

Activity Guide



Research Ethics

Reflecting on values, responsibility, and ethical questions through LEGO co-construction

Summary

Learning about research ethics means understanding how scientific research is conducted and what is expected of it. Participants are invited to reflect on ethical norms and practices of research, why they matter, how they are applied, which can in turn contribute to scientific credibility and public trust.

To reflect on research ethics, participants are invited to co-construct LEGO structures that represent “ethical” and “unethical” research. Working in parallel on “ethical” and “unethical” research, participants explore ethical contrasts and tensions. When groups share their constructions, differences become visible, prompting discussion about what makes research responsible, and why these distinctions matter in practice.

Why It Works

LEGO co-construction makes research ethics visible and concrete. By building and comparing “ethical research” and “unethical research” structures, participants explore differences and discover tensions. The playful space for sharing and discussion helps clarify what responsible research looks like in practice and why it is important.

What You Need

- **Materials:** LEGO Serious Play kits
- **Time:** 45-60 minutes
- **Ideal Group Size:** 2-3 participants (multiple groups can run at the same time)
- **Format:** in person

How It Works

1. Welcome and Warm Up

10 mins

Invite participants to get to know one another, build a comfortable space for discussion, and begin reflecting on their experiences with science, research, and ethics.

Introduce a short ethics scenario as a warm-up: Alex, Mona, and Sam are lab partners in a chemistry class. Yesterday, Sam was absent. Alex and Mona worked hard to complete the experiment so they could submit their lab report the next day. Today, Sam returns to school after being away and asks their partners for the data from the experiment so they can complete and submit the report with the group.

Guiding question: Should Alex and Mona share the data with Sam?

2. What is Research Ethics?

10 mins

Briefly introduce research ethics, supported by a short video or presentation (for example a video from Understanding Research or an equivalent resource).

Open the discussion by asking: What makes research ethical and why is it important?

3. LEGO Co-Construction

15 mins

Before building, introduce the core LEGO Serious Play principle: participants will respond to a question by building. The LEGO structure is the answer. Encourage them to “think with their hands” and remind them that there are no wrong answers.

In small groups, invite participants to build one of two structures: what is ethical research? and what is unethical research?

4. Sharing and Reflection

20 mins

Each group presents and explains their structures. Together, identify key principles that appear across the constructions, for example, integrity, informed consent, voluntary participation, confidentiality, and security.

Participants are also invited to name “red flags”, practices or situations that could be unethical or harmful in a research context.