

3.7.5 Mix and Match (Mash-up)

Brief description, and rules of the implementation of the learning activity

Mix and Match is a creative learning activity in which students combine two unrelated concepts – animals, objects, places, characters, materials, or abstract ideas – to invent something entirely new. The task encourages divergent thinking, flexible imagination, playful experimentation and creative explanation. Instead of simply matching words, students explore why and how two ideas can fit together, what the new mash-up could look like, and what purpose or meaning it could have. The aim is not a “funny creature,” but a creativity-driven reasoning process: invent, justify, compare, refine.

Skill focus

- **Primary Skill Focus**
 - Curiosity, sense of wonder and openness
- **Complementary/Secondary Skill Focus**
 - Problem-solving
 - Curiosity, sense of wonder and openness

Age group	Student number	Duration
6-10 years old	Whole class working in pairs or small groups	45-60 minutes

Proposed step by step implementation of the learning activity

1. **Warm-up:** Getting ideas flowing. The teacher shows two simple cards (e.g., elephant + helicopter) and models an imaginative mash-up: What could it look like? What could it do? What problem could it solve? Students share quick ideas in pairs.
2. **Exploration phase:** Noticing possibilities. In pairs, start study a set of cards and brainstorm: What surprising connections can we find? How many different ideas can we generate with the same paper? What if we change one word? What if we replaced one word? What if the mash-up lived in the ocean / in space / in the forest / in the city? The teacher encourages curiosity and flexibility.
3. The teacher prompts curiosity and flexibility.
4. **Guided activity:** Creating and describing mashups. Each pair randomly selects two cards (living things, places, objects, emotions, inventions, etc.) and develops a creative mash-up: They must: describe its appearance; explain its abilities or purpose; decide where it lives; identify what challenge it faces; invent how it solves the challenge. Students draw or write short notes.
5. **Main activity:** Building the Mash-Up Gallery. Each pair creates a visual representation (drawing, collage, labelled sketch). Then the whole class participates in a gallery walk. At each station, students: guess the mash-up’s functions; ask questions; add “What if...?” suggestions, appreciate original ideas. The creators then explain their design and thinking process.

6. **Creative extension:** Pairs may: create a backstory; write a short comic scene; act out how their mash-up moves or communicates.
7. **Whole-class closing reflection:** Students share what surprised them, what idea inspired them, and how their creativity developed.

Indoor/Outdoor Classroom layout notes

The activity can be implemented indoors or outdoors. A flexible layout supports creative exploration: desks grouped for pair/group collaboration; free movement between stations; visible access to drawing and card materials; outdoors: use picnic tables or ground spots with enough space for creating and presenting. The space should encourage interaction, curiosity, and safe creative expression.

How does this learning activity develop this particular skill?

This activity builds creativity by allowing students to: generate many different ideas from few inputs (divergent thinking); see beyond the obvious and explore unexpected possibilities; blend unrelated concepts into meaningful new combinations; justify their choices through storytelling or explanation; stay open to others' interpretations and co-create; strengthen problem-solving through creative challenges. The playful format reduces fear of mistakes, encourages risk-taking, and builds resilience through iteration ("Try again — make it stranger, smarter, clearer, funnier!").

What do we want to achieve regarding primary skill development (student understanding and/or behaviour)?

As a result of this activity, students will be able to generate original mash-up ideas, explore multiple creative connections between unrelated concepts, and express their thinking through imaginative explanations and drawings.

- They will understand that creativity grows from curiosity, flexible thinking, and valuing diverse viewpoints.
- They will be able to justify creative decisions, rethink ideas based on feedback, and collaborate to improve their mash-up.

Suggested use, and practical subject-related examples

Language Arts

- Create a mash-up character for a story
- Write a comic strip or short tale about the creature
- Combine an emotion + a weather type to inspire poetry

Mathematics

- Mix shapes to create a new geometric form
- Create "pattern creatures" using repeating structures
- Combine numbers with objects (e.g. triangle + tree) to inspire symbolic meaning

Science

- Mix an animal + an ecosystem → explore adaptations
- Combine a machine + natural element to solve a real problem
- Invent a creature that can survive climate extremes

Social Studies

- Mix two cultures → explore food, celebrations, homes, clothing
- Mash-up historical periods (e.g., “Viking astronaut”)
- Reflect on diversity and valuing different ideas

Art

- Create mash-up illustrations, collages, or sculptures
- Explore textures, colours, and materials through hybrid designs

Materials and tools needed for implementation

- Word cards, picture cards, or category cards
- Blank papers / drawing sheets
- Coloured pencils, markers, crayons
- Optional: recycled materials for 3D mashups
- Scissors, glue, craft supplies

Guiding questions

Pair / small group:

- What was the first idea that came to your mind? Why?
- Can you imagine a second or third version of this mash-up?
- How would this creature/object solve a problem?
- Which part of your idea changed as you worked on it?

Whole class:

- What surprised you about your classmates’ mashups?
- Did someone’s idea help you develop your own further?
- What made you curious about another group’s design?

Tips and Tricks for dealing with challenges

- **Challenge:** Students create only literal or simple combinations.
Tip: Ask: “Make it stranger!” or “Add a special ability!” Provide prompts (e.g. emotion + object, weather + animal).
- **Challenge:** Students struggle to visualise the mash-up.
Tip: Use silhouettes, shapes, or mix-and-match images for support. Let them sculpt it with recycled materials.
- **Challenge:** Some students hesitate to share ideas.
Tip: Allow pair-sharing first. Provide sentence starters: “Our mash-up can... Because...”
- **Challenge:** Groups get stuck after one idea.
Tip: Encourage “3 versions rule”, generate three different interpretations. Trick: Add constraints: time travel, underwater, robot mode, etc.
- **Challenge:** Creativity drops due to perfectionism.
Tip: Celebrate “weird,” “funny,” or “impossible” ideas. Emphasise process over product.

Difficulty level tailoring

Teachers can adapt the activity to three difficulty levels based on students' curiosity, readiness, and ability:

- **Beginner learner (6-7 years old):**
 - Use clear, simple picture cards (animals, foods, toys).
 - Provide templates: *This is a ____ + ____ = ____ . It can...*
 - Focus on drawing and 1–2 sentence descriptions.
- **Advanced learner (8-9 years old):**
 - Allow abstract or unusual combinations
 - Require 2–3 creative explanations
 - Let students write a short story or comic
 - Encourage presentation skills
- **Expert learner (9–10 years old):**
 - Students choose themes (e.g. environmental problems, helping a community)
 - Mash-up must serve a purpose
 - Students design illustrated books, posters, or mini-presentation
 - Include reflection on societal or ecological connections

Debriefing and Reflection questions

Creativity

- What made your mash-up original?
- Which idea changed the most during the process?
- What creative risks did you take?

Flexibility

- How did your idea evolve when your partner suggested something new?
- Did you change direction at any point? Why?

Curiosity and Openness

- What detail made you most curious about another group's design?
- What new question came to your mind?