

Citiblocs wooden building blocks review – educational precision-cut construction toy

Parents and kids looking for an ecofriendly wooden construction toy that can involve the whole family in play may like to give Citiblocs a try. These precision-cut wooden blocks are all the same size and plank shape, making it possible for builders with big imaginations and steady hands to create incredible structures.

About Citiblocs wooden building blocks

Each Citiblocs plank is cut to the same carefully selected ratio and measures approximately 4.5 x .75 x .25 inches. The length and the uniformity of size of each plank makes it easier for builders to stack these unique blocks high to create tall skyscrapers or other detailed structures without the need to use glue, grooves, or connecting pieces.

Recommended for ages 3 and up, Citiblocs are a green toy, made from lightweight New Zealand pine wood harvested from FSC renewable forests. They are nontoxic and both ASTM and CPSIA certified.

Citiblocs are comparatively inexpensive for the quality and quantity of blocks a consumer receives in each of the seven sets available so far.

- A 52-block set retails for around \$15.
- A 54-block set with planks colored red and blue retails for around \$17.
- A 100-block set retails for around \$28.
- A 200-block set retails for around \$50.
- A 300-block set retails for around \$80.
- A 500-block set retails for around \$165.
- A 1,000-block set retails for around \$230.



A snake built from wooden blocks from a Citiblocs construction set toy. (photo: CITIBLOCKS)

Because these blocks lead to open-ended play, parents and kids can play with them over and over again over a period of years, building almost an infinite variety of structures and getting far more play value for their money than they would get from many other more close-ended toys whose possibilities for play are soon exhausted. Larger sets are great for use by groups of people in daycares, schools, summer camps, or even museums.

Award-winning wooden construction toy

In its short time on the market, Citiblocs has already racked up several awards, including:

- A Creative Child Magazine Toy Awards 2009 Preferred Choice Award in the category of "Wooden Toys – Building Blocks."
- A Dr. Toy Best Vacation Product for Summer 2009 Award
- A Father's Day GreatDad Recommends and Mr. Dad Seal of Approval, an award that makes total sense, since this is a toy that gets Dad (and Mom too!) just as involved in play as the kids are.

Learning from block play

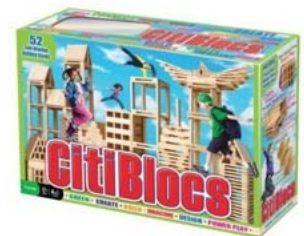
As any blocks are, Citiblocs are educational, giving children hands-on practice with everything from the concept of cause and effect to an understanding of symmetry, balance, mathematics, and science, as well as developing fine-motor skills and (when played with by a group of builders) interpersonal and communication skills.

In order to facilitate learning, the makers of Citiblocs offer resources on their Web site such as [free lesson plans and building ideas](#) to download and a [gallery of pictures of Citiblocs models](#) for inspiration.

Review of Citiblocs play experience

The wooden planks in a test set were very light, well-balanced, and easy to handle. If struck with a sharp object, their soft sides do show dings, but most likely such marks of play will matter only to the pickiest master builder.

The example structures pictured both on the sides of the block box and in the print resources included with each set provide adults and children alike with great sources of inspiration, but kids can and should certainly feel free to build many kinds of structures beyond buildings, animals, vehicles, and so on. One young tester, in fact, lay several planks end to end around on the rug to map out the floor plan for a fort.





A house made from wooden Citiblocs planks

Children may become frustrated if unable to replicate some of the amazing Citiblocs models right away, so parents may need to encourage kids gently to practice first with making simpler structures or just to focus on making their own, unique creations. Overall, families enjoying creative imaginative play together with the help of these blocks should always remember that there is no wrong way to use them.

Citiblocs vs. Kapla blocks vs. Keva planks

Fans of other precision-cut wooden building toys will notice the similarity between Citiblocs, Kapla blocks, and Keva planks. Both [Kapla blocks](#), which are made from pine from renewable French forests and come in both plain and colored versions, and [Keva planks](#), which are made in the U.S.A. from maple wood, are identical in size and shape to Citiblocs and can be used interchangeably with them when building structures.

Kapla blocks, however, are both higher in price than Citiblocs and currently not being imported to the United States. The makers of Keva planks, in turn, point out that because their blocks are made of maple wood that is harder than pine, their blocks will resist normal wear and tear better than pine blocks, and thus retain over time the consistent shape needed for truly precise building. Maple is an exceptionally good wood from which to craft blocks. That said, maple is also more expensive to use than pine – the price of each set of Keva planks is on average about \$10 higher than the price a family pays for the same number of Citiblocs.

This is not to say that any of these sets is better or worse than the others. All three brands are great (Kapla blocks were named one of Dr. Toy's Best Ten Toys for 2006, after all!). Each will meet different needs, however, and families or institutions that would like to invest in a large number of quality precision-cut wooden building blocks at a low cost may be best served by choosing Citiblocs.

The good news is that families that have already invested in sets of Kapla blocks or Keva planks can combine those blocks with Citiblocs sets to create even bigger structures, and that the project ideas found in the guide books and on the Web sites of Kapla blocks and Keva planks can also be used with Citiblocs.

Where to buy Citiblocs

In Chicago, [Geppetto's Toy Box](#) has a whole section filled with various Citiblocs sets. A Master Builder also visited Geppetto's recently to build a showpiece display of Citiblocs creations in their storefront window (see the slideshow below for some pictures of these amazing structures or visit Geppetto's at 730 Lake Street in Oak Park to view it in person).

Toys R Us stores also plan to stock Citiblocs just in time for back to school purchases. And interested builders can always purchase them directly from the [Citiblocs Web site](#).

Families that would like to give Citiblocs a test run this summer before purchasing them can visit the [Children's Gallery of the Cedarhurst Museum in Mt. Vernon](#).

What can you build with Citiblocs wooden blocks?

Our adult tester adapted a picture on the side of the Citiblocs box to design his own creation.

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What can you build with Citiblocs wooden blocks?

Geppetto's Toy Box in Oak Park is currently hosting a storefront window display of Citiblocs structures put together by a visiting master builder.

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What can you build with Citiblocs wooden blocks?

A wooden giraffe towers over one end of the Citiblocs window display.

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What can you build with Citiblocs wooden blocks?

A wooden rocket stands at the opposite end of the display.

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