



The LEGO SERIOUS PLAY Etiquette

The dictionary defines etiquette as "the forms and practices prescribed by social convention or by authority". The LSP etiquette is a little different. The etiquette summarizes the experiences, science, forms and practices that have evolved over time. It is the soul of LSP and what makes it such a powerful methodology. The etiquette falls into four major parts:

1. A set of beliefs and underlying principles for engaging in a process with the LEGO SERIOUS PLAY method
2. A systematic set of group dynamic principles
3. A set of principles for the systematic use of the LEGO bricks
4. A set of facilitation and design principles for staying in FLOW

Who is responsible for adhering to the LEGO SERIOUS PLAY etiquette?

The LEGO SERIOUS PLAY method is for groups and teams. The smallest team is two people. Any LSP process has either a certified facilitator or a process leader, who enables the process in accordance with the process defined in the etiquette. This is the person responsible for adhering to the etiquette.

When your role is a **facilitator**, you are not part of the process itself for the group. You can assist with building, but only on a technical level - how to get the bricks to stick together the way the participant wants them to. You don't build your own models and tell your own stories.

When your role is **process leader** for a group that is already familiar with the LSP methodology, you are part of the group process. You then participate in the process at the same level as everyone else. You construct, give meaning and make stories like the others in the group. A process leader's role is very different from that of a facilitator. As a process leader, you are a member of the system in which the answer is anchored. As a facilitator, you help the system uncover its own answer, without assuming that you have it (being a non-member of that system).

1. A set of beliefs and underlying principles for engaging in the LEGO SERIOUS PLAY method

The answer is in the system

The complex issue has emerged in the system, and the answer can be found in the same system. The LEGO SERIOUS PLAY approach helps the members of the system move to a new level of knowledge where the answer is constructed, and the system is expanded.

Anyone can use the LEGO SERIOUS PLAY method

*The only requirement is hands (or feet). LEGO building experts have no advantage at all. Anyone always has a chance to learn the techniques and the skill set **before** they are challenged with "real stuff". We never identify anyone in front of others as an "expert" in LSP.*

The LEGO SERIOUS PLAY method always requires at least two people

The process requires a question from someone and someone to hear the answer and may be ask questions to the model. That someone can be a facilitator or process leader. When it is a process leader that person builds and shares too

Lead the group as a facilitator, not as consultant, trainer, teacher or instructor

As a facilitator you only know the question, you know what to ask and how to ask it. You need to suspend any knowledge you may have about the topic of the workshop/question. You care for the participants answer, but you do not have an opinion. To care means to protect and explore the answer. There are no "right" answers, nor good vs bad answers.

The real power of the process is in this sequence

*Workshops with the LEGO SERIOUS PLAY method are **always** about using the bricks to Construct and Share the meaning of a model, and the process always moves from individual to shared. If you skip the construction and just talk, the effectiveness of the whole approach is lost. By skipping the construction of a model and thus of new knowledge, participants typically fall back on reproducing existing socially acceptable truths. If the participants construct and don't talk—new meaning will be created individually, but since it is not shared it remains unknown to others. LEGO SERIOUS PLAY challenges always start with individual models. This ensures the sharing of original new knowledge and keeps all participants in flow.*

2. A systematic set of group dynamic principles

Everyone participates in every phase, all phases are mandatory

100/100 means that everyone contributes with their piece in the building, sharing and reflection phase. Everyone MUST build in response to the question and everyone MUST share the meaning in their construction. *There is no such thing as saying: "I can't think of anything to build" - or "I don't have a story to tell" or "You can skip me this time." If this happens, it means one individual is trying to unhook from the process. Like having one player sitting down in the middle of the basketball court, it could fragment the flow for others. This flow is established very naturally in the beginning of the process. Allowing one participant to become an observer, makes the other participants vulnerable. They are opening up, putting themselves "out there" but the person on the fence is just observing and does not have "skin in the game". Establish this clearly in the skills building, a participant can decide to be late in the round, they may share something they think is simple, but they share*

Everyone is involved all the time (100/100)

100/100 means that everyone is involved and engaged all the time. Everyone is either building, or everyone is in the sharing phase. In the sharing phase one person is sharing, but everyone else is involved by listening and bridging to the reflection phase they are also involved by asking questions. If one person refuses to share, leaves the room, checks their phone, whispers in the ear of someone else, continues building on their models, etc. then it is not a 100/100. Make clear rules about mobile phones, if someone continues to build during the sharing, ask them to stop, if someone leaves the room during the sharing, then call a short break until they return.

Facilitate a "everyone has a voice" process (100/100)

This is a particular part of the 100/100: Always make certain that everybody has a voice, in particular in AT2 and AT 3 the facilitator should help distribute the time and actively engage in creating space for EACH participant to have their voice heard. When the shared building is almost at an end, the facilitator can check in with each participant.

Frame the challenge so it is inclusive

Make sure participants understand why they are building and making stories about "this topic/issue", and that they will be making a story using the model. At the same time, the framing should be sufficiently open for the participant to construct her/his knowledge and meaning about the given issue. Provide them with instructions about how much time they have (short, moderate, or long time), and also any other criteria that they should consider before they start building.

