

Like other Gimmicks, this is a battle mechanic that only shows up sometimes. It won't always happen in the wild and it will occur for certain events such as gym battles.

For now I am calling them "Support Battles".

Support Battles can happen as singles or doubles. During a Support Battle, each Pokémon on the field will have another from their team supporting them. Who is out and who is supporting is determined by their placement in the team. (Maybe you will get to choose by locking them together)

For now I'll just talk in terms of single battles.

Basically, a supporting Pokemon is watching the leading Pokémon's back and helping them to fight when necessary, like a loose tag team. This reflects mechanically in several ways.

**-Rotation:** The supporting Pokémon is technically out on the field, like in rotation battles. This means it is affected by environmental effects and can be rotated in once a turn with the leading Pokémon as a free action. You can only Rotate if the Supporter isn't doing something else. Once Rotated in the Supporter becomes the Leader and are supported by the other. Like in Rotation battles, only the leading Pokémon can be hit with attacks. (Just this free rotation changes the tactics quite a bit. Your opponents can do this too.)

**-Switching:** When you choose to switch out a Pokémon with one that isn't out, you can choose either the Leading or Supporting Pokémon to swap. If a Pokémon is knocked out, you will replace that one in specific, whether they are the leader or supporter.

**-Triggers:** Most Pokémon have two Trigger abilities that are specific to them when supporting (though many are shared).

A Trigger is an in game event that "opens up an opportunity" for the supporting Pokémon to aid.

Examples of such events include:

- Your Leader takes a certain amount of damage.
- Your Leader knocks someone out.
- Your Leader is affected by a status condition, etc.
- A Weather Condition comes into effect.
- A certain type of Pokémon comes into play.
- And more!

The Trigger Ability that pretty much all Pokemon have is called "Attack Opening".

Basically, when this trigger happens, on the following turn, the supporting Pokémon will have the ability to perform one of its attack options. You will essentially have a fifth option to choose from as your move for that turn. This option is chosen randomly from your supporting Pokémon's available moves.

Only moves that affect other Pokémon can be chosen from this way, like attacks and targeting effects. Personal stat boosts and moves that happen over multiple turns aren't included in this selection.

If the Supporter's move is chosen, they will jump in and do it, rather than the leader doing anything. If your leader is paralyzed or asleep, the Supporter can still attack when the opportunity is given.

You can think of this like the Leader and Supporter coordinating along with their trainer for a well timed attack from the Supporter.

This simply gives the trainer more options on occasion, sometimes letting you use moves that your switched in Pokémon doesn't have and with the stats of another on your team. Again, the Trigger that allows this opportunity is specific to each Pokémon. Maybe a Dark type will trigger whenever the opponent is hit with a stab move. Maybe a Psychic type will capitalize on an opponent missing their attack.

The **second** trigger that most will have is more Pokémon specific. When this Trigger occurs, the supporter will do something unique in response.

For example: Pikachu could have a Trigger ability called "Shocking Loyalty". It says "Whenever Pikachu's Leader becomes Paralyzed, Pikachu switches with them and acts immediately". This ability deters opponents from Paralyzing when Pikachu is supporting and adds some flavor to Pikachu.

Another example is a Pokémon like Swellow having a Triggered ability called "Air Chase". "Whenever the Leader would miss a special attack on a Pokémon in the air, the flying Pokémon takes half damage instead".

You can imagine the Swellow quickly lifting up your Pokémon to help them reach the flying target.

-Passives: Some Pokémon could even have Support passives. These are passive abilities that only take effect during support battles and when Supporting.

Garchomp Support Passive Example - Dragonic Belligerence: "Dragon Type attacks from Garchomp's Leader have a 20% chance to cause the target to switch out if possible."

Basically Garchomp waits for the moment to swat the Pokémon back, like with the move Dragon tail.

Ribombee Support Passive - Beneficial Nectar: "Healing effects on the supported Pokémon are increased by 5%".

