

# What's your LUG like?

*Text by Satanspoet and Jetro*

*Pictures by their respective LUGS*

The LEGO® Group has developed The LEGO Ambassador Program that is a LEGO community based volunteer program made up of representatives from LEGO User Groups globally.

The mission of the LEGO Ambassadors is to work together with the LEGO Group in all areas which concern the worldwide LEGO community and be the voice of their respective LEGO User Group towards the LEGO Group.

As many of you know already, LUG stands for LEGO User Group and there exists practically in all countries. But the questions that will arise is: how LUGs originate? what structure they have? Are all the same?

To give concrete answers, we contacted representatives of different LUG's to which we have formulated the following questions:

**HBM:** What is the name of your LUG and what does it stand for?

**rtlToronto:** Chris Magno: rtlToronto was named after the original news group were the three founding members first met online. R.T.L.News. or Rec.Toys.Lego

**Builder's Lounge:** Chris Malloy: Builder's Lounge

**CactusLUG:** Clark Edwards: CactusLUG

**FreeLUG:** Daniela: The name of our LUG is : FreeLUG French Enthusiast LEGO User Group.

**ItLUG:** Luca Rosconi: ItLUG simply means "Italian LEGO Users Group".

**HispaBrick Magazine®:** Carlos Méndez: HispaBrick Magazine. Derived from the name of the magazine we publish and around which our LUG is formed.

**HBM:** When was your LUG started and why?

**rtlToronto:** rtlToronto is one of the first LUG's formed back in early 1996. It was started from the need for Chris Magno and Calum Tsang to meet fellow AFOLs in the Toronto Area with a focus on Robotics, Technics, and the new MINDSTORMS.

**Builder's Lounge:** Builder's Lounge was started in 2005, as a retreat for a small group of builders to simply "hang out" and relax, without the need for the usual oversight that must occur in an open forum. Basically, by privatizing the conversations, and keeping a small membership, we are able to foster a much more relaxed and laid-back atmosphere than is typically the case with online forums.

**CactusLUG :** We started June 2008, just before a new LEGO store was to open here in Phoenix. We started the group with five like-minded people who have a love for LEGO.

**FreeLUG:** The official birth-date is February 2003, 18th but the announcement in the "journal officiel" is April 2003, 26th.

**ItLUG:** ItLUG started in 1999 as an independent community of adult LEGO fans willing to share their experience on LUGnet, in a dedicated section in italian language.

**HispaBrick Magazine:** When it started is complicated to say. The magazine was born in 2008, but we were seriously established as a community in 2011. Our LUG originated from the need to create some structure around the project of the magazine. We were a group of friends with a similar way of living our passion for LEGO bricks, and when we decided to go a step further and organize and participate in events like a LUG then we established ourselves officially.

**HBM:** How big is your LUG?

**rtlToronto:** We have 15 - 20 active members, and that number shrinks or grows as people raise families, or discover the group.

**Builder's Lounge:** A little over a hundred, though even with as small a group as we have, many members are not regularly active.

**CactusLUG:** We have since grown into a group 15 regulars, and a few more that just visit online.

**FreeLUG:** In 2011, there were approximately 260 members (adults and children).

**ItLUG:** At the end of 2011, we have more than one hundred official club members, and more than two hundreds accounts on our forum that has a dedicated section for the members only but also a wide public section open to other fans that are interested in our activities.

**HispaBrick Magazine:** Currently we have 21 registered members, from three different countries. Each issue of the magazine reaches more than 5000 fans.

**HBM:** Describe your LUG format:





**rtToronto:** rtToronto is run as a “group of people who just want to meet once a month and talk about a mutual interest”. We do not collect dues, fee’s, we have no formal memberships, my rule has always been, if you show up, you’re in, and if you do not show up that’s ok too. If one member wish’s to have an event, then I encourage them to organize, and run that event. We are not registered anywhere. We meet once a month at a public restaurant for a nice meal and I never know how many people will show up from month to month.

**Builder’s Lounge:** Currently, our group is based on flickr, and our discussions all take place there. We have a private membership.

