

Stacking Dell Force10 MXL 10/40G Blade Switches

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Introduction

Numerous Dell switches include a stacking feature that allows multiple physical switches to operate as a single logical switch, providing a consolidated interface for management. The Dell Force10 MXL 10/40Gb switch is the latest Dell switch with this feature. Up to six Dell Force10 MXL switches can be connected in a single stack using QSFP+ (40Gb) ports.

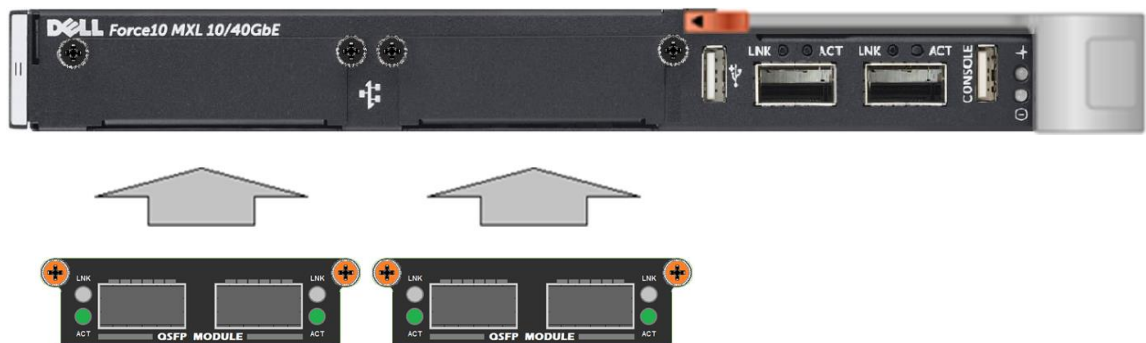
A single switch (Master) in the stack controls all switches in the stack thereby allowing the user to manage and configure all member switches and ports using one IP address. This IP address is copied from the Master to the Standby when the Standby is created. If for any reason the Master fails and the Standby takes over as the Master, the IP address of the stack will remain the same, allowing continuous management of the stack.

The *new* Master unit will also continue to use the *original* Master unit's MAC address which helps to reduce disruptions to the network. When a failed Master re-joins the stack, it does so as a member (not a Master) unless a new Master has not had time to be elected.

Up to four QSFP+ (40Gb) ports can be used for stacking on any member switch. Only two scenarios support using four ports. One uses all four ports in a daisy-chain stack topology containing only two switch members. The other uses a ring topology with two links between each member (see Figure 6). Three or four QSFP+ ports may also be used between each member in a daisy-chain topology containing only two member switches. The typical scenario uses one or two QSFP+ ports to connect stack members in a ring topology while allowing available QSFP+ ports for uplinks. Dell EMC recommends a ring topology (connecting the first and last members to create a loop) for a more resilient stack that helps avoid stack splits. Stack splits are covered below in more detail.

This document provides an easy to use step-by-step guide on how to configure stacking for the Dell Force10 MXL (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Dell Force10 MXL (10/40G Ethernet)



Optional expansion modules for the Dell Force 10 MXL include:

40G QSFP module (pictured)

- Use independently to stack or with built-in QSFP ports
- 2 ports @ 40Gb ea. or split to use as 8 ports @ 10Gb ea.
- Hot swappable in either bay
- Can add 1 or 2 QSFP expansion modules to blade switch
- Dell P/N 5KFVW

10GbaseT - 4 port module (not pictured)

10G SFP+ - 4 port module (not pictured)

Note: The Dell Force10 MXL can only be stacked with other Dell Force10 MXL switches.

Note: Only QSFP+ ports can be used for stacking and they must be in 40Gb mode. Stacking cannot be enabled on these ports when split into four 10Gb ports.

An important advantage of stacking is that it provides a consolidated interface for management of multiple switches linked together. After a stack is deployed in the network, operators can easily add units to the stack as their port requirements increase, with minimal administrative overhead. Additional stack members can immediately utilize existing configuration information such as routing and switching configurations, VLANs, ACLs, port profiles, and security certificates.

1.1 Redundancy

By connecting a cable from the last switch in a stack back to the first switch, the operator ensures that a stack has the protection of redundant paths for control and data traffic. Support for link aggregation groups (LAG) configured across multiple switches provides yet another layer of redundancy as well as adding bandwidth. This means that any single point of failure (a switch or a stack cable failure) will not affect the overall operation of the remaining stack elements. This type of stacking topology is referred to as a “*ring topology*”. The other stacking topology where the last and first switch are not connected is referred to as a *daisy-chain* topology stack. This type of stack is much less resilient and not recommended in most cases. Both topologies are mentioned several times in this document

1.2 Failover roles

If the stack Master fails (for example, loses power), it is removed from the stack topology. The Standby unit detects the loss of peering communication and takes ownership of the stack management, switching from Standby to Master. If a Standby was not set up by the administrator, the stack automatically triggers an election within the remaining units to select a new Master. While a new Master is being selected (either through election or pre-selection), a new Standby is also chosen from the remaining members based on the same criteria as a Master selection (priority, then highest MAC address).

After the former Master switch recovers, despite having a higher priority or MAC address, it does not recover its Master role but instead take the next available role as Standby or Member.

1.3 Stacking LAG

When multiple links between stack members are used, the Dell Force10 MXL automatically bundles them into a single logical link, or LAG, providing higher stacking bandwidth and redundancy. The stacking LAG is established automatically without user configuration once

all ports used in the LAG are set in stacking mode. The LAG can lose link or gain links simply by removing or inserting the cables.

1.4 Enablement of LAG/LACP on blade servers

Another benefit of stacking MXL switches is that it allows a blade server to create LAGs to the stacked switch. For example, if MXL switches are stacked in slots B1 and B2, then NICs on B1 and B2 on a given server could be configured for LAGs/LACP.

1.5 Meta-data

The actual stack configuration used to stack switches during power-up is read from meta-data, *not* from the startup configuration. It is applied at boot time prior to starting the switch firmware and reading the startup configuration. Stack information shown in the startup and running configurations is simply repeating information from the meta-data for the user's knowledge. Therefore, if the startup configuration is deleted and the switch is reloaded, it will not clear the stacking configuration and the stack will remain intact after the reload. In order to remove the stacking configuration, the "no" command will need to be implemented for each of the stack-unit commands that were used to create the stack.

