

**A MATH ESCAPE ACTIVITY • BEST-SUITED TO GRADES 3-5**

# **THE BACK-TO-SCHOOL MIX-UP**

## ***ESCAPE ROOM ACTIVITY***

**You are SO excited for the first day of school! But when you get there everything is mixed up! The teachers are speaking a strange language, letters are backwards, and even the maps on the walls are completely wrong! The strangest part is that YOU are the only one who seems to notice! It's time to figure out this back to school mix up and get it fixed.**

*are you ready for  
the challenge?*



**CREATED BY SHELLEY GRAY**



*what is going on?*

**Can you fix the back to  
school mix-up?**

# ABOUT THIS RESOURCE

*You are SO excited for the first day of school! But when you get there everything is mixed up! The teachers are speaking a strange language, letters are backwards, and even the maps on the walls are completely wrong! The strangest part is that YOU are the only one who seems to notice!*

***Will you be able to fix this back to school mix-up?***

Ready to take your back to school activities to a whole new level? Your students are going to LOVE this “Back to School Mix-Up” escape room-style activity where they will crack codes and work together as a team, ultimately overcoming the obstacles and fixing the back to school mix-up!

Your students will be completing six different challenges (or obstacles) in order to fix it. These challenges will be completed as a small group of three to four people in order to encourage teamwork and cooperation.

When a team has solved a challenge, one member will come to you with the answer and to get the next envelope.

The goal is for each group to complete the escape room, but it is motivating to have teams compete against each other to see who can solve it first.

***BIG GOALS: If you are familiar with my escape rooms, you know that there is generally a large focus on specific math skills. The big goals of this particular escape room are teamwork, cooperation, and adding a ton of FUN to your classroom during the first week of school. So although there are math skills involved, the main goal here is engagement and teamwork during that first week.***

# MODIFICATIONS

**This escape room includes modified activities for two of the obstacles (see the details in the pages to follow).**

**If you are using this escape room with second grade students, use the modified activities. Still, most second graders will need help with reading instructions and with the codes if they have never done this type of activity before. There are a few ways to help scaffold for younger students:**

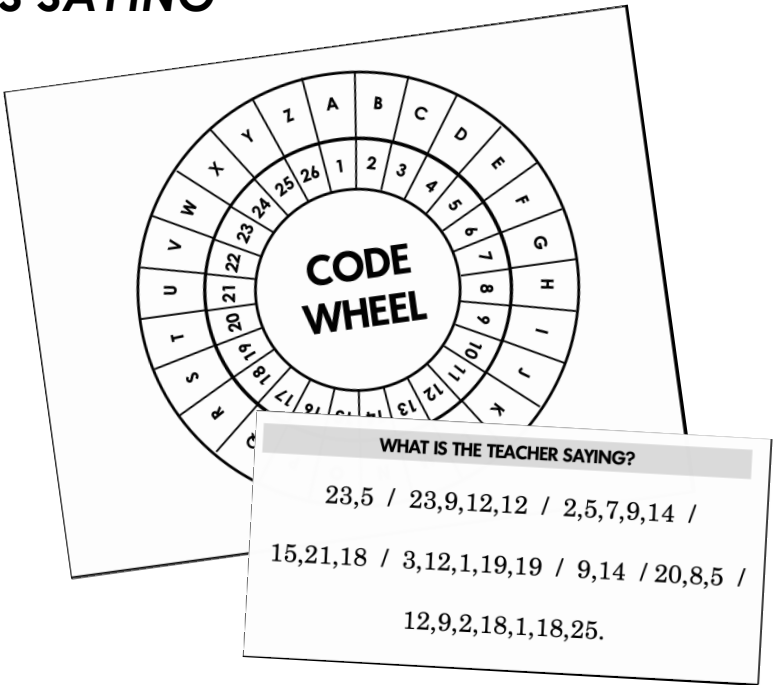
- Have a parent volunteer or classroom assistant work with individual groups.**
- Have the students work in small groups, but complete the obstacles at the same time. Before switching to another obstacle, the teacher can read instructions and give a brief overview of how to complete the activity.**
- If you think that your students are ready to do this escape room independently, do some pre-teaching before you begin to explain the code breaking activities.**



**Obstacle #1: FIGURE OUT WHAT THE TEACHER IS SAYING**

You walk into the school on the first day excited to be there! First you see the principal and she says something to you, but it's hard to understand. She must be mumbling. Then you see your teacher. You run over to him to say hello and he begins talking to you in some strange language. Then you notice that EVERYONE is talking in the same language. What is going on? You are so confused!

