Pedagogical Toolbox
Gameplay tools

Game mechanics: Combining resources and items

Explanation of the mechanics

In any game where players must gather resources, whether it be information, clues, cards or items, a mechanic of combination or association can be used to create interactions between different elements of the game or between players, reward their efforts and put their findings to use by merging their roles or purposes.

For example, some board games assign each player a card with a question, symbol, or information, and they need to find a second card or element with the answer, equivalent symbol, or related data in order to earn points or progress to the next step. Certain role playing games involve crafting or building items used to perform more complex tasks or access the next steps of the adventure, and escape rooms can include riddles such as maps with hidden writings that can only be seen through a sheer, coloured piece of plastic or glass, lens, or pair of warped glasses.

This mechanic can be applied with single players or involve collaboration between players who would share their resources in order to progress and win together.

Many combinations are possible; here are a few examples:

Elements to combine		Result or reward
Information, name, date, number, letter	Incomplete text or list, symbol, logo, shape, colour	Solving riddles by association, figuring out codes or formulas, filling out documents
Character card, photo, portrait	Character description, role, trait, action	Discovering a new character or player, identifying an enemy or ally, furthering the story or lore
Key, code, lockpick, pin	Lock, padlock, box, chess, door	Obtaining treasures, points, or items, accessing new information or locations
Broken tool or object	Screw, nail, rod, bolt, tape, piece of wood or metal	Fixing an item or weapon needed to perform a task, unlock a new skill or defeat an enemy
Computer, phone, car, spaceship, flashlight, electrical tool	Wire, battery, rod, bolt, chip, hard drive, memory card, USB stick	Repairing technological resources to access information or save data, fixing vehicles or communication devices
Chain, string, necklace, hook, ring	Pendant, jewel, precious metal, gemstone	Repairing or crafting jewellery or gifts to exchange with characters or players
Map, star chart, compass, mirror, lens, piece of glass or plastic, spyglass or monocular, glasses		Associating information or pieces from two objects to find a hidden code, direction, location
Mineral or natural resources (water, fire, dirt, ore, rocks, plants, sticks, bones, etc.)		Creating substances, liquids, metals, foods, beverages, or items to heal, gain advantages or develop skills
Cloth, fabric, leather, fur, paper, rope		Crafting clothes or armour, repairing or completing maps or books to discover new information, upgrading items or skills