Another way to completely wipe out all configurations and return to factory defaults is to erase the meta-data (NVRAM) and delete the startup configuration by following the instructions in *Restoring factory defaults* below.

1.6 Restoring factory defaults

Usually a standalone MXL can be set to factory defaults simply by deleting the startup configuration and reloading the switch (Step 2). However, once an MXL has been stacked, additional steps are required in order to remove the stacking configuration from the NVRAM meta-data. To completely remove all configurations (including stacking) and return to factory defaults on any stack member:

1. Unplug the stacking cables connecting the switch to the rest of the stack.
2. From the console prompt of the removed switch, type **delete startup-configuration** and press enter, then **reload** the system. If prompted to save the configuration, enter "no".
3. During reboot, press any key at the *second* prompt to get to the **BOOT_USER #** menu (the bootup process allows five seconds to press any key to get to this menu).
4. From the **BOOT_USER #** prompt, type **enable admin** to get into administrative mode. The default password is "ncorerulz", which brings up the **BOOT_ADMIN #** prompt.
5. Type **nvram erase <enter>**. Then type **reload <enter>**. When the reload completes, the switch will be at factory defaults.

1.7 Constant stack configuration

A minimum stack configuration is always present on a stack-capable switch. Even if a switch has never been stacked with other switches, it is still considered a "stack of 1", and therefore

will always contain “stack-unit” lines in the running configuration. Here is an example configuration of a device that is *not* stacked.

Note: FTOS starts numbering stack units at zero, so a single **stack-unit 0** as shown below is in fact a stack unit of 1.

```
FTOS#show running-config
Current Configuration ...
! Version 8.3.16.0E0
! Startup-config last updated at Thu May 3 11:49:39 2012
!
boot system stack-unit 0 primary system: A:
boot system stack-unit 0 secondary system: A:
boot system gateway 172.31.0.1
!
redundancy auto-synchronize full
!
hostname FTOS
!
username root password 7 d7acc8a1dcd4f698 privilege 15
!
stack-unit 0 provision MXL-10/40GbE
!
interface TenGigabitEthernet 0/1
no ip address
shutdown
!
interface TenGigabitEthernet 0/2
no ip address
--More--
```

Additional stack-unit lines like the one below may be found in an unstacked MXL if one or more expansion modules are present. In order to use these ports for stacking the quad mode will need to be removed.

```
stack-unit 0 port (41, 43, 49, 53) portmode quad
```

1.8 Bare Metal Provisioning

The system is configured for Bare Metal Provisioning (BMP) mode when it leaves the factory. Bare Metal Provisioning can be used to help configure a stack or a stand-alone system. With minimum effort, BMP can obtain IP address, running configuration and boot image information from a DHCP server. For more information regarding how to setup BMP, consult the *Dell Force10 MXL User Guide*.

2 Identifying physical units and ports in a stack

The Master will always have a blue LED illuminating steadily (not flashing). A stand-alone will also have the blue light illuminated since it is its own Master. Standby and Member units in the stack do not illuminate this light.

Note: The CMC shows each Master in the chassis and the fabric (A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, or C2) where it is located...

Figure 2. I/O module overview from the CMC

The screenshot shows the Dell Chassis Management Controller (CMC) interface. The main content area is titled "I/O Modules Status" and contains a table with the following data:

Slot	Health	Fabric	Name	Launch IOM GUI	Role	Power Status	Service Tag
A1	✓	10 GbE KR	Force10 MXL 10/40GbE		Master	On	0000000
A2							
B1	✓	10 GbE KR	Force10 MXL 10/40GbE		Master	On	0000000
B2							
C1	✓	10 GbE KR	Force10 MXL 10/40GbE		Master	On	0000000
C2	✓	10 GbE KR	Force10 MXL 10/40GbE		Master	On	0000000

The left sidebar shows the "Chassis Overview" and "Server Overview" sections. The "I/O Module Overview" section is expanded, showing the status of each I/O module (A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2) and their respective fabric types (10 GbE KR or Not Installed).

2.1 Port numbering

When installed in a PowerEdge™ M1000e Enclosure, the MXL 10/40GbE *external* switch ports are numbered 33 to 56 from the bottom to the top of the switch (ports 1-32 are *internal* 10G ports):

- 40GbE base-module (built-in) ports:
 - In 2x40GbE mode of operation (default), the ports are numbered 33 and 37.
 - In 8x10GbE mode of operation, the ports are numbered 33 through 40.

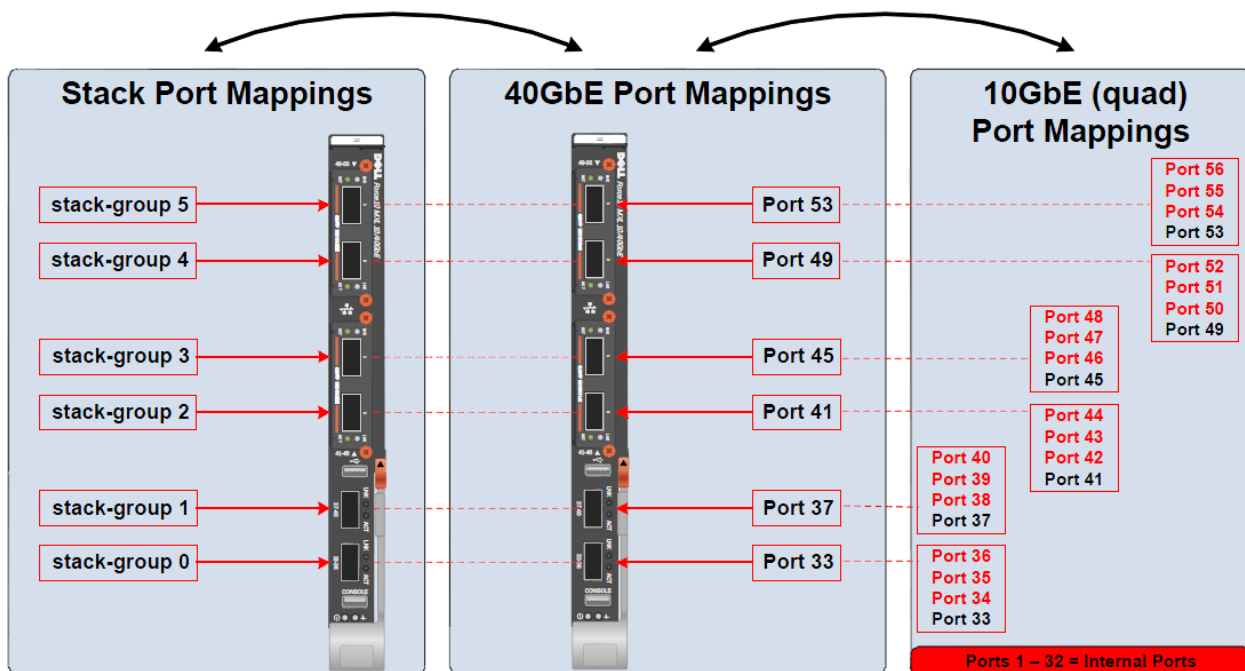
The 40GbE mode of operation is required for stacking. For information about how to change from 8x10GbE mode to 40GbE mode, refer to [Combining split 10GbE SFP+ ports into a single 40GbE QSFP+ port](#) below.