**YOUR TASK:** Figure out what the teacher is saying to you.

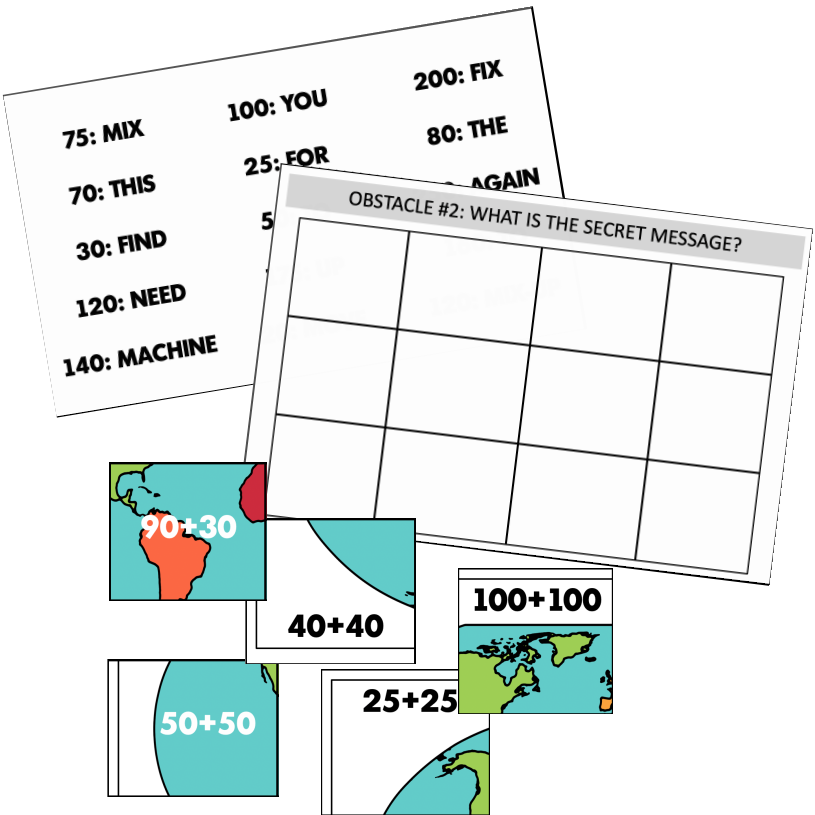


**Obstacle #2: FIX THE MIXED UP MAP**

Alright! You are pretty sure that Mr. Smith told you to go to the library. As soon as you walk through the library door you notice something. The map on the wall is completely wrong! South America is above North America, Africa and Australia are mixed up, and the oceans are completely wrong! You try to tell the librarian, but she doesn't seem to think that there is anything wrong. Why doesn't anyone see this?

**YOUR TASK:** Put the puzzle together. Solve the equations in order to figure out the message.

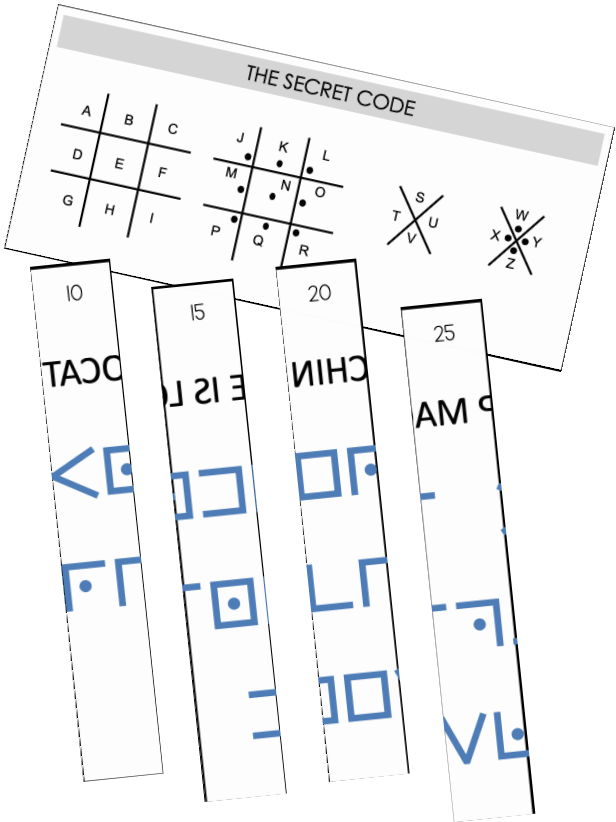
Two modified (one easier and one more difficult) versions of this activity are included.



