This an excerpt from the LEGO4SCRUM book

This chapter guides you through Preparing the Learning Environment

lego4scrum

Third complete edition

One of the most interactive ways of introducing Agile thinking and Scrum framework

Covering user story mapping and magic estimates, overall backlog refinement and joint multi-team scrum meetings, continuous integration and many more other agile practices all simulated with LEGO® bricks.

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The book is available at
LEANPUB.COM/LEGO4SCRUM AND AMZN.TO/2UUQ5RO

Preparing the Learning Environment

You're standing in front of a class. This part of the training was announced as a 'full-fledged Scrum simulation'. You've also mentioned LEGO and everyone's expecting lot's of fun.

But did you think of everything you would need?

To avoid hairy-monster-surprises here are few essential things to take care of beforehand.

Room Setup

You should have enough wall space around you for the story mapping, estimating and sprint boards.

How much is enough? I'd say 2x2 meters is a bare minimum you'll need for 20-30 people. The wall space should be centered, visible and easily accessible for the participants.

Room setup with with wall space

This wall space should not be sees as 'yours' but rather a shared collaboration space. So I often have to re-configure the classroom in the middle of a training for the simulation to have an accessible wall. This is OK. You can use a break for it and also feel free to ask participants to help. In fact re-arranging the working environment to make it more collaboration-friendly is one of the essential skills of an agilist. So you might want to teach this by asking participants to carry few tables around.

Sometimes I'm lucky to have a large mirror in the room. That's even better as this also a good reminder that Scrum makes things visible by reflecting all the organizational dysfunctions right back at you.

Room setup with a huge mirror

Tables for Teams

Yes, you need tables so that the LEGO development teams could work independently simulating a multi-team Scrum environment.

But nothing special here really. Except maybe for one little trick…

Intensionally Forget the 'Integration Table'

You might be guessing that the group needs one extra table for the city deployment. Well, you're right. But no!

They will of course benefit from an extra table. But reminding them of it in advance removes a great learning they might have when they discover it themselves. This aha moment usually happens few moments in the first Sprint Review after the PO shouts: "So lads, where is my city?"

So don't remove this insight from them. Let'em figure it out on their own. It is OK to be a little evil for the sake of amplified learning of your participants. (Well, you may adjust your nob of evilness that suits your style. But my one is always turned up).

That's exactly the same reason why I don't recommend creating the Definition of Done (DoD) agreement before the first sprint of the game. I want the teams to fail and hence understand why they badly need a good DoD and in every project.

This actually can trigger some blaming, they might even say: "Hey trainer, why didn't you remind us of the integration table? Did you set us for the failure?". See, this as a great learning opportunity for you to do some little lecturing on 'blaming vs. taking responsibility'[20].

I'd probably say at this point that they, participants, had all the resources they needed to do what needed to get to Done-Done-Done by the end of the sprint; and that it is their responsibility to think and take care of their development processes. That what separates 'coders' from 'developers'.

Never take the blame. Turn it into a teaching piece.

Stationary and Materials

Have you brought enough stationary to support the process?

Post-Its or Stattys?

Post-Its are great. But Stattys[21] are cooler - they stick by the power of static electricity, hence super easy to get rearranged on to the wall. Especially they are good for workshops like this one, where you need big visible and easy-to-manipulate color-coded cards.

Stattys or normal Post-Its for the backlog - it is your choice, but it is good to have three distinct colors for the user story mapping.

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[20]See https://www.christopheravery.com/responsibility-process for a great deal of wisdom on how to help people become aware of their internal responsibility process.

[21]Stattys are static-electricified notes that can become a great helper on a workshop: http://www.stattys.com/.

Stattys at work

You will also need normal Post-Its (I prefer rectangular 5x3) to let participants add details to the backlog items. More on this - in the chapter on Initial Product Backlog Refinement.

Which LEGO Sets and How Many?

You'll need some LEGOs. (I'm sure I've mentioned this before).

Well, LEGO is a company famous for deprecating its products quite fast (don't ask me why, this is disturbing). So by the time you're reading these words it is very likely that the below mentioned sets are already out of market. Anyways, similar ones will be in stock. They only differ in number of pieces in the box, and they all work just fine:

LEGO set 10693, 303 pieces

LEGO set 10696, 484 pieces

LEGO set 10698, 790 pieces

LEGO set 10697, 1500 pieces

Rule of thumb: For 20 people the largest set of 1500 pieces shall be enough.

Also there are several tricks allowing to save on the material (evil

mode on!).

One is not to predefine sizes of the built elements. Simply just say that the buildings (or whatever you are building) needs to be relatively sized to each other. Firstly, it creates a need for coordination between the teams. Secondly, it allows an aha-moment when teams discover that they can build faster by building smaller. Engineering it is.

Another tricks is to introduce prices for the materials! You'll be surprised how few bricks people actually need to build valuable stuff when LEGO is a scarce resource! Limited resources enable creative solutions. So in fact not having a lot of bricks is a good thing.

Duct Tape

"Silence is golden, but duct tape is silver...". In fact I prefer the *blue* painter's tape from Scotch.

Duct (painter's) tape

You'll need some tape for visualizing the planning boards.

Duct (painter's) tape

Markers

Enough markers for you and participants. At least a few per a team.

If you use Stattys, make sure your markers write on them. I guess they ought to be permanent (not white board or watery) markers to go well on Stattys or a similar material.