stimulated in active play with the CitiBlocs 200 Piece Wooden Building Set. There was no question in the final scoring in this evaluation category; the CitiBlocs 200 Piece Wooden Building Set closes the doors on the competition in this evaluation category with a perfect score of [5 Stars].

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**EDUCATIONAL VALUE:** Rating Level - [5] ★★★★★

The educational value of the CitiBlocs 200 Piece Wooden Building Set was not difficult to establish. It must be looked at from a different perspective in regard to educational value. The CitiBlocs 200 Piece Wooden Building Set serves a top level medium of learning and skill development from learning which is from hands on experience, not the usual read a book, listen to teacher, learn something. Instead it educates children how to access their creative development skills and many other aspects of their skill development, thus it ranks well in the education value. With the combination of results from our evaluation scoring and the independent hands-on evaluation with consumers, the CitiBlocs 200 Piece Wooden Building Set scored a perfect score of [5 Stars] in this category.

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**FUNFACTOR™:** Rating Level - [5] ★★★★★

In our evaluation of the CitiBlocs 200 Piece Wooden Building Set in the evaluation category of FunFactor™, it demonstrated an enormous capability of creating laughter and sometimes a bit of frolic. As the children were addressing their endless imagination, and combined it with their creative skills which the CitiBlocs 200 Piece Wooden Building Set unquestionably influences a constant improvement of, the children were having the time of their lives. Laughter and comedic expressions were at the very center of it all in the midst of their recreational play.

The CitiBlocs 200 Piece Wooden Building Set proved it has the organic ingredients to not only serve as a ecological contribution to **greenBusiness™**, but serves as medium to generate more laughter and a greater level of skill improvement that a whoopie cushion! Although there is intense focus quite often as the children exercise the use of the creative imagination, the CitiBlocs 200 Piece Wooden Building Set still managed to bring a generous sum of FunFactor™ into the mix. The CitiBlocs 200 Piece Wooden Building Set danced its way through our evaluation in this category with a perfect score of [5 Stars].

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**INNOVATION:** Rating Level - [3] ★★★

With our more strict and well-defined evaluation guidelines, the evaluation in this category was quite a challenge for all of us, even an architect who was constantly determined to create the most intensely designed creations possible with the 200 CitiBlocs which came with this building set. To our surprise, it was the architect who made it clear where the CitiBlocs 200 Piece Wooden Building Set stood as far as innovation is concerned.

A point was made as to how "*CitiBlocs are an extension of a common building set design which has been prominent in societies across the globe for centuries.*" While that statement in its own way took the air out our balloons of excitement with CitiBlocs, the architect explained how that is a powerful and positive point of reference.

The only downside is a fact we cannot deny, the level of innovation is not applicable to the CitiBlocs, rather it comes from the inventive minds of the people who pick up the CitiBlocs. *"Those people exercise their imaginations to create anything from an assembly of wooden planks with a magnificent symmetry of simple, perfect rows, or perhaps a work of genius budding from their imagination."* The architect went on further to say, *"The CitiBlocs are but a comfortable organic medium used to create a positive end."*

The point of all this is essentially that CitiBlocs are a valuable product but in this evaluation category the focus of value weighs more for those who use the product rather than the product being the source of the level of innovation. The CitiBlocs 200 Piece Wooden Building Set is impressive over all, yet in this evaluation category pulls an average score of [3 Stars].

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#### **MARKETING VALUE:** Rating Level - [5] ★★★★★

The CitiBlocs 200 Piece Wooden Building Set pulled its weight quite well with a dominant or competitive position in comparison to other product of like kind in the market.

The CitiBlocs 200 Piece Wooden Building Set has an advantage in some respects. In today's U.S. society, the old mark of *"Made In The USA"* has gained some serious tarnish due to a number of industry issues of recent past as well as the current state of our economy. Although quality CAN be found in manufacturing in the US, it's not always within the budget in comparison with the same quality being provided for lesser cost overseas, or simply not available in the US period for some product produced.

When you consider the following;

- Each block is precisely cut using state of the art technologies and high quality Radiata Pine from certified renewable forests in New Zealand.
- Each block is perfectly cut to ensure proper balance and stackability.
- All Citiblocs are certified safe and non-toxic and have been tested and approved according to all CPSIA rules and regulations.
- CitiBlocs provide a substantial contribution to a child's skill development
- CitiBlocs have a substantially lesser price point while still retaining the quality as that of their competitors

The marketing value is influenced dramatically and gives the CitiBlocs a clear edge on its competitors. The CitiBlocs 200 Piece Wooden Building Set literally screams ahead in this evaluation category with a perfect score of [5 Stars].

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#### **VISUAL APPEAL:** Rating Level - [3] ★★★

When it comes to visual appeal, the CitiBlocs 200 Piece Wooden Building Set pulled an average score, yet this should not be even the slightest of a concern. The CitiBlocs 200 Piece Wooden Building Set is a winner in almost all other categories, and when you look at the overall scores combined, the product still came through and was accomplished what so many other products have failed to do; it became one of our latest new inductees!

When it comes to visual appeal, it is not a vital element in the judgment of a buyer or person using it. The person using the CitiBlocs 200 Piece Wooden Building Set judges the visual appeal based upon the qualities of what they have created, not what they have created it with. The packaging is well above average in visual appeal in itself, yet just not enough to put a WOW! in it. When you combine all of the evaluation guidelines for this category and add them all up, the CitiBlocs 200 Piece Wooden Building Set makes it in the gate with an average score of [3 Stars] in this evaluation category.

#### **EVALUATION RESULTS** - From evaluation for induction into **"The Toy Man® Product Guide"**

**Overall Rating:** 4

**Seal of Approval:** Approved

**eco-Recognition Seal:** Approved

**Award of Excellence:** Not Eligible

**eChoice Award:** Selected

## THE TOY MAN® SEAL OF APPROVAL



"*The Toy Man® Seal of Approval*" serves as an emblem of professional recognition for having met the high standards of The Toy Man® Product Guide for quality, safety, value, and product integrity. In essence, only the products submitted for our evaluation which "*have what it takes™*" to meet our high standards are approved for induction!

It is important to realize that this emblem was first established in 1971 by the [International Parenting Institute™ \(IPI™\)](#), for exclusive use by [The Toy Man® Product Guide](#) in its product evaluation process. It is modeled after the "[Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval®](#)", an emblem of recognition for products which meet the globally recognized high standards set forth by the [Good Housekeeping Institute®](#).

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## THE TOY MAN® ECO-RECOGNITION SEAL



The Toy Man® *eco-Recognition Seal* embodies the highest recognition for products and services which provide a significant contribution to ecological concerns by one or more of the following;

- The product is useful, empowering, and eco-friendly.
- Recycled / Recyclable materials are being used in the manufacturing of the product, (*in part or entirely*).
- Product packaging has been eliminated for the product and is now available online only.
- A substantial effort is currently being made for the primary availability of the product to be online.



"*The Toy Man® eChoice™ Award*" - This is more than just an award, this is the "*brass ring*" so to speak; the award that serves as an emblem of recognition for products & services which contribute *substantially* to positive skill growth and productivity. This productivity is measured in the value of potential cognitive as well as critical skill growth and/or overall level of improvement in an individual or group from use of a product or service.

**PLEASE NOTE:** *The eChoice™ Award images which were used from 1971-1984, and 1984-2007 have been retired. Although the former versions of the eChoice™ Award have been retired, they still remain valid.*