- 2-Port 40-GbE QSFP+ expansion module operating in the **default** 8x10GbE mode:
 - In expansion slot 0, the ports are numbered 41 to 44 and 45 to 48.
 - In expansion slot 1, the ports are numbered 49 to 52 and 53 to 56.

The 40GbE mode of operation is required for stacking. For information about how to change from 8x10GbE mode to 40GbE mode, refer to [Combining split 10GbE SFP+ ports into a single 40GbE QSFP+ port](#) below.

- 2-Port 40-GbE QSFP+ expansion module operating in 40GbE mode:
 - In expansion slot 0, the ports are numbered 41 and 45.
 - In expansion slot 1, the ports are numbered 49 and 53.
- 4-Port 10-GbE SFP+ or 10GBASE-T module (NOT USED FOR STACKING):
 - In expansion slot 0, the ports are numbered 41 to 44.
 - In expansion slot 1, the ports are numbered 49 to 52.
- Only one 10GBaseT expansion module can be installed per MXL.

Figure 3. Port mapping for QSFP+ ports



See [Port mapping](#) for a complete list of port numbers.

2.2 Combining split 10GbE SFP+ ports into a single 40GbE QSFP+ port

The MXL 10/40GbE Switch supports splitting each 40GbE port on the base module or a 2-Port 40GbE QSFP+ expansion module into eight 10GbE SFP+ ports using a breakout cable. However, ports must be combined into single 40GbE QSFP+ ports to operate in Stacking mode.

Note: By default, the 40GbE ports on a 2-Port 40GbE QSFP+ expansion module come up in 8x10GbE (quad) mode as eight 10GbE ports. If these ports are to be used for stacking, they must be converted to 40GbE using the steps below.

To *combine* four 10GbE split ports into a single 40GbE port, enter the command:

```
FTOS(conf)# no stack-unit <0-5> port <33, 37, 41, 45, 49, 53>
portmode quad
```

Save and reload for the changes to take effect.

To find the stack-unit number (0-5) of the stack-unit being viewed type the command:

```
FTOS(conf)# do show system brief
Stack MAC : 00:1e:c9:cc:bb:21
Reload Type : normal-reload [Next boot : normal-reload]
-- Stack Info --
Unit  UnitType  Status  ReqTyp  CurTyp  Version  Ports
-----
→ 0    Management online  MXL-10/40GbE  MXL-10/40GbE  8.3.16.0E0  56
1      Member      not present
2      Member      not present
3      Member      not present
4      Member      not present
5      Member      not present
```

Valid *port* values are 33 and 37 if there are no expansion modules installed, and 41, 45, 49, and 53 for expansion module ports when expansion modules are installed. See [Port numbering](#) for more information on how ports are numbered.

The last part of the command, “portmode quad” is required and typically converts the port to a split 10GbE SFP+ port. However, when preceding the command with the “no” option as in the example above, the ports are converted to a single 40GbE.

To complete the conversion to 40GbE, save the configuration and reload the switch.

```
FTOS# copy running-config startup-config
FTOS# reload
```

Display the current 40GbE or 4x10GbE mode of port operation using the following command:

```
FTOS# show running-config
```

Two different lines in the configuration can identify the port mode:

1. stack-unit 0 port 41 portmode quad

This example shows port 41 is in quad mode, which means ports 41, 42, 43, and 44 are each 10GbE. Only the first port number (33, 37, 41, 45, 49, and 53) for each QSFP+ is listed here when in port mode. If there is no “stack-unit” listing for the first port number, then the ports are not split and are running at 40GbE.

```
2. interface fortyGigE 0/33
:
interface TenGigabitEthernet 0/41
```

Each individual port mode is listed further down in the configuration. If the interface is listed as *fortyGigE* then it may be used for stacking. If it is *TenGigabitEthernet*, then it may not be used for stacking.

The command **show interface status** will also show which Ethernet mode each port is in and whether it is 10Gb (Speed = Auto) or 40Gb (Speed = 40000 Mbit). If the port is configured as a stack port, then **show interface status** will not display any information about that port.

When creating stack ports on an MXL, all ports must be fixed or on the expansion module. Mixing fixed and expansion module ports in order to stack is not supported.

3 Master selection criteria

A Master is elected or re-elected based on the following considerations, in order:

1. The switch with the highest Priority at boot time.
2. The switch with the highest MAC address at boot time.
3. A unit is selected as Standby by the administrator, and a fail over action is manually initiated or occurs due to a Master unit failure.

No record of previous stack mastership is kept when a stack loses power. As it reboots, the election process will once again determine the Master and Standby switches. As long as the Priority hasn't changed on any members, the stack will retain the same Master and Standby.

Note: Each stack members' role (including the Master and Standby) can be defined by the user at any time by setting the Priority.

If the entire stack is powered OFF and ON again, the unit that was the Master before the reboot will remain the Master after the stack resumes operation. However, when a stack is powered on, all members are in "sleep" mode for 5 seconds while waiting on the previous Master to join the stack. If the previous Master fails to join within 5 seconds, the remaining members (including the Standby) elect a new Master.