**CactusLUG:** We are an open group that does not just restrict activities online. We encourage anyone to come and join us for a meeting. We use our site and online group as a means of communication. We are strictly an Adult-Only group. We have allowed a couple of younger members, but that is only on a case-by-case basis. We try not to make a habit of that. We meet once a month in a semi-central location of town. We do have registered members, but refer to them as paying and non-paying in the case of membership dues. We have a President, Secretary and Treasurer. Our project managers try to maintain Membership, LUG Showcase and Displays/Events/Shows.

**FreeLUG:** Our Lug is a registered association - in France “association Loi 1901 à but non lucratif” (non profit organization). We have two official annual meetings (General assembly of the association in the first quarter of each year and our summer convention “REF” Rencontre Estivale FreeLUG)

We support different ways for communication between our members:

- Mailing lists:
  - Freelug-general (you can subscribe to this list even if you’re not member but the list is mainly in French) (<http://lists.freelug.org/cgi-bin/mailman/listinfo/freelug-general>)
  - Freelug-adherents (you need to be member of Freelug)
  - Dedicated region lists, (to organize the different events on which we are present), open to members of others (french)-lug
  - Specific lists (board, website management, external contact,...)
- WebSite: [www.freelug.org](http://www.freelug.org) : we continuously publish article about LEGO® (review of sets, technical technic, summary of exhibition...)
- Wiki : [wiki.freelug.org](http://wiki.freelug.org) : it is a community tool to manage/



prepare exhibition and share others information that don’t need to be on the public website ([www.freelug.org](http://www.freelug.org))

- Forum: we have a forum directly link to the mailing list [freelug-general](mailto:freelug-general), you can access on it from homepage of [www.freelug.org](http://www.freelug.org)

- IRC channel: server: [irc.freelug.org](irc://irc.freelug.org)
  - channel #Freelug: open channel for everybody, member or not, mainly in French, but we have people from others country that’s come visit us.
  - a private channel for board monthly meeting.

**ItLUG:** At the present, ItLUG is an official and registered Association of social promotion, according to National regulation.

We have a website ([itlug.org](http://itlug.org)) and a forum, that is the official way of communication for the club. Important news is sent via email to the club members only, to ensure they can be informed even in case they are not always active on the forum. As per official club regulation and statute, members under 18 are admitted only with a written request form signed by their parents, that have the right to vote during the plenary Assembly.

ItLUG members pay an annual fee, and have some gadget, benefit and discount, other than the possibility to participate to the LUGBULK program.

There is a board called “Consiglio Direttivo” composed by 7 members: the board members are elected every 3 years. Official activities are focused on real event and exhibitions: there are national events, and local ones, according to an approved planning along the year calendar.

**HispaBrick Magazine®:** In principle we are only a group of users, without any legal concept to back it up (association or similar). All our users are adults. There is no fee. We communicate through our web forum, and we meet whenever an opportunity arises, but mainly for the events.

**HBM:** Why did your LUG choose this format and what are the advantages of it?

**rtToronto:** It was not chosen per se. the “format” evolved. This system has not been a good fit for a few people over the years. Those people tend not to return. Those that do come to dinner every month are always greeted with a cheerful hello.

**Builder’s Lounge:** When the forum was started , it was as a retreat from the hustle and bustle of busier forums. By having a small, personal membership, we don’t have to worry about moderation, spamming, or dissension between members.

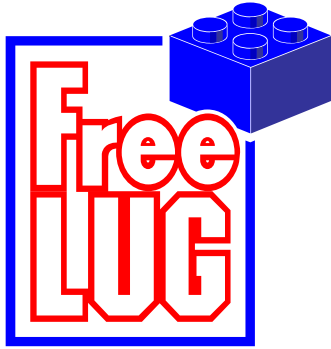
**CactusLUG:** This format just kinda grew into being. We didn’t plan it, or cultivate the theme. We do try to set aside the beginnings of the meetings to take care of club business, i.e. dues, projects and the like.

