



THE JIGSAW CLASSROOM

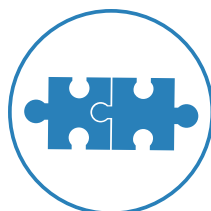
The Jigsaw Classroom is a cooperative learning technique that reduces racial conflict among school children, promotes better learning, improves student motivation, and increases enjoyment of the learning experience.

OVERVIEW

The jigsaw classroom is a research-based cooperative learning technique invented and developed in the early 1970s by Elliot Aronson and his students at the University of Texas and the University of California. Since 1970s, thousands of classrooms have used jigsaw with great success.



The jigsaw classroom has a four-decade track record of successfully reducing racial conflict and increasing positive educational outcomes such as improved test performance, reduced absenteeism, and greater liking for school.



Just as in a jigsaw puzzle, each piece – each student's part – is essential for the completion and full understanding of the final product.



If each student's part is essential, then each student is essential; and that is precisely what makes this strategy effective.

[LEARN MORE](#)

(overview)

JIGSAW IN 10 EASY STEPS

The jigsaw classroom is very simple to use. If you're a teacher, just follow these steps:



STEP ONE

Divide students into 5- or 6-person jigsaw groups.

The groups should be diverse in terms of gender, ethnicity, race, and ability.

STEP TWO

Appoint one student from each group as the leader.

Initially, this person should be the most mature student in the group.

STEP THREE

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.



STEP FOUR

Assign each student to learn one segment.

Make sure students have direct access only to their own segment.

STEP FIVE

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.



STEP SIX

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.

STEP SEVEN

Bring the students back into their jigsaw groups.

STEP EIGHT

Ask each student to present her or his segment to the group.

Encourage others in the group to ask questions for clarification.

**STEP NINE**

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.

**STEP TEN**

At the end of the session, give a quiz on the material.

Students quickly come to realize that these sessions are not just fun and games but really count.

TIPS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Compared with traditional teaching methods, The jigsaw classroom has several advantages:

- Most teachers find jigsaw easy to learn
- Most teachers enjoy working with it
- It can be used with other teaching strategies
- It works even if only used for an hour per day
- It is free for the taking

**MORE ABOUT
IMPLEMENTATION** (tips)

ABOUT ELLIOT ARONSON

Elliot Aronson is currently Professor Emeritus at the University of California in Santa Cruz. He has long-standing research interests in social influence and attitude change, cognitive dissonance, research methodology, and interpersonal attraction. Professor Aronson's experiments are aimed both at testing theory and at improving the human condition by influencing people to change dysfunctional attitudes and behaviors.

Professor Aronson received his B.A. from Brandeis University in 1954, his M.A. from Wesleyan University in 1956, and his Ph.D. in psychology from Stanford University in 1959. He has taught at Harvard University, the University of Minnesota, the University of Texas, and the University of California.

In 1999, he won the American Psychological Association's Distinguished Scientific Contribution Award, making him the only psychologist to have won APA's highest awards in all three major academic categories: distinguished writing (1973), distinguished teaching (1980), and distinguished research (1999).

MORE ABOUT
ELLIOT ARONSON

(<http://aronson.socialpsychology.org/>)



HISTORY OF THE JIGSAW

An Account from Professor Aronson:

“The jigsaw classroom was first used in 1971 in Austin, Texas. My graduate students and I had invented the jigsaw strategy that year, as a matter of absolute necessity to help defuse an explosive situation. The city's schools had recently been desegregated, and because Austin had always been racially segregated, white youngsters, African-American youngsters, and Hispanic youngsters found themselves in the same classrooms for the first time.

Within a few weeks, long-standing suspicion, fear, and distrust between groups produced an atmosphere of turmoil and hostility. Fist-fights erupted in corridors and schoolyards across the city. The school superintendent called me in to see if we could do anything to help students get along with one another. After observing what was going on in classrooms for a few days, my students and I concluded that inter-group hostility was being fueled by the competitive environment of the classroom.”

MORE OF PROFESSOR
ARONSON'S ACCOUNT

(history)



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