3.1 Manually selecting a Master during initial stack setup

When using two or more switches to initially create a stack, the Master is chosen based on the highest Priority first, then highest MAC address. To find the MAC address of a switch, type **show system** from a CLI prompt:

```
FTOS#show system
Stack MAC : 00:1e:c9:cc:bb:21
Reload Type : normal-reload [Next boot : normal-reload]
-- Unit 0 --
Unit Type      : Management Unit
Status         : online
Next Boot      : online
Required Type  : MXL-10/40GbE - 34-port GE/TE/FG (XL)
Current Type   : MXL-10/40GbE - 34-port GE/TE/FG (XL)
Master priority : 0
Hardware Rev   : X00
Num Ports     : 56
Up Time        : 1 wk, 3 day, 23 hr, 5 min
FTOS Version   : 8.3.16.0E0
Jumbo Capable  : yes
POE Capable    : no
→ Burned In MAC : 00:1e:c9:cc:bb:21
No Of MACs     : 3
```

To force a particular switch to become the Master during stack creation, be sure that switch has the highest Priority of all switches joining the stack. The switch with the highest Priority

number is elected Master. The default Priority is 0. Priorities for the stack-unit can be configured using the command 'stack-unit <unit-number> priority <1-14>' from the configuration mode as follows:

```
FTOS (conf) #stack-unit 0 priority ?  
                Priority Value  
FTOS (conf) #stack-unit 0 priority 12
```

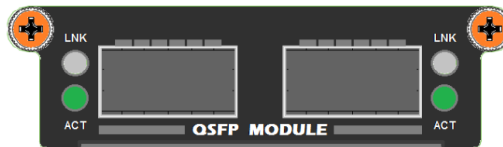
4 Stacking scenarios

The following section presents a variety of examples stacking Dell Force10 MXL switches, providing step-by-step CLI commands. Consult the table of contents for a list of examples covered in this document.

It is most important to have all switches on the same firmware version prior to stacking them. Be sure to update all switches to be used with the latest firmware to obtain the best results.

Unless noted, the example scenarios assume the switches are using the MXL built-in external ports 33 and 37 and that no expansion modules are installed providing additional external ports. However, once a QSFP+ expansion module is set to 40Gb mode, it can then be set to stacking mode just like the built-in QSFP+ ports. Each QSFP+ expansion module (Figure 2) installed provides two additional ports which can be used for stacking when in 40Gb port mode. Use the “**show system stack-port**” command to see if any ports are already in stacking mode.

Figure 4. QSFP+ two 40GbE port expansion for the MXL



Dell Force10 MXL modular blade switches may only be stacked using QSFP+ ports in 40GbE port mode.

QSFP+ built-in ports are set to 40Gb by default while expansion module QSFP+ ports are set to 10Gb ports by default. To change a port from 10Gb mode to 40Gb mode, use the command

```
FTOS (conf) #no stack-unit 0 port p portmode quad
Please save and reload for the changes to take effect.
```

where *p* is the port to be converted. Refer to the section [Combining split 10GbE SFP+ ports into a single 40GbE QSFP+ port](#) for more details on how to use this command.

Note: MXL stacking support QSFP+ cable lengths at distances of up to 7m. Dell EMC offers cables in lengths of 1m, 3m, 5m, and 7m that can be used for this purpose.

The Dell Force10 MXL supports stacking across multiple M1000e chassis (known as vertical stacking). That means it is possible to have six M1000e chassis', each one having an MXL installed with all six MXL switches being members of the same stack.

Figure 5 shows the connectivity between the stack members in M1000e chassis slots A2, B2, and C2 using a single 40Gb stacking port. Figure 6 shows the connectivity between stack members across multiple M1000e chassis using two stacking ports between members. All slots (A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2) in the M1000e are supported, and any of these slots can be used to stack along with any other slot or set of slots. There are no limitations as to which slots can be used and the number of chassis which can be used. The only limitation is six MXL devices. The follow lists possible scenarios:

- Stacking two to six Dell Force10 MXL switches using any combination of slots A1, A2, B1, B2, C1 and C2 in a single chassis.
- Stacking two to six Dell Force10 MXL switches using any combination of slots A1, A2, B1, B2, C1 and C2 in multiple chassis'.

Examples:

- Stacking six Dell Force10 MXL switches across six M1000e chassis , using slot A1 in first chassis, B2 in second, C1 in third, A1 in fourth, B1 in fifth, and B1 in sixth.
- Stacking six Dell Force10 MXL switches across two M1000e chassis, using slots B1, B2 and C2 in chassis 1 and slots B2, C1, and C2 in chassis 2.
- Stacking three Dell Force10 MXL switches across two M1000 chassis, using two slots in the first chassis and only one slot in the second.
- Any other way of stacking up to six MXL switches in up to six chassis.

Note: It is also possible to have multiple stacks in a single chassis (horizontal stacking) or across multiple chassis' (vertical stacking).

Figure 5. Stacking multiple MXL switches in a single M1000e

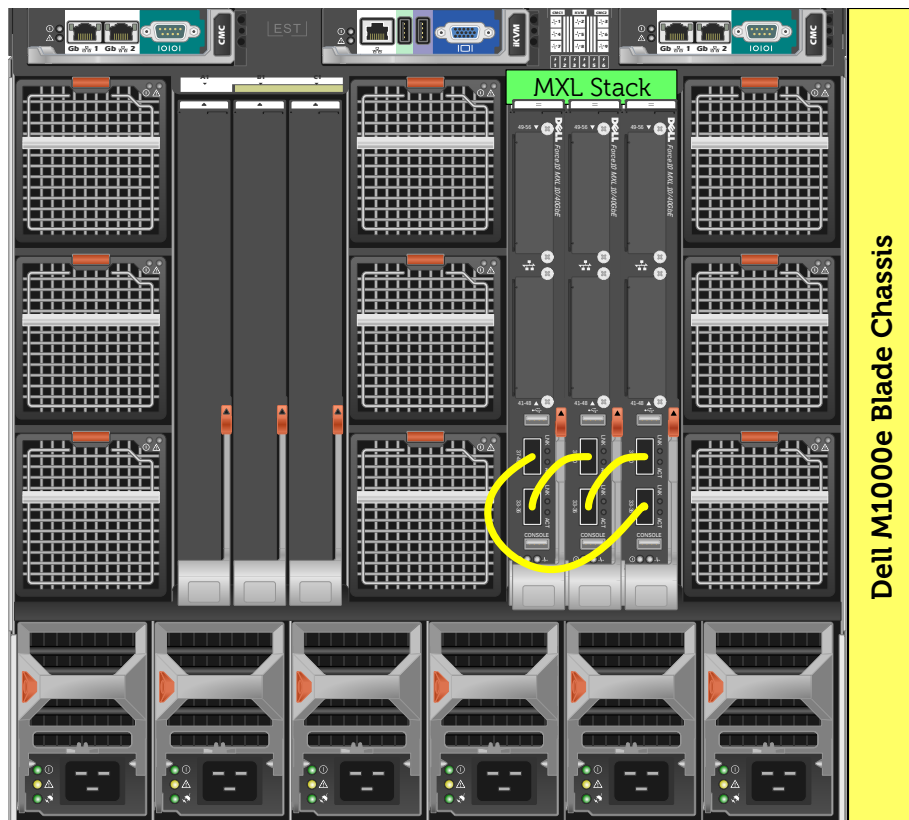


Figure 6. Stacking MXL switches across multiple M1000e chassis using two ports between members