My intention when it comes to balancing is that traditionally weaker Pokémon will be better Support Pokemon, adding to team variety.

**That is it for the basics of the mechanic, but it gets potentially deeper...**

## Split Support Battles

Firstly, it gave me the idea for something called Split Support battles. These are like doubles battles, except the battling Pokémon are essentially back to back, fighting individually, but at the same time. Both are considered Leader and Supporter to each other. So, you choose the moves for your first Pokémon, then your second, and then they carry out in the same manner as with a doubles battle, except they are on different battlefields, so the camera rotates to show the second battle that is happening after showing what happens during the first round's battle. You are basically doing two singles battles at once, but environmental effects are impacting both, and each Pokémon is supporting the other as they battle. You would be fighting two separate

unsupported Pokémon or maybe they are each Supported individually. The big difference here is that sometimes when your Pokémon has the opening to attack for their Leader, they will get to do two attacks in the same round! That might seem weird so the mechanics could be tweaked there.

**Party Split Battles:** Maybe you could also have a Split battle, where two Pokémon are fighting and there is a third one in between the both of them. In this situation, your Supporter can only take a Support Action for one of the fights per round, so you'll need to choose who to help.

**Doubles Split Battles:** Now this allows for the potential of having Doubles-Split Battles, which essentially is a Four vs Four, but with two separate fights happening at the same time. Eight Pokémon out at once is probably too chaotic and would likely need at least some of its own rulings to work, especially when combined with the increased complication of Support Pokémon. However, in my eyes, this feels like the best way to do it rather than having four on the same field. These battles would be rare and balanced in a way where you are essentially saving much more time, getting that much more experience and seeing that many more Pokémon without the in-between. You could even imagine a Party Doubles Split battle, which would have your entire party out at once.

**Triples Split Battles:** I even thought about Triple-split battles. This isn't where your entire party is on the field at once, but rather you have three Pokémon, each in separate battles and with a supporting Pokémon backing them up, but not swapped in. This would be a method for having all Six Pokémon essentially fighting at the same time without all of them out and without the same chaos that comes with a typical triple battle. I could imagine this mechanic making for very cool boss battles as well, where your entire team is fighting a single Legendary virtually at once.

## **Pokémon Bonding**

Another cool thing about the Support Mechanic is that it opens up some possibilities with PokémonXPokémon bonding. I always thought it was cool that you could become friends with your Pokémon, but it makes for an even better team if their bonding with each other matters as well. Basically, each Pokémon on your team would have a Friendship score with each other as well as you. For them it is called their Bonded level. They raise their Bond naturally by traveling together (slowest method), battling together (doubles or support battles), or through over world activities.

I imagine you could do side activities that increase your Pokémon's Bond and teamwork. It would be cool if some Pokémon were better at making friends than others and for some it was a bit of a puzzle to crack them. You as the trainer would need to figure out ways to improve the team dynamic in order to get your terrifying Annihilape to bond with your Dedenne.

**Better Bonded-Better Support:** The primary impact of Pokémon bonding would be that it increases their effectiveness when Supporting one another. Basically, when a Trigger occurs for a Pokémon, the Supporter only has a chance of reacting to it. This means that just because it happened, you aren't guaranteed for the effect to occur. The Effect Chance is increased as two

Pokémon's Bond is increase. Once the Dedenne is comfortable around the Annihilape, it can more consistently understand its fighting technique, cues, and body language. Some will bond better, like those that are the same type or are related in some way. Two regional variants might understand each other very quickly!

Also, as Pokémon bond, this may unlock more Trigger Abilities or Passives for a Pokémon that they can only perform when working together. Maybe some will also care about the specific Pokémon or type that they are bonded with. One possibility would be a Signature Combo move, where both Pokémon combine their signature abilities or attacks as a super powerful finishing blow!