**Obstacle #3: DECODE THE CLASSROOM MESSAGE**

The message on the map said to find the Mix-Up Machine! This must be how everything got so mixed up! You need to find this machine...FAST! You go to your classroom to see if you can find some clues about where this machine might be. You notice some papers on the table. Maybe this is a clue!

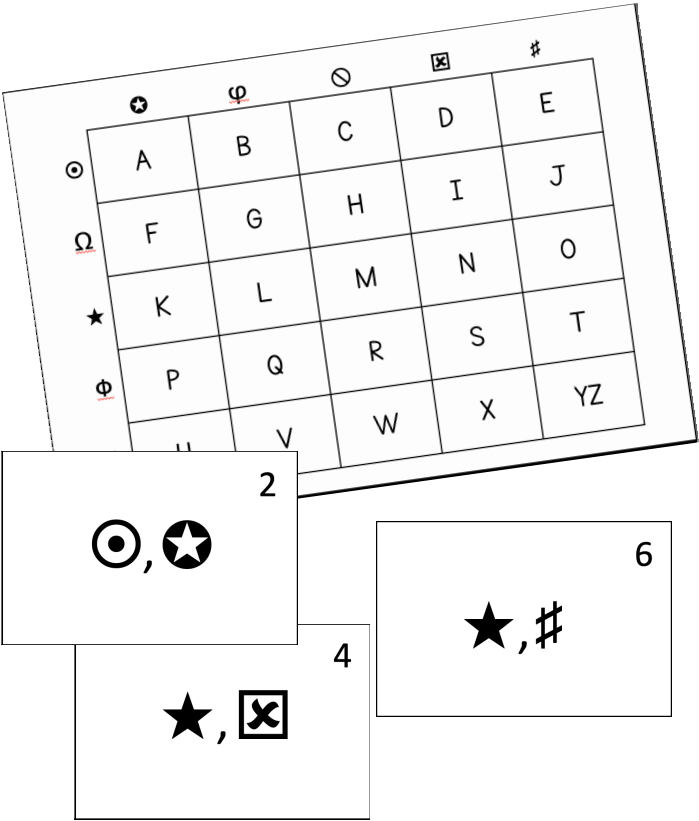
**YOUR TASK:** Count by 5's to put the paper strips in order. Then decode the message.



**Obstacle #4: GET INSIDE THE PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE**

The Mix Up Machine is under the principal's desk! Now you just need to get inside the principal's office without anyone seeing you. This secret mission is tougher than you thought! You wait for the perfect moment. As soon as you see the principal leave her office, you run to the door and turn the handle. It's locked! You'll have to figure out the secret code word to open the door and get inside!