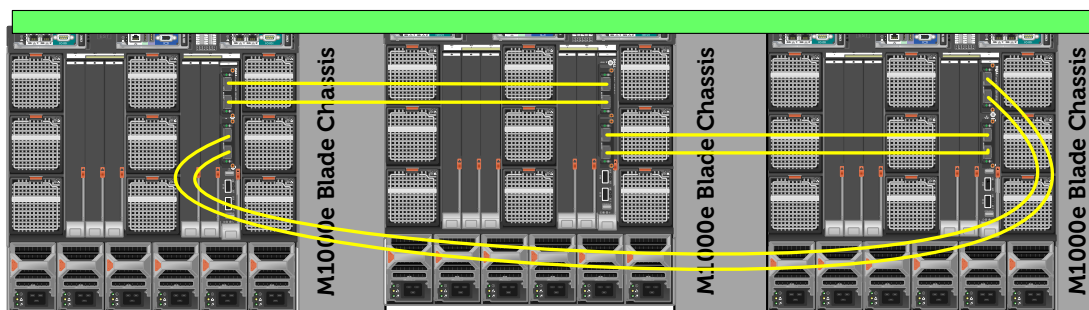


Figure 6 shows three MXL switches, each in slot A2 of three different M1000e chassis (vertical stacking), and all three wired for stacking using two links. A typical scenario like this one, uses either one or two links between members. A QSFP+ expansion module is required when using two links between switches in a stack with a ring topology as shown.

Note: When creating stack ports on an MXL, all ports must be fixed or on the expansion module. Mixing fixed and expansion module ports in order to stack is not supported.

The Dell M1000e Server Chassis includes a management console port on the CMC that allows management of each module from a single serial connection to the chassis. For more information, see the *Dell Blade Server CMC User's Guide* at <http://support.dell.com/support/edocs/software/smdrac3/cmc/index.htm>.

For this example the expansion ports 41, 45, 49, and 53 are used as shown in the above figure.

For each switch in the stack, two cables are run from stacking ports on a switch to the two stacking ports on the next switch. This process is repeated until all of the devices are connected. To complete the ring topology for the stack, two stacking ports on the last switch are connected to two stacking port on the first switch.

Connecting additional cables in parallel will increase the stacking bandwidth. Dell EMC recommends that you connect the stack in a ring topology for resiliency and also that you use the same number of ports between peers in the stack. For example, do not use two cables between switches 1 and 2, and 2 and 3, but then only one cable to connect 3 and 1.

Note: Up to four ports per MXL can be used to create a stack. All four ports on a member could be connected in parallel to another stack peer to create a stack of two members. Three ports could also be used in parallel to create a stack with only two members. To create a stack with three or more members, use 1 or 2 links between each member.

4.1 Creating the MXL stack

Prepare individual switches to be stacked

1. Identify all switches to be used as members of the stack, and upgrade each (as standalone MXL 10/40GbE switches) to the **same firmware version**.
2. Each MXL switch should be powered up with the default configuration.

- Once the initial switch configuration is complete and the individual MXL 10/40GbE switches are powered up and fully operational, they are then ready to be stacked using the instructions below.

Each 40GbE Interface corresponds to a stack-group, which is shown in the output of "**show system stack-unit 0 stack-group**" command. Use the "show inventory optional-module" command to see what expansion modules are installed.

Example:

```
FTOS#show system stack-unit 0 stack-group
```

Stack group	Ports
2	0/41
3	0/45
4	0/49
5	0/53

```
FTOS#show inventory optional-module
```

Unit	Slot	Expected	Inserted	Next Boot	Power
0	0	QSFP+	QSFP+	AUTO	Good
0	1	QSFP+	QSFP+	AUTO	Good

In this example, stack-groups 2 thru 5 correspond to two 40G QSFP+ expansion modules inserted in slots 0 and 1. Since stacking MXL switches does not use 10Gig Interfaces, there are never stack-groups associated with SFP+ or 10GbaseT ports that may be installed. Those modules and ports are only used for uplinks on the MXL switch.

Note: If an SFP+ module was present in Slot 1, and an QSFP+ module present in Slot 0, then stack-groups 4 and 5 would be unavailable, and only stack-groups 2 and 3 would be available, corresponding to interfaces 0/41 and 0/45.

Note: Activation of the ports using the **no shutdown** command isn't necessary on the ports to be used for stacking.

Configuring priority and stack-group

Using the commands below, configure the Priorities and stack-groups for each of the MXL 10/40GbE Switches.

Setting the Priority will determine which switch will become the management (Master) switch.

The switch with the highest priority number is elected Master. The default Priority is 0.

Priorities for the stack-unit can be configured using the command 'stack-unit <unit-number> priority <1-14>' from the configuration mode as follows:

```

FTOS (conf) #stack-unit 0 priority ?
<1-14>                                Priority Value
FTOS (conf) #stack-unit 0 priority 12

```

Note: It is best practice to assign priority values to all switches before stacking them to acquire and retain complete control over each unit's role in the stack.

Stack-groups (below) are easier to think of simply as “stack ports.” For example, using the **stack-group 0** command simply turns the lower port (port 33) into a stacking port, **stack-group 1** command turns the next port (port 37) into a stacking port, and so on. See [Figure 3](#) for a complete list of stacking-group mappings. The stack-group (port) for each stack-unit are configured using the command 'stack-unit <unit-no> stack-group <stack-group-id>' from the configuration mode as follows:

```

FTOS (conf) #stack-unit 0 stack-group 0
FTOS (conf) #02:26:05: %STKUNIT0-M:CP %IFMGR-6-STACK_PORTS_ADDED:
Ports Fo 0/33 have been configured as stacking ports. Please
save and reload for config to take effect

```

Continue to run the **stack-unit 0 stack-group** command to add additional stack ports to the switch, using the stack-group mapping shown in Figure 3.

