

Want to try Jigsaw in *your* class?

What is Jigsaw?

The jigsaw technique is so named because students first form “expert” groups that research and refine their expertise in one topic before splitting up and reforming into “teaching” groups that contain a member from each different area of expertise. In their new groups, each student-expert teaches the other members about the topic s/he has become expert in. A variation is to allow the students to act as experts all together as a group and share their knowledge with the entire class.

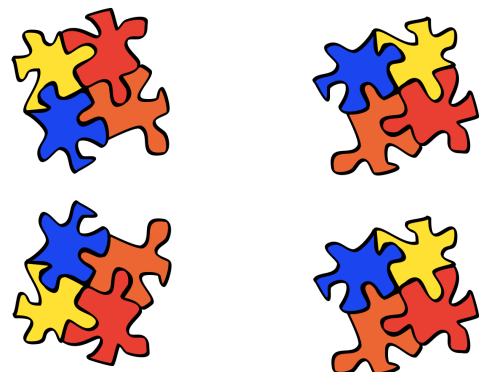
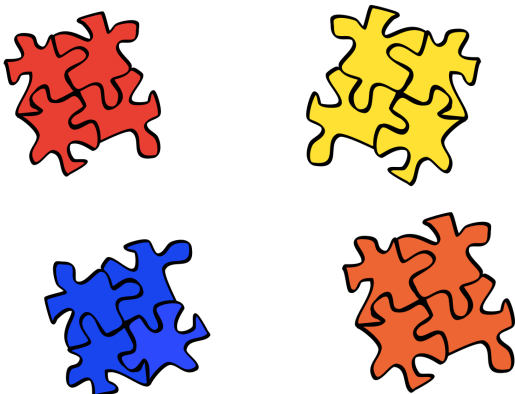
Jigsaw At-a-glance	
Prep	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assign topics to student groups • Check physical layout of the room—Does it allow for students to move freely? • Set time constraints for session(s)
During	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce the activity • Keep track of time
After	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan a Post-activity exercise

Prep

- Assign topics to student groups:
 - Decide how big you want each jigsaw group to be (4 or 5 students is typical). The number of students you have per group equals the number of topics you need to generate ahead of time. Note that, depending on your pedagogical aims, rather than assigning 4-5 disparate topics, you might assign 4-5 subtopics that belong to one overarching topic (for example, if the overarching topic is the Civil War, you might ask each group to become expert on: a) military generals, b) major battles, c) slavery and the outcome for African Americans, and d) the importance of the Mississippi River).
 - After they receive their topic, the idea is that all of the students in the initial group will now become expert in that topic. Be clear with your students about what constitutes acceptable evidence or expertise in your discipline. *Do you expect them to cite research from peer-reviewed articles? Do personal experiences count?*
- Check the physical layout of the room—Does it allow for students to move around freely?

Students in their
“expert” groups

Students in their
“teaching” groups



- Set time constraints for session(s):
 - A Jigsaw activity can easily be stretched over two class sessions. For example, you could have students work in their “expert” groups during session 1 and then have students re-form in their “teaching” groups for session 2. Alternatively, you may ask students to conduct research as a homework assignment and to meet in their expert groups to share and discuss the results of this research immediately prior to switching into their “teaching” groups in the same class session.

During

- Introduce the activity:
 - **Script:** *Today we are going to do a classroom jigsaw. [Break students into expert groups]. You are now in your expert groups. Your task is to become experts in [insert topic here]. Spend the time you have together refining your understanding of [insert topic here].*
 [Have expert groups break apart and re-form into teaching groups. Teaching groups contain one member from each expert group.] *You are now in your teaching groups. Each of you is an expert in a different aspect of [insert topic]. Your task now is to teach your topic to the other members of your group.*
- Keep track of time
 - Remind students when it is time to move from their expert groups to their teaching groups.

After

- Plan a Post-activity exercise:
 - Following the jigsaw session, it’s a good idea to ask students to write or talk about the information covered or the insights they gleaned from the session. A follow-up activity gives students the opportunity to consolidate information, ask questions about points of lingering confusion, and to reflect on new insights.

<i>Post-Session Options</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have students create a poster that integrates their understanding of all of the different topics discussed during the jigsaw. • Hold a whole-class discussion to debrief the session. Aim to uncover any lingering points of confusion. • Ask students who were initially experts in topic A to report on their understanding of topic B and so on. Have they successfully learned a new topic at the level of the experts? Ask their peers from the original expert group to provide feedback on their performance.