

LEGO minifigure

For the individually packaged LEGO toys, see [LEGO Minifigures \(theme\)](#).

A **LEGO minifigure**, commonly referred to as a



A LEGO minifigure on a boat

"**minifig**", or simply just "**fig**", is a small plastic articulated figurine, many of which are yellow, available as part of the construction toy LEGO, produced by Danish toy manufacturer the LEGO Group. They were first produced in 1978, and have become hugely successful, with over 3.7 billion produced,^[1] and the figure appearing in a variety of media, including movies, books and video games. The figures are usually found within LEGO sets, although they are also sold separately as *keychains* and *magnets*. While some are named as specific characters, either licensed from film franchises or of LEGO's own creation, many are unnamed and are designed simply to fit within a certain theme (such as police officers, astronauts and pirates). Minifigures are collected by both children and adults. They are highly customizable, and parts from different figures can be mixed and matched, resulting in a large number of combinations.

Similar figures are produced by other companies such as the *Kreons* from construction toy Kre-O by Korean company Oxford (subsidiary of Hasbro).

1 History



Early LEGO minifigures without moving arms and legs

A precursor to the minifigure was released in 1975. These were at the same scale as the current minifigures, but had a different design. They had solid torsos without separate movable arms, solid lower body pieces that were not moveable, and heads without printed features. They had a small variety of headpieces in various colors, including caps, pigtail hair and cowboy hats.

The first modern minifigures were released in 1978, with seven different figures in *Castle*, *Space*, and *Town*.^[2] For the next 11 years, minifigure heads were produced with a simple facial expression, rendered as two solid black dots for eyes and a smile, also painted in solid black. In 1989, minifigures in the *Pirates* theme were produced with different facial expressions.^[2] The *Pirates* minifigures also included hooks for hands, as well as peg legs; this was the first departure from the traditional body parts.

Another departure from traditional parts was the use of spring-loaded legs. These legs are joined together at the top. These legs were only featured in basketball sets, 2002-2003. Other leg variations include short legs for children or dwarfs, or long legs (used in the *Toy Story* theme).

In 2003, the first minifigures with naturalistic skin tones (as opposed to the yellow used until this point) were released, as part of the LEGO Basketball theme; these minifigures were also created in the likeness of living people.^[2] The following year, the use of natural skin tones was expanded to all licensed products; in which figures were created to represent film actors and other living people. Popular examples include *Star Wars*, *Indiana Jones*, *Harry Potter* and *Batman* minifigures.^[2]

By 2006, LEGO had reportedly produced 4 billion minifigures.^[2] There are at least 3655 different Minifigures produced between 1975 and 2010 and the number

of new Minifigures per year is increasing rapidly. In 2010 more than 300 new Minifigures were introduced.^[3]

2 Design and construction

Minifigures generally feature six parts (widely referred to as *tools* in the toy industry): **head**, **torso**, **hips**, **arms**, **hands**, and **legs**; these six parts allow seven points of articulation: **swivel head**, **swivel arms**, **swivel wrists**, and **swivel legs**. Minifigures are usually packaged as three separate parts in Lego sets: head, torso and legs. The plastic is **acrylonitrile butadiene styrene (ABS)**, a tough material that makes LEGO figures durable.

The plastic is melted into specially designed molds that produce the different parts of the minifigure. Some of the molds are also accessories such as weapons (swords, guns, lightsabers, etc.) or everyday accessories (cups, food, tools, etc.). Heads and torsos always need further decoration, and sometimes the arms and legs do, too. This difficult process is why the figures are more expensive than any other Lego products. After being printed, the head is placed on the torso, the legs attached, and the arms are snapped on. The figures are finally bagged and readied for sale.

3 Use

Minifigure heads are cylindrical, and attach to a long, narrow cylinder molded onto the top of the torso, which allows the head to rotate. This feature also allows items to be attached to the figures over the torso, such as air tanks, **cap**s or **breastplates**. The heads have a stud on top which is the same size as studs on standard Lego bricks which could allow one to be placed on it. The head is the only component of the minifigure which can be used for other applications - blank minifigure heads have often been used in Lego sets to replicate other objects such as lampshades and electrical appliances.

Head accessories vary widely, and include **hair**, **helmets** and **hats**. The legs rotate independently to 90 degrees forward, and nearly 45 degrees backward. Minifigures also connect to standard Lego bricks in both a sitting or standing position. The hands of a minifigure resemble the letter **C**, which allows them to hold many Lego accessories. There are hundreds of different accessories, including swords, axes, wands, cups, guns, and lightsabers. Additionally, the tops of the hands are approximately the same size as the studs on standard Lego bricks, which allows Lego pieces to be placed on top of them. These variations allow minifigures to be customized, keeping with the modular design of Lego elements.

