



# Cultivate your Creative Learning Facilitation Practice

“The role of the teacher is to create the conditions for invention rather than provide ready-made knowledge.”

– Seymour Papert, The Children's Machine

“We have found that strong social and emotional skills, such as being able to understand another’s perspective and experiences working with children, are more valuable than a strong technical background. Facilitators are co-learners and co-creators with [participants]. They do not need to know answers as much as know how to guide learners to answer their own questions and realize their own ideas”

– Family Creative Learning Facilitator Guide

We believe people learn best when they are working on projects they’re passionate about, in collaboration with peers, within a playful environment that encourages experimentation. At the MIT Media Lab, we call this approach **creative learning**, and we apply this pedagogy in the design of our PLIX kits and activities.

Facilitating creative learning activities is less about expertise and content knowledge and more about cultivating an environment in which participants can tinker, mess around, and express themselves creatively. **Here you’ll find some techniques and ideas to help you cultivate your own creative learning facilitation practice.** Try implementing a couple of these at a time, and reflect on your practice after each workshop you facilitate.

[plix.media.mit.edu](https://plix.media.mit.edu)

## **Frame activities to encourage creative possibilities**

When coming up with an activity prompt, try using a theme (e.g. “enchanted garden”) instead of an end product (e.g. “make a frog”). This will leave room for patrons to integrate their own ideas and passions into the activity.

## **Curate a set of diverse example projects to inspire patrons**

Have example projects readily available to your patrons during workshops. Your examples should showcase a variety of approaches and shouldn’t be overly complete or complex. A good example shouldn’t encourage direct copying, but should be used as a jumping off point to inspire a participant to tinker with their own ideas. Good examples can also help with troubleshooting and questions, so don’t be afraid to refer someone to an example (or a peer’s project) if they’re stuck!

## **Celebrate the learning process, not just the finished product**

Don’t forget to celebrate the messy journey of creative learning with your participants. Try check-ins and share-outs to reflect on the learning process with your patrons. When patrons are stuck, ask them clarifying questions about their ideas or process, and give suggestions instead of directions.

## **Encourage peer learning**

Avoid positioning yourself as the only person in the room with answers. Encourage patrons working next to each other to support one another. Everyone in the room has something to teach and learn, including the facilitator! Don’t be afraid to work together with a patron to figure something out.

## **Don’t touch the tools!**

Avoid grabbing the tools when a patron asks for help. Instead, ask questions or suggest possible next steps for the patron to implement themselves. If you do need to hold the tools to explain something, make sure to have the patron try that step again on their own.

## **Avoid technical jargon**

Offer technical terms to your patrons only when it is absolutely necessary. Instead, have relevant books and other resources readily available to curious participants who want to dive deeper.

## **Remember: Facilitation is a practice**

Don’t stress about being “good at it” right away. Becoming a creative learning facilitator will be a continuous process of trying, reflecting, and iterating. Remember to allow ~10 minutes for self-reflection after each workshop you facilitate.

### **Other facilitation resources we ❤️**

- The Family Creative Learning Facilitator Guide // [familycreativelearning.org/guide/](https://familycreativelearning.org/guide/)
- The Tinkering Studio’s Facilitation Field Guide // [www.exploratorium.edu/sites/default/files/files/facilitation\\_field\\_guide.pdf](https://www.exploratorium.edu/sites/default/files/files/facilitation_field_guide.pdf)
- Start Making!: A Guide to Engaging Young People in Maker Activities // [theclubhousenetwork.org/programs/making/](https://theclubhousenetwork.org/programs/making/)