

Handout 2

Engaging Instructional Activities



Jigsaw

The jigsaw classroom is very simple to use following these steps:

1. Divide students into 5- or 6-person jigsaw groups. The groups should be diverse in terms of gender, ethnicity, race, and ability.
2. Appoint one student from each group as the leader. Initially, this person should be the most mature student in the group.
3. Divide the day's lesson into 5-6 segments. For example, if you want history students to learn about Eleanor Roosevelt, you might divide a short biography of her into stand-alone segments on: (1) Her childhood, (2) Her family life with Franklin and their children, (3) Her life after Franklin contracted polio, (4) Her work in the White House as First Lady, and (5) Her life and work after Franklin's death.
4. Assign each student to learn one segment, making sure students have direct access only to their own segment.
5. Give students time to read over their segment at least twice and become familiar with it. There is no need for them to memorize it.
6. Form temporary "expert groups" by having one student from each jigsaw group join other students assigned to the same segment. Give students in these expert groups time to discuss the main points of their segment and to rehearse the presentations they will make to their jigsaw group.
7. Bring the students back into their jigsaw groups.
8. Ask each student to present her or his segment to the group. Encourage others in the group to ask questions for clarification.

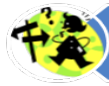
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9. Float from group to group, observing the process. If any group is having trouble (e.g., a member is dominating or disruptive), make an appropriate intervention. Eventually, it's best for the group leader to handle this task. Leaders can be trained by whispering an instruction on how to intervene, until the leader gets the hang of it.
10. At the end of the session, give a quiz on the material so that students quickly come to realize that these sessions are not just fun and games but really count.

Source:

<http://www.jigsaw.org/steps.htm>

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Corners

This structure is designed to allow participants to get to know themselves and each other better. It can be used as a content-related class-builder or used after a lesson as a review. The steps are:

- a. The facilitator announces the corners (please see the links below for ideas).
- b. Participants think about their choices.
- c. They write down their choices on a piece of paper.
- d. They go to the corner of their choice.
- e. They talk with others in the corner about why they chose it.
- f. A spokesperson from the corner shares with the whole group about why they chose it.
- g. After hearing all of the reasons, participants can then change corners.
- h. Participants return to their tables and review their reasons.

Variations and more information can be found on the following sites:

[eHow four corners](#)

[Suite 101 four corners](#)

[University of Regina four corners](#)



Round Table

This structure is designed to give everyone in the group an equal chance at participation. Starting with one participant, each person gets 1- 3 minutes going clockwise or counterclockwise, to present their point of view. This structure can be used as a warm-up, evaluation, or to share something learned or a point of view.



Inside/Outside Circle

Overview

During this strategy, students form two different circles: half of the group stands in a circle facing outward while the other half forms a circle around them facing inward. Students exchange information until the teacher signals the outer circle to move in one direction. The students now have a different partner with whom to exchange.

Steps

1. Decide which students will be in each circle (inside and outside).
2. Put a question or statement on the board.
3. Give students at least ten seconds to think on their own ("think time").
4. Ask students in the inside circle to share their response with the classmate facing them in the outside circle. When they have done this, ask them to say "pass", at which point the students in the outside circle will share their responses with the classmate facing them in the inside circle.
5. Have the outside circle move one step to the left or right and discuss the same question with the new partner. Option: post a new question for another discussion.

Hints and Management Ideas

- *Pre-assign groups.* You can use letters (a–b–c) to divide the class into two or more groups as needed.
- *Change partners.* Move the outside or inside circle at least one step to the right or left so students have the opportunity to communicate with more than one partner.
- *Monitor the discussions* for common misconceptions and to make sure that students are on task.

Benefits of Inside-Outside Circle

- When students have appropriate “think time”, the quality of their responses improves.
- Students are actively engaged in thinking with different questions and different partners.
- The activity encourages community building among students while incorporating movement and interaction.
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- Many students find it safer or easier to enter into a discussion with another classmate rather than with a large group.
- No specific materials are needed for the strategy, so it can be easily incorporated into lessons.