4 Design variations

While nearly all minifigure heads, torsos, arms, hands and legs are the same size and shape, some sets have included figures that deviate from the standard. The most extreme design variation was a minifigure produced in an edition of five of the **Star Wars** character **C-3PO**, cast in solid 14-carat gold.^[4]

4.1 Torso

Minifigures built from special, uniquely molded pieces were first introduced in **Life on Mars**. **Martians** are composed of five tools: two pairs of double arms, a mechanical torso, a conjoined leg piece, and a head. This configuration is also used for many **Star Wars Droids**; **Battle Droids** follow the same pattern, while **Super Battle Droids** feature a head fixed to a torso, **General Grievous** has space for four arms, and **IG-88** has a head constructed of other Lego pieces. Other droids, such as **Droidekas**, **Spider Droids** and **Pit Droids**, are constructed entirely from standard Lego pieces, yet are still generally considered minifigures. **R2-D2** and other **astromech droids** are constructed from unique parts, with a separate top, body and legs. The robots of **Exo-Force**, **Mars Mission** commander aliens and **Bionicle** miniatures have a design similar to the **Star Wars Battle Droids**, but with separate legs, movable hands, and a head affixed to a small torso. **Hagrid**, the half-giant character from the **Harry Potter** series, uses a larger minifigure body, with only the head being separable.

Skeletons, usually found in **Castle**, **Pirate**, and **Indiana Jones** sets, use the standard minifigure head, but unique torsos, arms, and legs designed to resemble a skeletal structure; although different, these figure parts are still detachable.

Additionally, **Pirate** minifigures sometimes include **peg legs** and **hooks** for hands, such as the **Aquasharks** and **Aquaraiders** from **Aquazone** and characters in the **Adventurers** and **Orient Expedition** sets, most notably the villainous **Baron** character.

4.2 Head

Minifigures have also featured unique head sculpts that differ from the traditional cylindrical shape; the first was **Jar Jar Binks**, included in a **Star Wars** set in 1999, followed by **Yoda**, **C-3PO**, **Harry Potter goblin** figures, **Kit Fisto**, and **Plo Koon**. **Kit Fisto** was the first minifigure to not use an acrylonitrile butadiene styrene head.^[4] The minifigure used rubber instead.^[4] Traditional accessories, such as hats and helmets, cannot be placed on these non-standard heads. Some minifigures, such as **Wookiees**, **Gamorrean Guards** and **Ewoks** use a sandwich board piece which fits over the body. **SpongeBob** has a sculpted Lego brick head that fits like a standard head, similar to

the ghost figures, except that these figures use short or standard legs instead of a brick.

4.3 Head- and neck-wear

A variety of clothing and accessories has been produced for minifigures, including caps, hats, and helmets. In Lego Star Wars sets, Clone Troopers and Stormtroopers have uniquely sculpted helmets, adapting the original character designs to the minifigure format. Exo-Force minifigures feature anime-style hair, as does the *Nightwing* minifigure from the *Batman Arkham Asylum* set.

Ghost figures have a full-body cape which attaches to the head of the minifigure, and solid brick-like legs

4.4 Legs

Some minifigures created to resemble female characters, particularly in Castle and Pirate sets, use large sloped bricks instead of legs, to resemble dresses or skirts. However, these sloped bricks are taller than standard minifigure legs, making some characters seem awkward when placed next to taller females.

Shorter legs, without joints at the hip, are sometimes used to create minifigures which are shorter in stature than standard figures. Such pieces were first created for Star Wars sets but have since been used elsewhere, although primarily in licensed sets. Other legs include Genie smoke legs, mermaid tail legs, and Squid Warrior legs. For the television series *Ninjago: Masters of Spinjitzu*, a species called serpentine, influenced by snakes and other similar reptiles, have legs. Only the generals have tails, notably Skales, Pythor P Chumsworth, Acidicus, Fangtom and Skalidor. For the 2015 series, a type of Serpentine called the Anacondrai all have tails.

5 Customisation

Minifig customisation is the practice of modifying Lego minifigures. This can be as simple as mixing and matching parts, or as complex as remolding plastic. Some custom minifigures are made by affixing stickers or decals to the figures. There are also businesses which sell custom decals and molded minifigure accessories, many of which are inspired from popular media such as films and video games. While a relatively recent phenomenon, minifigure customisation has rapidly become popular within the wider building community, although some maintain a "purist" approach, using only elements produced by Lego.

