

Getting Started with Blended Learning Toolkit

By Dr. Catlin Tucker

Definition	Blended learning is the combination of active, engaged offline with active, engaged learning online. Blended learning is an umbrella term that encompasses several models that combine this online and offline learning in different ways. Regardless of the model, blended learning aims to give students more control over these four aspects of their learning: 1) time, 2) place, 3) pace, and 4) path.
Benefits	Blended learning provides more opportunities to: • Differentiate learning for groups of students with different needs, skills, language proficiencies, or interests. • Personalize individual learning paths to ensure each student is making progress toward learning goals. • Build more student agency, or choice and voice, into lessons and learning experiences. • Allow students to control the pace of their learning. • Prioritize the students' voices, ideas, questions, and wonderings. • Encourage collaboration on shared tasks. • Improve access by incorporating the core principles of Universal Design for Learning into lessons and learning experiences.
Models	The rotation models work best in a traditional school setting. • Whole Group Rotation–The whole class rotates between online and offline learning. • Station Rotation–Groups of students rotate through a series of online and offline learning stations with one station offering a small group, teacher-led experience. • Flipped Learning–The transfer of information is provided via video or other media that allows students to control the pace at which they process and consume that information. Then class time is dedicated to student-centered learning (e.g., application). • Playlist/Individual Rotation Model–Individual students make progress through a sequence of learning activities that mix learning modalities and media to allow students a high degree of control over the pace of their learning.

Blended Learning Design Checklist

Below is a checklist designed to help teachers think about how to design learning experiences to maximize the effectiveness of weaving together online and offline learning.

- ☐ Select the standards and skills you plan to target.
- ☐ Identify the learning objectives and write them in student-friendly language.
 - ☐ What do you want students to understand or be able to do?
- ☐ Decide on the blended learning model that will be best fit given your target standards and learning objectives.
- ☐ Build mechanisms into your lessons or unit to collect formative assessment data so you can effectively track student progress.
 - ☐ How will you assess prior knowledge at the start of the learning?
 - ☐ How will you check for understanding during the learning?
 - ☐ How will you encourage a reflective practice at the end of the learning?
- ☐ Think about how you can use your blended learning models to differentiate learning for different groups of students.
 - ☐ How might you modify the process by which you teach something?
 - ☐ How could the product students create to demonstrate their learning be different?
 - ☐ How might you adjust the academic rigor or provide additional scaffolds as students focus on a particular skill?
 - ☐ Would it be useful to have different groups focusing on different skills?
 - ☐ Would presenting information using a range of media (e.g., text, audio, video, visuals) aid with comprehension?
- ☐ Prioritize student agency.
 - ☐ What key decisions will students get to make?
- ☐ Balance the online learning with the offline learning to give students a break from the screen and encourage conversation and collaboration.
- ☐ Dedicate time to connect with and support small groups or individual students via small group instruction, coaching, or conferencing.

The Station Rotation Model

The station rotation model does what the name suggests; students rotate through a series of online and offline stations. The benefits of the station rotation model include:

- Creating smaller learning communities within the larger class.
- Freeing the teacher to work with small groups of students.
- Differentiating learning (e.g., process, practice, scaffolds, product) for groups of learners with different skills, language proficiencies, and interests.
- Prioritizing communication and collaboration among students.
- Allowing students more control over the pace at which they process information and navigate tasks.

Time in each station:

Cue to move [music, bell, lights on and off?]:

Tech needed:

Station #1: Objective/Skill: Description:	Station #2: Objective/Skill: Description:
Station #3: Objective/Skill: Description:	Station #4: Objective/Skill: Description:

To make a copy of the station rotation lesson template pictured above, use this short link bit.ly/COPYSRM.

The Flipped Learning Model

Teachers spend significant time transferring information to students. Unfortunately, the transfer of information is most effective when students can control the pace at which they process and consume that information. If teachers plan to explain a concept the same way for all students, they should consider making a short video. That way, students can pause, rewind, or rewatch the video. Using video to explain key concepts or introduce basic information frees the teacher to spend time on more high-value activities, like supporting practice and application.

Below is a three-part flipped lesson plan teachers can use to build a complete learning experience around the video content.

3-Part Flipped Learning Lesson

Step 1 Drive Inquiry, Encourage Exploration or Assess Prior Knowledge	Step 2 Transfer Information + Drive Higher Order Thinking Around that Video Content	Step 3 Get Students to Extend and Apply
Activity description:	Activity description:	Activity description:
What materials or tech tools do you need for this step?	What materials or tech tools do you need for this step?	What materials or tech tools do you need for this step?

To make a copy of the 3-part flipped learning lesson template pictured above, use this short link bit.ly/COPYFLIP.

Choice Boards

Choice boards a fun way to build student agency into a lesson or unit. Teachers can design their choice boards using a range of strategies, including:

- Standards-aligned to target specific skills
- Engage–practice–apply to allow students to choose how they want to engage with information (e.g., text, audio, video), practice concepts or skills using a method that is appealing, and apply what they’ve learned in a way that works best for them.
- Thematic to encourage a deep dive into a particular topic or subject.

Choice Board		
[Standard/Skill #1]	[Standard/Skill #2]	[Standard/Skill #3]

To make a copy of the standards-aligned choice board template pictured above, use this short link **bit.ly/COPYCHOICE**.

Dr. Catlin Tucker

Dr. Catlin Tucker is a bestselling author, international trainer, and keynote speaker. She was named Teacher of the Year in 2010 in Sonoma County, where she taught for 16 years. Catlin earned her doctorate in learning technologies at Pepperdine University. Currently, Catlin is working as a blended learning coach and education consultant. Catlin has written a series of bestselling books on blended learning, which include *Balance With Blended Learning*, *Blended Learning In Action*, *Power Up Blended Learning*, and *Blended Learning In Grades 4-12*. She is active on Twitter [@Catlin Tucker](https://twitter.com/Catlin_Tucker) and writes an internationally ranked blog at CatlinTucker.com.

Want to learn more about blended and online learning?

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