Note: When creating stack ports on an MXL, all ports must be fixed or on the expansion module. Mixing fixed and expansion module ports in order to stack is not supported.

Maximum stack-group per unit

A maximum of 4 stack-groups per unit can be configured. In a ring topology, that would be 2 stack-groups in each direction, i.e. 80Gbps stacking bandwidth. In a two unit stack, a maximum of 4 stack-groups between the two units (i.e. 160Gbps stacking bandwidth) is allowed. Trying to configure more than 4 stack-groups results in the error shown here.

```

FTOS(conf)#do show system stack-unit 1 stack-group configured
Configured stack groups in stack-unit 1
-----
0
1
2
3
FTOS(conf)#stack-unit 1 stack-group 4
% Error: Max stacking bandwidth for a unit is reached.

```

Cabling the stack

After setting these values save the configuration on each switch and reload each switch. Once all switches to be used in the stack have reloaded, attach the stacking cables in a

supported topology using the MXL 40G-QSFP+ ports. It is recommended to attach the Master and Standby (based on priority or MAC address) first, then attach cables to the other members. As each cable is attached and each unit joins the stack for the first time, notice that the first available Unit-ID (0-5) is assigned to that unit, and the configuration for that unit is added into the running-configuration of the stack. Upon subsequent reloads, the unit-ID is retained by each stack member.

If a new member with a higher Priority than the current Master joins the stack, it will become the Master of that stack. As cables are added and units join, the stack is dynamically built with the highest priority switch becoming or staying the Master. The fastest and most efficient way to build the stack is to connect the Master and Standby first so the stack will not go into a Master re-election when it finds the higher Priority/MAC.

Validation

Issue the **show system brief** command to see the unit IDs present in the stack.

```
FTOS#show system brief
Stack MAC : 00:1e:c9:f1:00:7b
Reload Type : jump-start [Next boot : normal-reload]
-- Stack Info --
```

Unit	UnitType	Status	ReqTyp	CurTyp	Version	Ports
0	Management	online	MXL-10/40GbE	MXL-10/40GbE	8.3.16.0E0	56
1	Standby	online	MXL-10/40GbE	MXL-10/40GbE	8.3.16.0E0	56
2	Member	online	MXL-10/40GbE	MXL-10/40GbE	8.3.16.0E0	56
3	Member	online	MXL-10/40GbE	MXL-10/40GbE	8.3.16.0E0	56
4	Member	online	MXL-10/40GbE	MXL-10/40GbE	8.3.16.0E0	56
5	Member	online	MXL-10/40GbE	MXL-10/40GbE	8.3.16.0E0	56

Issue **show system stack-port status** command to see the topology and link status for each port.

```
FTOS#show system stack-port status
```

Topology: Daisy chain

Interface	Link Speed (Gb/s)	Admin Status	Link Status	Trunk Group
0/33	40	up	up	
0/37	40	up	up	
0/41	40	up	down	
0/45	40	up	down	
1/33	40	up	up	
1/37	40	up	up	
1/41	40	up	down	
1/45	40		up	down
2/33	40		up	down
2/37	40		up	up
2/41	40		up	down
2/45	40		up	down

3/33	40	up	down
3/37	40	up	up
3/41	40	up	down
3/45	40	up	down
:	:	:	:

Note: Each stack members' role (including the Master and Standby) can be redefined by the user at any time by setting the Priority values and reloading the stack.

Logical provisioning of a unit in a stack

If desired, a stack-unit number can be pre-allocated and applied to an MXL switch added to the stack at a later date. This pre-configuration is stored on the Master switch and applied once the stack unit is added. When you provision a unit number for an MXL 10/40GbE Switch:

- The base-module ports on the switch (ports 33 and 37/stack groups 0 and 1) are pre-configured for 40GbE operation.
- The 40GbE ports on FlexIO expansion modules (ports 41 and 45 in slot 0; ports 49 and 53 in slot 1) are pre-configured for 4x10GbE (quad mode) operation.

Once logical provisioning of a unit has been applied using the commands below, configurations can be made on that unit as if it were an actual physical unit.

```
FTOS (conf) #stack-unit 1 provision ?
MXL-10/40GbE          34-port GE/TE/FG (XL)
FTOS (conf) #stack-unit 1 provision MXL-10/40GbE
```

Certain configuration changes on the unit such as “fanout” and “stack-groups” may require saving and reloading the entire stack. Refer to the *MXL User Guide* for more information on provisioning.

4.2 Adding new members to an existing stack

Adding a new member into an existing stack is achieved with the same simple tasks used during the initial stack setup. If more than one new member is to be added, repeat the following steps to add one new member at a time.

1. Prepare the switch using steps found in section [Prepare individual switches to be stacked](#) found on page 16.
2. If adding to a *ring topology stack*, cable the new switch into the stack using the following steps:
 - a. Unplug one end of any QSFP+ cable from any of the existing stack members.
 - b. Take the end just unplugged and plug into a QSFP+ port of the new switch.
 - c. Take a second (new) cable and plug one end into the other QSFP+ port of the new switch, and the other end into the port that was unplugged from in step 1 above.
3. If adding to a *daisy-chain topology stack*, cable the new switch into the stack using a new cable, plugging one end into the QSFP+ port of the new switch, and the other

end into a stack port on the end member switch.

Note: Unplugging stacking cables between two members of a daisy-chain stack will create a stack split, immediately causing the switch or set of switches that were separated from the Master to become a new Master of its own stack.

4. Repeat step 2 or 3 for additional cables to be added between stack members.
5. Follow steps in [Configuring priority and stack-group](#) on [page 17](#) to complete the stack addition. At the end of this step, only the switch being added will need to be reloaded.
6. Verify the new member was added using the **show system brief** command from the Master switch as shown on [page 19](#).

Once the new members have joined the stack, they are ready to be configured to include VLANs, LAGs, data cables to other equipment, etc.

4.3 Updating firmware on a stack

Important: Be sure to check the Release Notes and any special install instructions that may have come with new firmware updates. It is important to follow instructions found in those documents if they deviate from this white paper.

