

Cross-Pollinate Pairing Guide

Find someone from an opposite field, trade one skill each way, and make one small thing together. Six weeks, one session a week.

What this is

Cross-pollinating is a skill trade. You teach someone a piece of what you know, and they teach you a piece of what they know. The further apart your fields are, the more you both get out of it.

It works best between two people who are curious, not two people who are experts. Nobody needs credentials to be useful to someone from another field.

Find your opposite

Your opposite works in a field that feels far from yours. A baker and a programmer. A nurse and a ceramicist. A lawyer and a drummer.

Where to look:

- People you already know whose work you've never asked about.
- Friends of friends. Ask: "Who do you know who does something nothing like what I do?"
- A show & tell, a class, a meetup, a group chat you're already in.

What to say

Keep the ask small and specific. Something like:

"I'm doing a six-week skill trade. One hour a week, I'd teach you a bit of _____ and you'd teach me a bit of _____. Want to try one session and see?"

One session is an easier yes than six weeks. Start there.

People I could ask

Name	Their field	How I know them

Weeks 1 and 2: map what you can teach

Before you trade, each of you lists what you could teach in about an hour. Not everything you know. One hour's worth.

Good one-hour skills are small and concrete: a technique, a tool, a way of looking at something.

What I could teach in an hour

Skill	What they'd leave with

What they could teach in an hour

Skill	What I'd leave with

Pick the first trade

Choose one skill from each list. Pick the smallest one that still sounds interesting to both of you.

I'm teaching:

They're teaching:

The first session

Keep it small. The first session is about finding out how the other person learns, not covering everything.

- 5 minutes: catch up and say what each of you hopes to get out of it.
- 20 minutes: the first person teaches. Show, then let them try.
- 20 minutes: switch.
- 5 minutes: what was hard, what was easy, what's next week.

Teaching someone from another field

- Skip the jargon, or explain it the first time you use it.
- Let them try before you correct them.
- Say why you do it that way, not only how.
- Notice what they find obvious that you don't. That's their field showing.

Weeks 3 to 5: the trade

One session a week. Keep a short log, so you can see what moved.

Week	What I learned	What I taught	One thing to try before next time

After week two, when it gets awkward

Most pairs hit a slow patch around week three. That's normal. Here's what usually helps.

- Sessions keep slipping: pick a fixed day and time, and make it shorter instead of skipping it.
- One person is getting more out of it: say so, out loud, and rebalance the next session.
- It feels too basic: go one level deeper in the same skill instead of switching skills.
- It feels too hard: go back to the smallest version of the skill and do it twice.
- You've run out of things to teach: teach how you decide, not what you do.

Week 6: make one small thing together

Make one thing that needs both of your fields. It can be tiny: a poster, a recipe card, a short script, a sketch of an idea.

Our small thing:

What carried

What did you take from their field that you'll keep using in yours?

Last step

Show the thing you made together to someone else. Then decide if you want to keep trading.