

Revisiting Technic

*A look at today's Technic through the eyes of an AFOL
"disconnected" from Technic for years*

Text by car_mp

Images by LEGO® Systems A/S

Although as an engineer perhaps these things should attract me more, I only had two Technic sets before my "dark ages", the bulldozer (856-1) and truck (8848), both from the pre-liftarm era. In addition to these sets, I also built some of my older brother's sets in those days, such as the Auto-chassis (8860). I absolutely admired it and its assembly entertained me over the weekends. I found them fun to build and liked to play with their mechanisms, but I found it difficult to create MOCs, probably due to my short age then. I was able to make vehicles with steering, differential and that sort of things, adapting them from official models I had built previously, but I could not innovate. I must confess that I have a very special love-hate relationship with this line. Sometimes, models I build normally would require a good Technic skeleton. Or maybe I would like to add some motors and give them some kind of life of their own. At those moments I would like to master this world. But normally they don't attract my attention. Forgive me if I offend anyone but in my eyes, Technic is only a cousin of classic LEGO®. And although I have had occasional more or less fortunate dealings with Technic parts in recent years, now, taking advantage of a Technic model that has fallen into my hands (motorbike 8051) I've decided to try this line again.



My first impression is the amount of new parts. Of some of them I could not imagine their use without seeing the instructions. And then there are the liftarms. There isn't a single Technic Brick in the entire model ... I must confess that I missed them during the construction. Yes, I know the new world of possibilities for liftarms, with its angles, their different thicknesses But I feel old to learn all these tricks.

Besides the typical parts that seem to emerge from the solid unit of existing ones (they look like pin groups fused to form a single part), others that just look like old parts that have been stretched for some obscure reason, or rubber parts, there are some that have been the center of the development in recent years. First came the PF (Power Functions) revolution, a world of motors and infrared lights that have allowed Technic models to take the road without an umbilical cord that joined them to their masters. And the newest, LA (Linear Actuators), they are great for converting a rotary motion into longitudinal. I must say that I soon

surrendered to PF, but the “LA” have left me quite cold. Probably everything is the result of my ignorance, but I think everything LAs do, could be done by other methods before, maybe not so simple but for me more technically beautiful. You may ask, where did this guy leave Pneumatics?. This line began when I dropped out of LEGO® life and although I know it (my brother is a devotee of it) I must say it is a line that scares me a little. Don’t scream, I will explain myself. I think that Pneumatics functionality is incredible and it is an important part of technology in real life, which LEGO has recreated quite rightly in my view. However, when motorized, when I see the different compressors that people have designed, circuits, etc, I always expect something will go flying somewhere. Yes, I know that I am exaggerating, but you knew what this article was about, when you started reading it anyway, right?.

But let’s continue. When building the model the differences are clear. The build script takes you from the inside of the model out, while leaving many axles and other types of anchors loose, waiting for a later step that will make them acquire sense. It’s hard also to get used to the parts that do not have a clear position when assembling. Let me explain myself. When you insert, into the same axle, several parts (liftarms, gears ,...) you find that the positions are not defined unequivocally as the studs on the bricks. Many times you have to adjust the position to match the gears properly. You must learn to hold the pieces in places other than the usual when applying force to insert parts such as gears onto the axle. Finally I can tell you that it’s easy to forget a part so you have to go back to it later. Separate parts of each step and make sure you put them all in.

Technic models use panels for aesthetic purposes. Honestly I think it is the best solution for these models. They are lightweight and give more than acceptable results if you’re a little skilled. We shouldn’t abuse of them, the beauty of these models are their capabilities, and seeing how a cascade of gears moves can be hypnotic.

You can read everything about Liftarms-Technic Bricks in issue number 001 (Spanish only), and about gears in issue number 007. Since my times, many new parts have appeared... and in different colors. It might seem a purely aesthetic issue, but no. Often colors speak of their characteristics, as a prime example pins with or without friction. It’s an uncomfortable lesson to learn - the first time that the wheels of your vehicle don’t spin, you’ll understand.

The best thing you can say about Technic is that it is real as life itself, and you can reproduce almost any mechanism of modern engineering. I will continue with my normal bricks ... for now.

#