Give people time to reflect and gather their thoughts before anyone begins to talk

Indicate when the construction phase is coming to an end. Give participants a moment before the sharing starts. Let each participant decide, when he or she wants to share.

3. A set of principles for the systematic use of the LEGO bricks

It is not about modeling

LSP is about constructing new knowledge; it is not about making a physical representation of what something looks like. It is about the meaning and story in the model.

It is not about using the bricks to convey someone else's answer or knowledge

The LEGO SERIOUS PLAY method is not about making people agree with decisions already made, it is about creating knowledge to solve problems. It is about surfacing and clarifying insights.

There is NO one right way to build

Participants are not given building instructions (blueprint) for what to build and how to build. The meaning of a particular brick or model is never defined before the construction phase. It is not about modeling someone else's story - it is about giving form to inner thoughts and ideas. It can always be built in bricks; it does not matter what it looks like. Sometimes the urgency of the idea will outpace time or ability to create the desired metaphor, then the participant should simply carry on using simpler elements. The only exceptions where participants are giving building instructions are in the 2.0 in the Skills Building, and in the Pencil Cup (Learning Point exercise)

Everyone has the obligation to build and the right to tell the story in their LEGO model

In other words, every individual has built something and must, therefore, also have the opportunity to share its meaning with others. Building a model - and then not being able to share its story - is completely meaningless to others and

destructive and demoralizing for the builder.

It's the BUILDER'S MEANING in the model

The bricks don't have any particular inherent meaning in them - or any pre-decided iconic value, not even people or barrels or wheels. Whatever the builder says about what something represents, that is what it is! Ask the builder to clarify the meaning but never criticize the builder's choice of metaphor.

"When I am asked to tell my story - you must ACCEPT it too"

Every story must not only be heard, but also accepted. It may not always be what the facilitator expected to hear or what the boss wanted to hear but be assured it will still be a valuable insight offered in the least threatening and most constructive method possible.

The Builder owns the Model

Whatever the builder builds is theirs and is "sacred". Others cannot edit or even move any part of it unless given permission by the owner of the model. The owner should freely agree with the way the meaning change. No one, including the facilitator, can ever alter someone's construction without getting permission first from the builder.

Question the MODEL and its story - not the Person

ALWAYS ask questions to get more and clearer meaning - for the builder as well as the listener. But always ask about the model and the relationship between the model and the story, not the person and his/her intentions and reasons. In short, ask about what you can SEE, and ask in a way where you don't assume what things mean. Questioning the person's motives can destroy confidence and fragment the group. By directing the questions to the model, we take the conflict out, the dialogue is moved from a personal relationship level to the object. Questions help create new knowledge as we make new connections in our brains by giving new meaning to the model.

"When you don't know what to build, START BUILDING"

Research has shown that using the hand initiates ideas that will not come from thinking alone. So, if participants are stuck, encourage them to start building ... anything. It always works. Don't have a planning meeting with yourself about what to build.

TRUST the PROCESS, Return to the Model

If passions run high leading to disagreements or misunderstandings, DO NOT try to get protagonists to discuss or talk it over face to face. Refocus questions and explanations and direct them firmly to the MODELS, and away from the people. It always works!

4. A set of facilitation and design principles for staying in FLOW

It must be "HARD FUN" to be memorable

You will be challenged to the edge of your capabilities in a workshop based on the LEGO SERIOUS PLAY method, but never beyond. It is "hard fun", which will make it exhilarating and sometimes exhausting.

Set clear goals

Be explicit about the big goal of the workshop. What is the big question that the workshop will answer for the participants? The more the goal is about the output of the workshop vs. being about the process the better. Make the goals clear with each individual challenge question. Be clear about how answering this question will help answer the big question. The notion of a journey towards the big goal at the end, helps people make sense of the individual questions.

Work with a minimum number of rules, which are clear and easy to understand

For example, introduce the simple LEGO SERIOUS PLAY "rules" in the Skills Building: everyone constructs, and everybody shares, questions are welcome, but should go to the model, you (the participant) give meaning to the brick.

Enable the participants to be active and take initiative

Don't over-structure the steps, for example when using AT 3. Don't have the participants sit the whole time at the table with their own set of bricks. Have shared bricks on side tables too.

Ensure an appropriate balance between the challenge and the skills

Following the correct Skills Building phase (1.0, 2.0, 2.1 and 3.0) is absolutely necessary, if it is first time the group does LSP. It is the progression that matters. If you skip or shorten the process, you will always find someone in room,

who is not yet confident enough to go in depth with the answers. Pose the right questions in the workshop. They need to be sufficiently un/clear and open and with "a high ceiling and low threshold", and with a clear time limit. Doing this effectively ensures that the inherent creativity remains "uncorrupted."

Deliver clear feedback on how the participants are doing

*Acknowledge the builder after having heard the story. Be strong and clear in your evaluation, but never be negative, humiliating or condescending, when you for example, compliment participants after completing a step on "work well done". **Thank them for sharing, not for what they shared. The evaluation or feedback is on the process, on what they have completed not on the content or quality of their answer.***

Make it easy to concentrate and focus

Remember, building time is quiet time, possibly supported with music. Establish clear rules about the use of mobile devices. Only start when everybody is in the room. Make certain that the layout of the room is good and there is enough space, the chairs are comfortable, and the temperature is correct.