

Celebrating 40 Years of LEGO® Technic

By Andrej

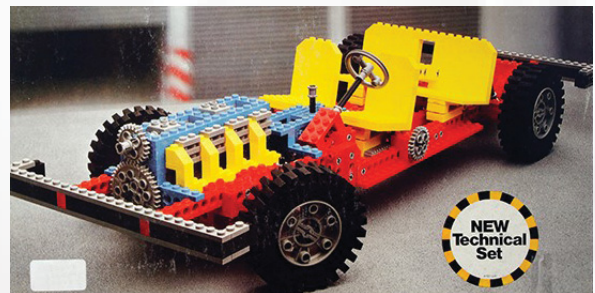
Images by LEGO® System A/S



This year marks the 40th anniversary of LEGO® Technic. In fact, it was 40 years ago, back in 1977, that LEGO tried something new. Initially they were simply called 'Technical Sets' and only marketed in Europe. The name 'Technic' was introduced a little later, in 1984. The first Technic models used a new kind of brick that included holes for axles to pass through. This also allowed pins to stick in to connect bricks together side by side, rather than the traditional stacking method. The set 853 'Auto Chassis' from that year already included piston parts with which you could build a working engine. The other three sets released in that year were a Forklift (850), a Farm Tractor (851) and a Sky Copter (852). That same year LEGO also introduced a 4.5V motor to be used with these early Technic sets. In the US these sets were available one or two years later with different set numbers. In the US, Technic was originally called 'Expert Builder'.



These first LEGO Technic models from the year 1977 didn't have as many parts as you can see in today's models. The 42055 Bucket Wheel Excavator set from 2016 is an extreme example with 3927 pieces, but many of the flagship sets from the last few years have had well over 2000 pieces each. The largest Technic set of 1977, the 853 Auto Chassis, had only 610 pieces. That is a pretty big difference. Even so, this set had many functions. For example, working steering (using the steering wheel in the driver's position) and a working engine with 2x2 square pistons. The engine also had some aesthetic features, such as cooling fins, and the model had a 2-speed working transmission.



LEGO Technic has evolved a lot over the last 40 years. They started out with bricks and plates, but you can hardly find any of those in modern sets which are now all studless beams and connectors. The first LEGO Technic sets didn't have many parts, because the models were simpler and didn't have as many functions or mechanisms as today's sets have.

You may wonder what LEGO Technic is doing to celebrate its 40th anniversary. For starters, LEGO has released ten new sets from the Technic team for the first half of 2017; a pretty big number, showing the theme is doing well. Moreover, each one of these sets includes a special commemorative brick with the 40th anniversary logo.

Let's talk about some of these new 2017 sets in more detail. My personal favorite pick is the 42063 BMW R 1200 GS Adventure motorcycle set. I simply love the design of this set and I like BMW motorcycles as well. Also, this set has really nice all-terrain tires that make it look like a real motorcycle. It also features working suspension and three boxes for storage. It is an iconic BMW all-terrain motorcycle. The model was released in collaboration with BMW, and the LEGO® Technic designer Lars Thygesen traveled to BMW Motorrad in Munich to find some inspiration for the set. Another Technic designer, Sam Tacchi designed the B model, which is the BMW future hover ride concept. It looks really interesting – a futuristic BMW hoverboard vehicle. Actually, it is a fictitious model, a flying motorcycle, and features a propeller that can be adjusted to push the bike up, as well as an engine in the front. These are some aviation principles included in the model that could work in real life.

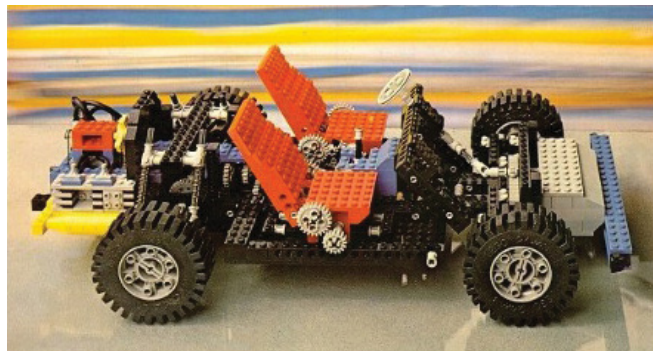


Another interesting 2017 Technic set I'd like to mention is the 42066 Air Race Jet. It is actually my second favorite LEGO Technic set of 2017. It contains 1,151 pieces, so it is a quite large set with many details like, for example, an opening cockpit and flight control surfaces. It actually has motorised landing gear that moves nicely and slowly. This effect looks really good in action. The trap opening and motor orientation are motorised as well. The model also features adjustable flaps in addition to the retractable undercarriage. The stickers on this model work really well and make the set look that much nicer. The alternative model for this set is a Private Jet.



LEGO has also presented a bonus LEGO Technic set that you can build from three specific 2017 sets. It's the new version of the iconic 8860 Supercar set. The 8860 Auto Chassis set was really special back in 1980. It was the next iteration of the 853 set from 1977 and included new functions not previously available in Technic, making it the second set in the Technic Supercar series. It represented the state-of-the-art in LEGO at that time. While it didn't look that good, as it didn't have a body, it still had great functions. The new version of 8860 is smaller than the original 8860 (the wheels in the Telehandler are a lot

smaller and the rest of the model is to scale), but it represents the old 8860 model pretty well. The colors are the same as the original set, and the functions are the same. The model has a working 4-cylinder engine, working steering, working differential and adjustable seats, just like the original 8860 set. This new supercar set can be built by combining the parts of the 42057 Ultralight Helicopter, the 42061 Telehandler and the 42063 BMW motorcycle. The instructions for this model is available for free download from LEGO.com.



The 42057 Ultralight Helicopter set contains 199 pieces and has a 2-cylinder engine, which is connected to the propeller and the rotor. Other features include orientable tail and two propellers, unlike on a typical helicopter. This helicopter set also includes a working gyroplane, which makes it a special set.

The third set that you need to build the special renewed 8860 supercar is the 42061 Telehandler. This small set contains 260 pieces. The features include 4-wheel steering, shovel orientation and arm lifting and extension. What is interesting is that the steering has a minimal turning radius. The alternative model for this set is a small truck.

There are also three new Technic sets that are planned to be released in August 2017. Some pictures of these sets have already been released. The August sets will include the 42068 Airport Rescue Vehicle, featuring 4-wheel steering and containing around 1,100 pieces. The second planned set for August is 42069 Extreme Adventure, which will have four tracks instead of wheels. The third set is the 42070 6x6 All Terrain Tow Truck, which will be remote-controlled. Also, we should see another set (it will probably be named as 42067) to be released in August 2017, but there aren't any details of this set yet. It should be the special 40th anniversary Technic set and I would be really glad for it to be another supercar. Maybe a Bugatti Chiron Technic set, which would look really good. I for one am curious to see what LEGO Technic has in store for us.



If you want to see all of the 2017 LEGO Technic sets, you can find them on my blog at brickseasy.com

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