For more detailed information, refer to Bennett, B. and C. Rolheiser. *Beyond Monet: The Artful Science of Instructional Integration*. Toronto, Ontario: Bookation, 2001.

Source: http://www.eworkshop.on.ca/edu/pdf/Mod36_coop_inside-outside.pdf



Numbered Heads

What Is It?

Numbered Heads Together is a [cooperative learning](#) strategy that holds each student accountable for learning the material. Students are placed in groups and each person is given a number (from one to the maximum number in each group). The teacher poses a question and students "put their heads together" to figure out the answer. The teacher calls a specific number to respond as spokesperson for the group. By having students work together in a group, this strategy ensures that each member knows the answer to problems or questions asked by the teacher. Because no one knows which number will be called, all team members must be prepared.

Why Is It Important?

This cooperative learning strategy promotes discussion and both individual and group accountability. This strategy is beneficial for reviewing and integrating subject matter. Students with special needs often benefit when this strategy is used. After direct instruction of the material, the group supports each member and provides opportunities for practice, rehearsal, and discussion of content material.

Group learning methods encourage students to take greater responsibility for their own learning and to learn from one another, as well as from the instructor (Terenzini & Pascarella, 1994).

Cooperative learning has been shown to increase student [achievement](#), [race relations](#), acceptance of [special needs students](#), and [self-esteem](#) (Slavin, 1995).

How Can You Make It Happen?

1. Divide the students into groups of four and give each one a number from one to four.
2. Pose a question or a problem to the class.
3. Have students gather to think about the question and to make sure everyone in their group understands and can give an answer.

4. Ask the question and call out a number randomly.
5. The students with that number raise their hands, and when called on, the student answers for his or her team.

How Can You Stretch Students' Thinking?

This is a flexible strategy that can be used at a variety of levels. The teacher may start with factual information questions, and as students become more familiar with the strategy, ask questions that require analysis or synthesis of information. Student groups can be given statements such as, "School uniforms help to keep students focused on academics." Students' task is to come to consensus on whether they agree or disagree, giving an explanation of their reasoning.

After the students respond, have the other groups agree or disagree with the answer by showing a thumbs up or thumbs down, and then explain their reasoning. Or, if the answer needs clarifying, ask another student to expand on the answer.

When Can You Use It?

Reading/English

Comprehension questions can be posed to groups, and students can work together to find the answers. For example, when reading a story, students can be given the task of analyzing one of the characters. They can be asked questions such as, "Which character traits are stated directly, and which are implied by the author?" and "What information do you get from the character's speech and actions?"

Writing

Students can evaluate the quality of a piece of writing using a [rubric](#). Have students review the writing as a group and assign scores as a group. Ask them to respond with their scores and rationale using the numbered heads together strategy.

Math

Numbered heads together can be used when solving [math problems](#). Ask questions such as "What are the facts in this problem?" "Which strategy would be most appropriate?" and "What solution did your group agree on?"

Social Studies

This strategy can be used after reading a chapter in a text, or after material has been presented. Ask clarifying questions about the text and have students find and discuss the answers. When groups are ready, review the answers using this strategy.

Science

This strategy can be used in preparation for a test or [quiz](#). Allow time for students to study together in their groups and perhaps create questions that might be on the test or quiz. Using the numbered heads together strategy, ask questions about the material that will be on the test or quiz.

Source: www.teachervision.fen.com



Fishbowl

Fishbowl activities allow a student to practice a skill under peer review and audience. In the fishbowl activity, a group of students are chosen to discuss a given topic. The rest of the class watches, listens, or reads the transcript of the discussion. A secondary discussion occurs concerning the outcomes and process of the first. Another technique is to remove one student from a discussion who is then responsible for providing a summary.

Goals & Objectives:

There can be several primary goals of a fishbowl activity. The goals can actually differ based upon whether the student is inside or outside of the fishbowl as well. The following suggestions are separated by the participant's duty.

