New Lego robotics kit talks to iPhones, comes with infrared 'eyes;' $350 later this year

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LAS VEGAS (AP) -- Lego bricks are getting cozy with the iPhone and other Apple devices in the latest incarnation of the Mindstorms robotics kit.

Lego is set to announce Monday that a new, $350 Mindstorms EV3 kit will have the ability to talk to iPhones, iPads and iPod Touches through Bluetooth wireless connections. That means Lego builders can use the devices as remote controls for their robots, or create simple programs that are then sent to the robots to control their actions.

Lego said the kit will go on sale in the second half of the year. It was announced as the International CES gadget show begins in Las Vegas this week.

Remote control was already possible with Android smartphones and the most recent Mindstorms kit, the NXT. Apple devices didn't work because the "brain" of the kit - a juice-box-sized electronic brick - lacked a chip that would identify the Lego gadget to Apple devices.

Also new in the Mindstorms EV3 kit is a "two-eyed" infrared sensor that can pick up signals from a small infrared remote and locate it. In the kit, Lego includes the blueprints for a snake robot that uses its eyes to sense if someone is close to its head, in which case it strikes.

The EV3 will also be the first Mindstorms kit to be available in Chinese, Korean, Spanish and Russian. Previous kits have been in English, Japanese and a few other European languages.

As with earlier kits, the EV3 includes four motors and five different sensors. The new brick is compatible with earlier sensors and motors and is "more hackable than ever," according to Lego. The first Mindstorms came out in 1998.

Suggested age for the EV3 is 10 and up.

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