**Jigsaw activities**

Jigsaw activities are a specific type of information gap activity that are particularly good for EAL learners because they promote interactive, collaborative group work and provide an opportunity for purposeful communication with good first language role models. They are useful because they encourage learners to develop speaking and listening skills within the context of a curriculum topic and support the development of academic language.

Jigsaw activities are a way of breaking down learning into chunks, making understanding and retention more manageable and effective. They foster inclusion, as each learner has an essential role and takes personal responsibility for this, and they motivate learners to gain sufficient understanding of subject matter to be able to teach others.

**Types of jigsaw activities**

Jigsaw activities can be used in all curriculum areas. Some examples of where they could be effective are:

* Science: the life cycle of a plant; the properties of different types of rock
* Geography: the water (hydrological) cycle; different sub-topics related to a country or region
* English: poems, novels, short stories or plays divided up by stanza, chapter, order of events or scene
* RE: different festivals celebrated by a particular religion
* History: the role of different countries in World War II; different aspects of life in a certain period

**Practical ideas for using jigsaw activities**

* **Top tip:** ensure each group has a mix of EAL learners and good linguistic role models

**? To consider:** What meaningful follow-up tasks will the groups

 complete once they have exchanged the information

**The process of organising a jigsaw activity**

**Step 1:** Divide the class into ‘expert’ groups of four to six learners (keeping the groups the same size as far as possible). Give each group a letter or a colour or other name. Then ask the learners within each group to number themselves 1 to 4 (or 1 to 6).

**Step 2:** Give each group a section of text or information (can be in pictorial form). The group should spend some time reading, discussing and helping each other to understand the text or information. Word banks and dictionaries (bilingual or English monolingual) may be useful at this stage. For a more in depth activity, the group may use ICT and reference books to further research a sub-topic.

**Step 3:** Learners, who are now ‘experts’ on the own section of text or information, then move into ‘jigsaw’ groups, with a shared number, i.e. all the number 1s work in a group, all the number 2s work in another group etc.

**Step 4:** Each ‘expert’ learner in turn shares with their ‘jigsaw’ group the section of text or information they were originally given. The others ask questions to ensure all have a good understanding.

**Step 5:** The ‘jigsaw’ group together complete a task which requires them to understand all of the information shared by each ‘expert’. This could be anything that requires each learner to contribute their piece of expert knowledge: filling in a grid or table, completing a diagram, designing a poster, devising a role play.

**Groupings**

* Beginner EAL learners can be paired with a more advanced EAL learner an English as a Mother Tongue speaker, both sharing the same number. They will then move to the next group and present their information together, with the beginner learner saying only as much as he or she is able and comfortable with.
* In a large class, two groups can be given the same text or piece of information, as long as ‘experts’ are shared evenly among the ‘jigsaw’ groups.

**Good for EAL, Good for All: Can I use jigsaw activities with the whole class?**

Yes, in fact they work better with the whole class. Jigsaw activities support everyone. They encourage collaborative learning, and help develop speaking and listening skills for all learners.