Lego executives have for some years now been using personalised minifigures in place of business cards, with email and phone details on the front and back of the torso,

and hair and facial features designed to resemble each executive. You can see a list of 39 of these here at [39 Lego Employee Business Cards](#). It is believed that over 100 of these exist.

6 Collecting

Many people collect Lego Minifigures without collecting the sets. The diversity of the themes that Lego has licensed has created quite a stir for AFOL and children alike. Additionally, the Lego group has produced more than 7000 Minifigures in the past 30 years and many people buy and sell these on eBay and other sites such as Bricklink. You can see most of the minifigures ever produced here at [Bricklink Minifigure Catalog](#). You can also see some of the most expensive and rare minifigures here at [Rare and Expensive Lego Minifigures](#).

7 Minifigures theme

Main article: [Lego Minifigures](#)

The minifigures theme was introduced in 2010. Each series consists of 60 polybags per box, with unique and exclusive minifigures inside. A new series is released every three to four months, with sixteen new unique and exclusive minifigures in each series (excluding the 8909 Team GB Minifigures, which includes 9 minifigures and also 71001 Minifigures Series 10 which includes 17). The minifigures can be based on movies, sports, fiction, history, or just average day life minifigures. Each minifigure contains new elements in the form of accessories or uniquely printed body parts.

8 Variations

8.1 Light up light-sabers

Other variations of the standard minifigure produced for Star Wars sets included the light-up light-saber (L.U.L.S.) minifigures. These figures were released as a part of the more expensive Star Wars Episode III sets in 2005. These figures look like standard minifigures, but to facilitate internal electronics, their parts cannot be removed; the only exception to this is the headgear, the left hand and arm, and each of the legs from the hips. When the head is pressed down, an LED illuminates the light-saber blade. These figures rely on battery power for their special feature. The batteries last three hours and are not intended to be replaced, although replacement is possible. Many fans, especially children, were amenable to this innovation. Others however, particularly adult collectors, found these figures contentious, considering them to be an un-

welcome gimmick. The fact that in two cases unique characters were produced solely as L.U.L. minifigs, with no standard version available to collectors, was also an unpopular decision. Following the initial release of these figures Lego announced no more were to be produced, due to their unpopularity and more expensive production. One set, the 7261 Clone Turbo Tank, which featured an L.U.L. version of Jedi Knight Mace Windu, was even reissued with a standard version of the minifig and an extra Clone Trooper figure to make up the cost of the set. There was also at least one high end City themed set (a Police Station/HQ) that included a police officer with a light up 'torch'. Another L.U.L.S. minifig in police uniform appeared without the 'saber' part of the light saber and a yellow LED in the 'handle' of the light saber, reusing the L.U.L.S. design outside the Star-wars setting as an effective 'torch'. He appeared in a high end City set based on a standard and well selling City Police HQ design. A complaint about the set was that the L.U.L.S. minifig was contained in a 'try me' compartment of the box allowing customers (and excited children) to wear down his battery while he was still on the shelf. The set was discontinued after a year with a separate identical design but with 3 extra normal minifigs replacing the L.U.L.S. minifig.

8.2 Magnets

Yet another variation on the minifigure is the **magnet** figure, from such themes as Star Wars, Batman, Indiana Jones and City. The magnet figures are not included in regular sets but are instead sold in packs of three or more. Some of these include accessories and display base bricks. These figures include magnets in their legs, which allow them to stick to metal surfaces. Magnet figures are nearly indistinguishable from stand figures in appearance. Unlike the LUL figures, only the torso and the hips of magnet minifigures are inseparable.

8.3 Microfigures

With the new **Lego board games**, the Lego microfigures were released. For that name, they are about half the size of the regular Lego minifigure. The microfigures have a fixed head, small, non-movable legs which somewhat resemble normal minifigure legs, and a hint of shoulders for arms.

8.4 Baby minifigure

In 2016, a new minifigure mold was released which is a new baby. The baby isn't like a microfigure, instead it is a scaled down minifigure of the adult one currently produced with arms and legs but not moveable. It currently appears in the Lego City Fun at the Park set and with the 16th series of Lego Minifigures.

8.5 Other Lego figures



Aluminum toy Lego figurines for the spacecraft Juno, sent to the planet Jupiter in the 2010s.