Steps for upgrading the firmware on a stack of switches are similar to upgrading the firmware on a single switch. After downloading a new image to the Master by using the **upgrade** command in the CLI, the downloaded image is distributed to all member units of the stack. The instructions below will guide the user through these steps.

Note: When upgrading a stack of switches, allow extra time between upgrade steps for files and configurations to be copied from the Master to each member unit. It is possible for the process of upgrading a switch stack to take a few minutes longer than upgrading a single switch.

1. Find the version of firmware each stack member is currently running.

```
FTOS#show system brief
Stack MAC : 00:1e:c9:cc:bb:1b
Reload Type : normal-reload [Next boot : normal-reload]
-- Stack Info --
Unit  UnitType  Status   ReqTyp    CurTyp    Version   Ports
-----
0   Standby    online   MXL-10/40GbE  XL-10/40GbE  8.3.16.0E0  56
1   Management online   MXL-10/40GbE  MXL-10/40GbE  8.3.16.0E0  56
2   Member     online   MXL-10/40GbE  MXL-10/40GbE  8.3.16.0E0  56
3   Member     online   MXL-10/40GbE  MXL-10/40GbE  8.3.16.0E0  56
4   Member     online   MXL-10/40GbE  MXL-10/40GbE  8.3.16.0E0  56
5   Member     online   MXL-10/40GbE  MXL-10/40GbE  8.3.16.0E0  56
```

2. Find which of the two boot files is currently active on the Master switch. In the example below, the A file is active as indicated by the [boot] option.

```
FTOS#show boot system stack-unit all
```

```
Current system image information in the system:
```

Type	Boot Type	A	B
Stack-unit 0	FLASH BOOT	8.3.15.0[boot]	8.2.1.0

3. Upgrade the image from a tftp server to the Master switches inactive file. This example shows B will be replaced with the new firmware file. Firmware file A not be overwritten and will remain active for now.

Caution: The command below may take several minutes to complete and may appear to be locked up during this time.

```
FTOS#upgrade system tftp://10.10.10.1/FTOS-XL-8-3-16-0.bin b:
!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
31972525 bytes successfully copied
System image upgrade completed successfully.
Upgrade system image for all stack-units [yes/no]: yes
!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
Image upgraded to all
```

4. Verify the new firmware was copied to all stack members.

```
FTOS#show boot system stack-unit all
```

```
Current system image information in the system:
```

Type	Boot Type	A	B
Stack-unit 0	FLASH BOOT	8.3.15.0[boot]	8-3-16-0
Stack-unit 1	FLASH BOOT	8.3.15.0[boot]	8-3-16-0
Stack-unit 2	FLASH BOOT	8.3.15.0[boot]	8-3-16-0
Stack-unit 3	FLASH BOOT	8.3.15.0[boot]	8-3-16-0
Stack-unit 4	FLASH BOOT	8.3.15.0[boot]	8-3-16-0
Stack-unit 5	FLASH BOOT	8.3.15.0[boot]	8-3-16-0

5. Configure the stack to boot to the new firmware file (B in this example), then save the configuration.

```
FTOS#config
```

```
FTOS (conf)#boot system stack-unit all primary system b:
```

```
FTOS (conf)#exit
```

```
FTOS#copy running-config startup-config
```

```

File with same name already exist.
Proceed to copy the file [confirm yes/no]: yes
!
11910 bytes successfully copied
Synchronizing data to peer Stack-unit
!!!!
...

```

6. Reload the stack to activate the new firmware.

```

FTOS#reload
Proceed with reload [confirm yes/no]: yes

```

Wait for reload to complete. This may take a few minutes longer than upgrading a single switch.

7. Verify the new firmware is active on all stack members.

```

FTOS#show boot system stack-unit all
Current system image information in the system:
=====

```

Type	Boot Type	A	B
Stack-unit 0	FLASH BOOT	8.3.15.0	8-3-16-0 [boot]
Stack-unit 1	FLASH BOOT	8.3.15.0	8-3-16-0 [boot]
Stack-unit 2	FLASH BOOT	8.3.15.0	8-3-16-0 [boot]
Stack-unit 3	FLASH BOOT	8.3.15.0	8-3-16-0 [boot]
Stack-unit 4	FLASH BOOT	8.3.15.0	8-3-16-0 [boot]
Stack-unit 5	FLASH BOOT	8.3.15.0	8-3-16-0 [boot]

4.4 Un-stacking (removing member units)

Minimizing traffic flow interruptions is always the primary goal when removing member units from a stack. Four possible scenarios pertaining to unstacking or removing a member unit are:

1. Intentionally reducing the size of a ring topology stack
2. Intentionally reducing the size of a daisy-chain topology stack
3. Removing or replacing a failed member unit on a ring topology stack
4. Removing or replacing a failed member unit on a daisy-chain topology stack

Removing a unit from a *ring topology* is easy because of the built-in redundancy of the stack. Eliminating links (intentionally or from failure) between any two members simply turns the ring topology into a daisy-chain topology, allowing all traffic to continue through the stack. After physically removing a stack member, simply connect the two sets of stack ports on the two switches that were previously attached to the switch that was removed. The stack will resync while regaining a resilient ring topology.

On a *daisy-chain topology* stack, after physically removing an *end member* unit (one that is only connected to one other member), there is nothing else to do. However, when removing a member unit from the middle of a daisy-chain stack, there are a few additional steps required

to prevent a split stack. A split stack occurs on a daisy-chain topology when any link (or switch) in the middle of the stack fails or is removed. The side of the split that has the Master will remain intact, while the side of the split with no Master will detect its Master is lost and therefore re-elects a new Master. When this occurs it leaves two stacks. Both stacks now share the same IP address which will cause problems if on the same network. To prevent stack split issues on the network, disconnect one of the stacks from the network and reconfigure the stack to a new IP address using the Master console port.