On top of this, Pokémon bonding can also sometimes have effects in the way that friendship does in existing games. If your supporting Pokémon would see the Leader get knocked out, maybe it jumps in the way, taking fifty percent of the damage. Maybe you will have a chance for them to sometimes break the rules, temporarily turning the battle into a two-on-one in an epic and dynamic situation. Perhaps after seeing their leader knocked out, the supporter comes in with a stat boost and an enraged state! There are many ways that we can reward players for taking the time to increase their Pokémon's Bond as well as methods for expressing Pokémon personality, which is one of the main things that the franchise is all about. This might be an alternative way rather than the Bond affecting the Trigger Effect Chance.

The friendship or affection mechanics in Pokémon are cool, but many find them to make the already easy games easier. This mechanic would do the same, though on the flip side if I were to implement it I would try to balance the game more to compensate, but also to allow the opponents the same mechanics. Pokémon found in the wild can be bonded with each other as well as those with Trainers. The Bonding Mechanic can also help make other Trainer Teams more flavorful as well as special encounters.

This entire mechanic is built for my region, which has a theme of Community. I wanted a way to help express that community through your Pokémon and their relationships with each other.

My primary concerns with such a mechanic as a concept is whether it would achieve its goals and if the complication that it adds to the formula is worthwhile for the potential payoffs. Also, it is important to search for feedback as I could be missing some glaring part of the puzzle and it is just fun for me to talk about this sort of thing.

### **\*Another Smaller Mechanic, Free Caught Pokémon!**

This mechanic is built so that you can have more Pokémon out in the world and out of the machine. This will help to flesh out the daycare system, but also add some more depth to the Support mechanic.

- You can choose up to four Pokémon that you have caught and become friends with to be set free into the wild.

- While these Pokémon are free, they will travel out to various places, primarily their own biomes and live freely or explore. They have trackers on them, like real life animals.
- While they are out there, you will be able to run into them in the overworld. When you encounter them and interact with them, they might have found a gift for you. Different types of Pokémon are likely to find different gifts. Gifts can include:
  - Eggs: Maybe they lay an egg or stole another Pokémon's!
  - Items: Certain items can be found, primarily consumables.
  - Surprise Pokémon battles? Maybe another Pokémon chased down your guy and it came to you for help. Or perhaps a smaller Pokémon was hanging out on your larger one. Maybe your Pokémon made a friend and they want to be caught by you or just to meet you!
  - Events: Maybe there are certain quests that can randomly occur with your wild Pokémon. Maybe someone gets mad at you because your Pokémon ate their flowers? Maybe you need to rescue your wild Pokémon from trappers or the evil team? Stuff like this makes the world feel much more dynamic.
- While traveling, Pokémon will slowly earn XP. This is the biggest benefit of this. They will earn XP faster than the daycare, but will be much less likely to have eggs and breeding isn't reliable.
- The other cool thing is that in certain situations, your wild Pokémon may appear to help you. If they were at least somewhat close by, your wild Pokémon might jump in or help you now where to support your battling Pokémon or replace a downed teammate. They could even turn a singles battle into a two v one! I love designs like this as the simple aspects of this make the world feel much more real and feed into the Pokémon fantasy.
  - Also, if a wild Pokémon is bonded with one in your party, it may act on that Bond, jumping in to block an attack that would hit them in a climactic moment!
- Finally, your wild Pokémon can act as your rides! I think that rather than having a single rideable Pokémon for each environment, you can use any that works. Big birds can fly you, you can ride horse-like mon, and bigger sea creatures can take you through the water. You can do this with viable Pokémon in your party or you can blow a whistle to summon a wild Pokémon to take you. Your character also has a bike, though riding Pokémon is cool and faster depending on the Pokémon. (It wouldn't be hard to actually tie their speed stat to how fast they ran in the overworld!)
  - There will also be some overworld stations where you could rent or borrow ride Pokémon. These are rare and people likely want to use their own dudes! This helps you bond more with them and customize your experience.
  - Ride Pokémon should also earn a very little amount of XP when you ride them. This might be breakable though. Perhaps it only adds a bit when you travel to a new area with them and only up to a limit each day/hour.