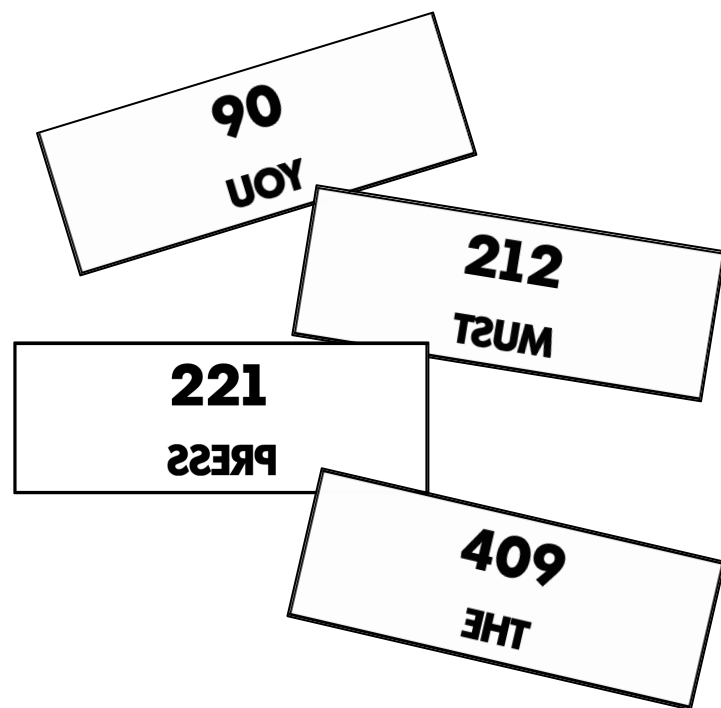
**YOUR TASK:** Figure out the secret code word to open the office door.



## Obstacle #5: FIND THE MIX-UP MACHINE

You get into the principal's office and look under her desk. You see the Mix Up Machine! Just as you are about to press the STOP button, something catches your eye. It's a note, but it's hard to understand because the words are all backwards and mixed up. You better figure out what this note says just in case it's important.

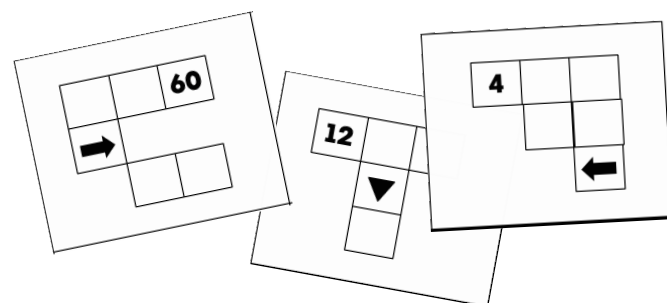
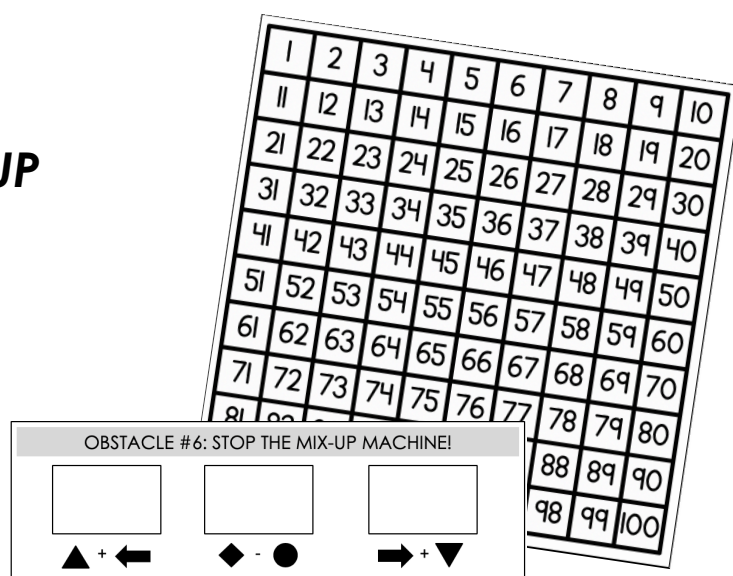
**YOUR TASK:** Order the papers from least to greatest (smallest to largest). This will reveal what the note says.



## Obstacle #6: STOP THE BACK TO SCHOOL MIX-UP

You'll need to press the button five times and then you can stop this back to school mix-up! You find the red button and try to push it, but it looks like you'll need to figure out a code first. You work quickly to figure it out. Let's stop this mix-up!

**YOUR TASK:** Use the 100 Chart to figure out what the symbols mean. Then use the symbols to fill in the number code.



*A modified (easier) version of this activity is included.*

congratulations!

**topped the**



congratulations

**You stopped the  
Mix-Up  
Machine!**