In some Lego products, figures other than standard minifigures are used. A catalog that shows all these LEGO figures is available.^[5] Some Lego sets from 1974 on included much larger figures where only the heads and hair were special pieces, which is why the usual figures are "mini". Technic has used larger scale **action figures** since 1986. These figures feature more realistic sculpts, although still distinctively angular, and feature more articulation, including bendable elbows and knees. These figures are further distinguished from minifigures in that they cannot be easily disassembled; even the hair pieces are non-removable. Duplo includes figures that have less articulation than standard minifigures and cannot be disassembled for **safety reasons**. Likewise, the **Fabuland** collection, produced in the 1980s, consisted of larger **anthropomorphized animal** characters, which also could not be easily disassembled. Belville and Scala, Lego products marketed to girls, also include larger scale figures. These figures are similar to Technic figures in articulation, but feature less angular body sculpts. Scala figures more closely resemble dolls, in that clothes are separate from the figures and hair is made of strands rather than molded plastic. In 2001 Lego further expanded the minifigure system, with the introduction of **Bionicle** figures. These figures are a part of a fictional story developed by Lego, and resemble **biomechanical** creatures. Initially, these figures were produced without articulation, only able to hold tools and weapons. Bionicle later got replaced with Hero Factory in 2010. In 2005, Lego released Bionicle playsets, with minifigure variations of characters that had previously been produced in the larger Bionicle scale, notably the Toa and Visorak characters. While these minifigures did not feature movable parts, Lego released Piraka and Inika playsets in 2006, which included minifigures with movable parts. The **Friends** theme, released in 2012, included mini-doll figures, a more doll-like construction with more realistic anatomy. Even though the mini-dolls in the Lego Friends theme have a more realistic anatomy, the mini-

dolls' legs can only move ninety degrees into a sitting position. The mini-dolls' legs are also molded together and can not move separately like the traditional Lego minifigure legs can. The mini-doll in the Lego Friends theme is slightly taller than the traditional minifigure.

9 Depiction in other media

- Minifigures have appeared in a variety of short films. Examples include the Spellbreaker animated adventure featured in Legoland parks, produced by the Billund-based animation studio Lani Pixels, and the Lego-sanctioned spoof of *Star Wars* titled *Revenge of the Brick*, produced by Treehouse Animation. These short film features computer-animated minifigures with added articulation and mobility, as well as textural modifications to create a realistic effect. Promotional videos on the Lego Batman official site are presented in a similar format, and are also produced by Treehouse Animation. The 2010 computer generated animation *Lego: The Adventures of Clutch Powers* became the first feature-length original Lego film; it has minifigures as the protagonists.
- In 2011, Lego minifigures were featured in *Toy Story 3* and the *Toy Story* short "*Hawaiian Vacation*".^[6]
- Lego has furthered the development of minifigures in entertainment media. In Lego video games, such as *Lego Star Wars* and *Lego Racers*, playable characters are animated minifigures, which feature more articulation and mobility than real minifigures, but retain the same basic appearance. Most Lego computer and video games have similarly animated minifigures, though depicted with varying degrees of realism.
- In January 2012, a Lego minifigure carrying a Canadian flag was featured in "Lego Man in Space"^[7] and garnered worldwide attention.^[8]
- Lego minifigures were prominently featured in *The Lego Movie*. Some of the minifigures in the minifigures theme appear as Master Builders. The minifigures are scheduled to feature in a sequel being released in 2019.^[9]

10 See also

- BrickArms

11 References

- [1] "LEGO minifigure turns 25" (Press release). The Lego Group. October 2003. Retrieved 2006-06-18.

- [2] Lego Group, Company Profile 2006 (PDF) Retrieved on June 15, 2006
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- [6] "Hawaiian Vacation" teaser at YouTube
- [7] Allen, Kate (January 25, 2012). "Toronto teens send Lego man on a balloon odyssey 24 kilometres high". *The Star*.
- [8] "Child's toy launched 'into space' by students". *BBC News*. January 27, 2012.
- [9] "The LEGO Movie Sequel is Officially Set for May 26, 2017! and emmet will fall into a land that is a clone of cloud cuckoo land but in this cloned version emmet get help from a mascot of the LEGO group and the one who was the main character of the LEGO group from 1978 to 1986 which is bob himself who helps emmet escape and with the help of mr gold one of the gold minifigures that is rare and". ComingSoon.net. Retrieved February 21, 2014.

12 External links

- Official Lego Website
- LEGO Star Wars minifigs
- Listing of almost all Lego Minifigures ever produced

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