To remove stacking configurations and return to individual switches, unplug the stacking cables going to the switch(es) that are to be unstacked. From the console prompt of a switch that has been unplugged, run all or a subset of the following commands in config mode. Use the chart in [Figure 3](#) on [page 9](#) to find the stack-group that correlates with each port:

```
FTOS (conf) #no stack-unit 0 stack-group 0
FTOS (conf) #no stack-unit 0 stack-group 1
FTOS (conf) #no stack-unit 0 stack-group 2
FTOS (conf) #no stack-unit 0 stack-group 3
FTOS (conf) #no stack-unit 1 stack-group 0
FTOS (conf) #no stack-unit 1 stack-group 1
FTOS (conf) #no stack-unit 1 stack-group 2
FTOS (conf) #no stack-unit 1 stack-group 3
FTOS (conf) #no stack-unit 2 stack-group 0
FTOS (conf) #no stack-unit 2 stack-group 1
FTOS (conf) #no stack-unit 2 stack-group 2
FTOS (conf) #no stack-unit 2 stack-group 3
:
:
FTOS (conf) #no stack-unit 5 stack-group 2
FTOS (conf) #no stack-unit 5 stack-group 3
FTOS (conf) #exit
```

Save the configuration and reload.

```
FTOS#copy running-config startup-config
File with same name already exist.
Proceed to copy the file [confirm yes/no]: yes
!
9582 bytes successfully copied
Synchronizing data to peer Stack-unit
!!!!
....
FTOS#reload
```

Once the reload has completed, unplug stacking cables from all ports where stacking was removed.

4.5 Renumbering stack units

Renumbering a Master, Standby or member unit, requires the **stack-unit renumber** command and a reload of one or more switches:

- Renumbering the Master switch requires a reload of the entire stack
- Renumbering the Standby switch only requires that switch to reload, but a different member switch is elected as the new Standby

- Renumbering a member switch requires a reload of that switch only
- Renumbering any unit in the middle of a daisy-chain topology stack may require a stack-split and subsequent stack-merge to occur
- Renumbering a switch to a number already assigned to another stack unit results in following error message:
“Renumbering will reset the unit. Warning: Interface configuration for current unit will be lost! Proceed to renumber [confirm yes/no].”

Use the following command to renumber:

```
FTOS#stack-unit 1 renumber 5
Renumbering will reset the unit. Proceed to renumber [confirm
yes/no]:
```

If the new number which we want to assign is already used by an existing member of the stack, the below error will occur.

```
FTOS#stack-unit 1 renumber 5
% ERROR: stack unit 5 already exists.
```

If the new number assignment is already used by a logically provisioned unit in the stack, the below confirmation message to overwrite is displayed.

```
FTOS#stack-unit 1 renumber 5
Stack unit 5 has configuration data. Overwrite? [confirm yes/no]:
```

Caution: Renumbering stack units may hinder management scripts and monitoring software that collects data based on particular port traffic. Use renumbering with caution when monitoring ports and be aware that scripts and monitoring parameters may need to be modified.

For more information on stacking the Dell Force10 MXL, please refer to the Stacking chapter of the *Dell Force10 MXL User Guide* available at <http://www.dell.com/manuals>.

A Stacking scenarios

Dell Force10 MXL - Physical Stacking Scenarios									
Below are 24 stacking possibilities for the Dell Force10 MXL Blade Switch using the recommended ring topology method of stacking. This list represents only the scenarios available when all MXL switches have the same hardware configuration and are cabled in a daisy-chain topology. There are dozens of other scenarios that can be obtained as well using MXLs with different hardware configurations or when using a daisy-chain topology. Though not recommended, the non-resilient daisy-chain stack can be created from an existing resilient (ring) stack by simply removing all cables between two members of a stack containing 3 or more members. If creating the stack for the first time, simply do not link the last member back to the first, creating a daisy-chain stack.									
Each scenario given can be used within a single M1000e chassis or configured across multiple chassis'.									
	QSFP ports per Switch	QSFP ports used per switch for Stacking	Links between Stack members	Stack members including Master and Standby	Available 40GbE QSFP ports for uplinks from stack	Ring topology for resilient stacking is used	Stack Bandwidth (GbE)	Internal 10GbE ports supported in Stacked switch	External 10GbE ports supported in Stacked switch (QSFP in Quad mode)
MXL switch (no module installed)	2	1	1	2	2	N/A	40	64	8
		2	1	3	0	Yes	40	96	0
		2	1	4	0	Yes	40	128	0
		2	1	5	0	Yes	40	160	0
		2	1	6	0	Yes	40	192	0
		2	2	2	0	N/A	80	64	0
1 QSFP module installed	4	1	1	2	6	N/A	40	64	24
		2	1	3	6	Yes	40	96	24
		2	1	4	8	Yes	40	128	32
		2	1	5	10	Yes	40	160	40
		2	1	6	12	Yes	40	192	48
		2	2	2	4	N/A	80	64	16
2 QSFP modules installed	6	1	1	2	10	N/A	40	64	40
		2	1	3	12	Yes	40	96	48
		2	1	4	16	Yes	40	128	64
		2	1	5	20	Yes	40	160	80
		2	1	6	24	Yes	40	192	96
		2	2	2	8	N/A	80	64	32
		3	3	2	6	N/A	120	64	24
		4	2	3	6	Yes	80	96	24
		4	2	4	8	Yes	80	128	32
		4	2	5	10	Yes	80	160	40
		4	2	6	12	Yes	80	192	48
		4	4	2	4	N/A	160	64	16
2 QSFP modules installed Unsupported Scenarios	6	5*	5	2	2	N/A	200	64	8
		6*	3	3	0	Yes	120	96	0
		6*	3	4	0	Yes	120	128	0
		6*	3	5	0	Yes	120	160	0
		6*	3	6	0	Yes	120	192	0
		6*	6	2	0	N/A	240	64	0

When creating stack ports on an MXL, all ports must be fixed or on the expansion module. Mixing fixed and expansion module ports in order to stack is not supported.

* When there are six QSFP+ ports available on the switch, a maximum of 4 ports may be used for stacking on that switch.

B Port mapping

Dell Force10 MXL - Port Mapping				
	QSFP+ 2x40G	QSFP+ 8x10G SFP+	SFP+ 4x10G	10G-BaseT 4x10G
IO Bay Two		56		
		55		
		54		
	53	53		
		52	52	52
		51	51	51
		50	50	50
	49	49	49	49
IO Bay One		48		
		47		
		46		
	45	45		
		44	44	44
		43	43	43
		42	42	42
	41	41	41	41
Fixed QSFP Ports		40		
		39		
		38		
	37	37		
		36		
		35		
		34		
	33	33		
32 1G / 10G Internal Ports	32	32	32	32
	31	31	31	31

	2	2	2	2
	1	1	1	1

C Network switch versions

Version information for the network switches used in creating this document are as follows:

Network switch	Dell Force10 XML
Software version	8.3.16.0, E8.3.16.163, E8.3.16.0E0