Second-hand brick haul: cleaning checklist

Sort, check, wash, dry. Tick each box as you go. Page 2 shows which parts can go in water.

1 SORT

- [ ] Tip the haul onto an old sheet or tray, not the carpet
- [ ] Take every model apart, down to single parts
- [ ] Take minifigures apart: hair, head, torso, legs
- [ ] Pull out anything that is not a building part: rubbish, coins, other toys
- [ ] Make three piles: SOAK, WIPE and KEEP DRY (see page 2)

2 CHECK

- [ ] Cracked, split or chewed parts: put aside
- [ ] Pen, paint or glue on parts: put aside, never soak in solvent
- [ ] Stickers peeling or curling: wipe-only pile
- [ ] Battery boxes: open them; batteries out
- [ ] White crust or green on battery contacts: a repair job, not a wash
- [ ] Yellowed white or grey parts: washing will not change them

3 WASH

- [ ] Plug or cover the plughole; use a bowl or a mesh bag
- [ ] Warm water no hotter than 40°C: if it feels hot on your hand, it is too hot
- [ ] A small squeeze of washing-up liquid
- [ ] Soak 15 to 30 minutes; overnight only for very grimy plain bricks
- [ ] Soft toothbrush for studs and the tubes underneath
- [ ] Rinse in clean water until there are no bubbles
- [ ] Wipe pile: damp cloth, mild soap, then dry cloth

4 DRY

- [ ] Shake hard, or spin a handful at a time in a salad spinner
- [ ] One layer on a towel; bricks on their sides so tubes drain
- [ ] Indoors, out of direct sun; a fan helps
- [ ] No oven, microwave, hair dryer, radiator or tumble dryer
- [ ] Allow 24 hours at least, 2 to 3 days for a big haul
- [ ] Bag or box them only when bone dry

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Which parts can go in water?

Sort the haul into three piles before you wash. When in doubt, wipe.

SOAK

warm soapy water, up to 40°C

- Plain bricks, plates, tiles and slopes
- Beams, pins, axles and gears
- Baseplates and large plates (one at a time, soft brush)
- Transparent parts (no scouring: they scratch)
- Minifigure heads, legs, hair and plain accessories
- Printed parts: gently, no brushing over the print
- Rubber tyres: by hand only

WIPE

damp cloth, mild soap, dry straight away

- Stickered parts
- Chrome and metallic-finish parts
- Cloth capes, skirts and sails (or hand-rinse and lay flat)
- Anything with string, elastic or flexible hose

KEEP DRY

never in water; electrics: damp cloth, mild unperfumed soap

- Battery boxes, hubs and motors
- Lights, sensors, sound bricks and cables
- Any part with metal in it, such as old train track
- Instructions, boxes and sticker sheets (paper)

NEVER

× Dishwasher × Washing machine × Tumble dryer × Water hotter than 40°C
× Bleach × Alcohol, acetone or solvents on prints × Drying in the sun or by heat

Yellowing is in the plastic, not on it: washing will not fix it. Keep white and grey parts out of the sun.

Hard water? White spots on big plates after drying: give them a final rinse in distilled or de-ionised water.

Want to disinfect? Soap and water does the cleaning. If you want more, use a cold-water sterilising solution at the label dilution, plain parts only, then rinse.

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