Remix - Teacher Guide

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, students will be able to:

- **Analyse Genre** — identify how instrumentation, tempo, and rhythm define a musical style, for example transforming a Rock track into Hip Hop, or Pop into Synthwave.
- **Manipulate MIDI** — edit note duration (legato vs. staccato), velocity, and quantisation to change the feel of a musical part.
- **Design Sound** — use software instruments and Audio FX including Reverb, Distortion, and Delay to change the texture and spatial depth of a mix.
- **Process Audio** — apply sampling techniques including chopping, filtering, and reversing to manipulate raw audio stems.

Compatible Platforms

Remix works with any DAW students already know. All four phases apply equally across platforms. There is no requirement to switch tools, and no platform is recommended over another.

Soundtrap · BandLab · GarageBand iOS · GarageBand macOS · Ableton Live

The Workflow — Phase by Phase

Remix follows a four-phase production workflow. Each phase builds on the last, moving from timbre and instrumentation through to audio manipulation. Teachers may spend longer in certain phases depending on student experience, context, and available technology. The phases do not need to be completed within a single unit of work.

Phase 1 — Timbre & Instrumentation: The Palette Swap

The notes are less important than the sounds when defining a genre.

Student task: Identify the core elements of the original track — Drums, Bass, Chords, Melody — and replace the original instrument presets with sounds from a contrasting genre.

Teacher tip: Encourage students to be radical. Swapping an acoustic piano for a distorted synth, or an electric bass for an 808 sub-bass, immediately shifts the emotional feel of the song. The more extreme the swap, the clearer the lesson about what makes a genre sound the way it does.

Phase 2 — Rhythm & Tempo: Groove & Structure

Tempo and drum patterns are the skeleton of the track. Change them and you change how the song moves.

Student task: Adjust the project BPM to fit the new genre, mute the original drum patterns, and program a new beat — for example, shifting from a standard beat to a half-time trap beat, or a four-on-the-floor house beat.

Teacher tip: Changing the tempo often disrupts the feel of the original bassline. Students may need to open the Piano Roll and lengthen bass notes to fill the gaps a slower tempo creates. This is a useful entry point for talking about note duration and rhythmic feel.

Phase 3 — Mixing & FX: The Producer's Toolkit

Mixing is not just about volume balance. It is a tool for sound design.

Student task: Apply Audio Effects to change the texture of the instruments:

- Reverb — to create atmosphere and spatial depth
- Distortion — to add aggression and presence
- Delay — to add rhythmic complexity

Teacher tip: This is a good moment to introduce wet and dry signals. Students need to understand how to balance an effect so it enhances the sound rather than drowning it. A 100% wet reverb is a common mistake — use it as a teaching moment about intent versus accident.

Phase 4 — Audio Manipulation: The Hybrid Remix

This phase moves away from MIDI and treats audio stems as material to be shaped — the practice of sampling.

Student task: Import the original audio stems (MP3/WAV) and apply:

- Filtering — automate EQ sweeps to create tension and release
- Chopping/Slicing — create stutter effects and rhythmic variation
- Reversing — use reversed clips to build swells or transitions

Teacher tip: Slicing audio requires rhythmic precision. Remind students to keep Snap-to-Grid on so edits stay on-beat. Cuts that drift off the grid quickly sound random rather than intentional — a good opportunity to reinforce the link between technical precision and musical feel.

Assessment Ideas

Remix works well for both informal in-class assessment and structured tasks. The focus should be on musical decision-making and genre literacy, not technical accuracy alone.

The Vibe Check — Students play their remix alongside the original. The class tries to identify the target genre based only on sounds and drums, not on what the student tells them. This keeps listening and discussion grounded in the elements that actually define genre.

The Topline Challenge (Extension) — Once the instrumental remix is done, students record the original vocals or write new lyrics over their arrangement. This shows how a familiar melody takes on a different meaning when placed over new chords and rhythms.

Curriculum Considerations

Remix connects to curriculum requirements in composing with technology, music analysis, sound design, and creative performance. Students work with genre, style, and production decision-making in a way that makes abstract concepts tangible. Evidence can be gathered through work-in-progress recordings, reflective journals, peer listening, or final remix presentations. Use the Curriculum Mapping Tool to align this unit with your local requirements.

Remix treats DAW production as musical thinking, not technical training. When students take something familiar and transform it, they are not just learning software. They are learning how genre, culture, and sound design shape the way music feels.

Step into the producer role · Transform the familiar · Genre literacy through doing · Creative decisions over correct answers