During and after performing the Fishbowl activity, students will...

- If in the fishbowl
 - demonstrate their knowledge of topic A...
 - provide a logical argument for a position concerning topic A...
- If observing the fishbowl
 - evaluate the arguments presented by others...
 - reflect on new insights provided by the discussion.
- Everyone
 - develop a higher awareness of the concept...
 - have an increased understanding of various viewpoints...

...as determined by successfully attending to 80% of rubric items.

Prerequisites:

The instructor usually decides on the topic. The instructor should provide some carefully constructed questions to help guide the discussion.

Students in the fishbowl must become well versed in the topic and able to discuss it intelligibly.

Materials and Resources:

The instructor provides [instructions](#). Students in the fishbowl may require more active online access during the activity.

Guiding Questions for this Lesson:

How well can the student learn and subsequently discuss a given concept?

Lesson Outline and Procedure:

Students in the fishbowl discuss and possibly debate a point of information or topic currently being learned. Students observing the fishbowl provide feedback and personal observations.

1. First, the instructor introduces materials for the students to learn a given concept.
2. A group of students are then assigned the fishbowl role. These assignments can be made at the beginning of the term in order to facilitate student schedules during the course.
3. Those in the fishbowl then actively discuss the topic. This discussion can be purely informational or it could be in the form of a debate. The students could also be conducting group work while others watch. The bowl may also be synchronous or asynchronous or even both.
4. During the fishbowl discussion, the instructor may provide guiding questions. Only those in the fishbowl should respond or actively participate.
5. Following the fishbowl, the observers [compose](#) a constructive critique or summary of the discussion. These can be public or submitted directly to the instructor.
6. All students incorporate what they have learned during the activity into another activity such as a journal or module reflection.
7. The instructor may provide a final summary point for the discussion before beginning the next unit of activity.

Teaching Strategies:

- Keep it constructive. Any student comments need to be constructive from the gallery in order to make those in the fishbowl comfortable.
- Keep the topic interesting, to motivate some students to actively participate while being observed by others.
- Students in the fishbowl must have the opportunity to share what they know.
- Be careful of peripheral participation. Some students learn best in the observing role, but everyone must participate at some point in the actual fishbowl in order to demonstrate competence in action rather than just from an evaluative standpoint, although both are important.
- Expect some students to get frustrated by this activity. For example, an observer may have what s/he believes to be an excellent point that everyone in the bowl is missing. It can be difficult for some students to keep that idea to themselves until after the activity without getting frustrated.
- Allow the students to self-facilitate within the group or appoint a leader if the activity goals include being able to lead a discussion on the given topic.
- One advantage of the fishbowl for online education comes when synchronous sessions are used. By limiting the active participants to those in the fishbowl, the online synchronous discussion does not become difficult to manage.

Accommodations:

What accommodations may be needed for students with disabilities or other special needs? In some cases, students with certain physical disabilities will simply not be capable of performing certain actions. Rather than marginalize, an online course can

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allow for accommodations such as alternative activities or the performance of activities with the help of a physical aid or human helper.

Timeline:

For those in the fishbowl, this can be an intensive activity requiring perhaps 5 hours in a given week. Those in the fishbowl need to be online every day that they are actually assigned to be in the fishbowl. The observers can come in at the end and observe the entire discussion in under an hour often. A typical activity will run one week. There are also options for performing the fishbowl in a synchronous setting, but there will still be about 5 hours for the fishbowl members since they will be required to more carefully read materials under discussion. The timeline may also change depending on whether students have advanced knowledge of the fishbowl activity and their role.

Ideas for Lesson Evaluation and Teacher Reflection:

How did the students like the lesson? End of semester evaluations should ask about the usefulness and learning accomplished through such activities.

How was student learning verified? The instructor can directly observe the activities of the group in the fishbowl. Observers can be assessed based on summaries or other activities concerning their experiences. Observers can also be used to assess the performance of the students in the fishbowl.

Source: www.uillinois.edu