**FreeLUG:** Mailing lists is our choice, because it is easiest to get message directly on PDA, or when we travel and have only slow internet connections.

**ItLUG:** As said, ItLUG started many years ago as an open and independent community.

Along the years the community grew up a lot, and so the events changed from some private meetings in house to a much more complex exhibition open to the public.

Due to the increasing success of these events, we were forced to acquire a formal and legal entity to deal with all the collaborators and local authorities.



In addition to that, also the high number of fans involved and present in the forum brought our attention to the fact that the group need to have some rules, and the decision makers have to be legitimated in some way: despite the full respect to the old founders we asked and voted to proceed with the new organization, and the vast majority agreed. Some high reputed members spent a whole year to prepare the Statute, the Regulation, and all the legal steps to become an official Association!

**HispaBrick Magazine®:** We use this format because we thought it was best suited for work around the magazine, and since our membership is not very high for now we do not need more. The forum allows us to keep track of the different themes and discussions about the events and the magazine.

**HBM:** What activities do you do as a LUG?

**rtlToronto:** We try to have a robot contest every year. The group also participates in various train shows, and other display's

**Builder's Lounge:** The Iron Builder competition, and Creations for Charity.

**CactusLUG:** We mainly hold meeting once a month. Our December meeting is reserved for a game of Dirty Brickster (gift exchange). We sometimes get together before our meeting and have lunch at a local eatery. We plan for shows and displays. We talk discuss and arrange the LUG Showcase at our two LEGO® stores.

**FreeLUG:**

- Shows:

Our members participate to about 30 exhibitions each year, mostly organized by other people and they invite us to join them. These shows can be categorized as follow:

1. 100% LEGO Shows (all themes, like LEGOWorld)
2. Model Shows (mainly trains model)
3. Theme mettings (Star Wars™, Comic'Con...)

Last year (2011) we started to organize our own events, called "Briqu'Expo" (100% LEGO exhibitions), and will organize 2 of theses exhibitions this year.

Sometimes we do animations for children at these events (see here some photos) <http://photos.freelug.org/main.php/v/FreeLUG/Animations/>

Sometimes we work directly with LEGO Fr on special projects : kidexpo, gallerie lafayette, pieces jaunes.

- Internal competition:

We try to offer regularly our members internal competitions with some rewards (white Boba Fett, chromed Dark Vador, sets). They are mainly based on building techniques or

constraints like the use of only one color, a maximum number of parts, ...

- bulk orders:

We organize one bulk order of each a year:

1. LUGBulk
2. Minifig Series
3. New sets

**ItLUG:** Together with ItLUG we've created another official club called "Sleghiamo la Fantasia" (unleash the fantasy) to keep separate two aspects: ItLUG is mainly oriented to exhibitions and to the AFOLs, while SlaF is more focused on the entertainment, education, laboratory, charity, etc. so is also in deal with schools, external meetings, and so on. The two associations are independent, but many ItLUG members are also involved in SlaF, and SlaF is always present during all the major ItLUG events with a dedicated and appreciated area: this way who is merely interested in pure LEGO will join ItLUG, while to play and let the others play with LEGO (also with LEGO Games and Duplo) there is SlaF with his sets for loan, play tables, contests, etc.

**HispaBrick Magazine:** Our main objective is the publication of the magazine. We publish it three times a year and this absorbs a lot of our time.

We participate in as many events as we can, in addition to organizing our own event next December.

We also participate in LUGBULK and we organize contests among our members whenever we can.

**Thanks to:**

Chris Magno, rtlToronto founder (<http://www.thepyroguys.com/rtl/>)

Chris Malloy, Builder's Lounge (<http://www.flickr.com/groups/builders-lounge/>)

Clark Edwards, Cactus Brick ([www.cactusbrick.org](http://www.cactusbrick.org))

Daniela Drost, FreeLUG ([www.freelug.org](http://www.freelug.org))

Luca Rosconi, ItLUG (<http://www.itlug.org/>)

Carlos Méndez, HispaBrick Magazine member ([www.hispabrickmagazine.com](http://www.hispabrickmagazine.com))

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