

BACKGROUND ON THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JIGSAW

<http://kids.clerk.house.gov/middle-school/lesson.html?intID=35>

Step 1

Students get in groups with four members. Task is to learn basic information about the U.S. House of Representatives (handout). Handout is divided into four parts; each member is assigned one part. Handout can be cut up so that group members get only their own part.

Step 2

Next, move into one of four expert groups with others assigned that part (1-4). While in the expert groups, students consult with one another to make sure that they understand the important information.

Step 3

Return to home groups. Each expert teaches his or her part to the others in the group. Encourage each group to develop questions that refer to the materials. (Refer to Article I of the Constitution in WTP pages 143-150 as a reference to answer questions.)

Step 4

As a whole group, quickly follow up with sharing around four *most significant* or *most problematic* fact.

Step 5

As a follow-up to the jigsaw strategy, students can be guided to prepare for a simulated hearing where they testify as experts on the House of Representatives. They could also use the knowledge that they acquired from the materials as a springboard for further inquiry.

Topics from Fred's presentations may be explored:

"House of Representatives or House of Commons": Comparing Self-Government
What is the role of Congress in American Constitutional Democracy?

"House and /vs. Senate"

"The House Committee System: Or, How am I supposed to know 435 Congressmen?!"
How Does Congress Perform its Functions in the American Constitutional System?

"The Essence of the House: the Rules Committee"

A mock constitutional convention could also be set up in which students role-play as delegates to the Constitutional convention debating the makeup of Congress.

Why was representation a major issue at the Philadelphia Convention? (see WTP text Great Compromise, pages 76-77)

What questions did the framers consider in designing the three branches of government? (see page 80)

Backgrounder: What is Jigsaw?

Jigsaw is a cooperative learning strategy that enables each student of a “home” group to specialize in one aspect of a learning unit. Students meet with members from other groups who are assigned the same aspect, and after mastering the material, return to the “home” group and teach the material to their group members. 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. That is what makes the Jigsaw instructional strategy so effective.

What is its purpose?

Jigsaw learning allows students to be introduced to material and yet maintain a high level of personal responsibility. The purpose of Jigsaw is to develop teamwork and cooperative learning skills within all students. In addition it helps develop a depth of knowledge not possible if the students were to try and learn all of the material on their own. Finally, because students are required to present their findings to the home group, Jigsaw learning will often disclose a student's own understanding of a concept as well as reveal any misunderstandings.

How can I do it?

In its simplest form, the Jigsaw instructional strategy is when: 1. Each student receives a portion of the materials to be introduced; 2. Students leave their "home" groups and meet in "expert" groups; 3. Expert groups discuss the material and brainstorm ways in which to present their understandings to the other members of their “home” group; 4. The experts return to their “home” groups to teach their portion of the materials and to learn from the other members of their “home” group

In more detail, and written from a teacher's perspective, to conduct a Jigsaw in your classroom: 1. Assign students to “home” teams of 4 or 5 students (generally their regular cooperative learning teams). Have students number off within their teams. 2. Assign study topics to “home” team members by giving them an assignment sheet or by listing their numbers and corresponding roles on the board. 3. Have students move to “expert” groups where everyone in the group has the same topic as themselves. 4. Students work with members of their “expert” group to read about and/or research their topic. They prepare a short presentation and decide how they will teach their topic to their “home” team. You may want students to prepare mini-posters while in their “expert” Groups. These posters can contain important facts, information, and diagrams related to the study topic. 5. Students return to their “home” teams and take turns teaching their team members the material. I find it helpful to have team members take notes or record the information in their journals in some way. You may want them to complete a graphic organizer or chart with the new information. 6. Involve the class in a whole-group review of all the content you expect them to master on the assessment. Administer an individual assessment to arrive at individual grades.

How can I adapt it?

There are limitless ways of adapting the jigsaw structure in terms of the size of the groups, the range of topics and the demonstration of mastery of those topics. Teachers have developed many variations. Here are several modifications that are helpful in different circumstances:

1. Give students subtopics and have them use reference materials in the library to research their subtopic. This frees the teacher from having to arrange materials in advance.
2. Have the “home” group write a report or give a class presentation on the overall topic, with the specification that it includes all the subtopics presented in the group.
3. Prepare outlines or study guides of what each subtopic should cover and have students read the same text, organizing and becoming experts on the material highlighted by their outline or study guide

Assessment & Evaluation Considerations

Assess students' degree of mastery of all the material. Reward the groups whose members all reach the preset criterion of excellence or give bonus points on their individual scores if this criteria is met. Students will need to evaluate themselves on how well their group did in the jigsaw (e.g., active listening, checking each other for understanding, and encouraging each other) and set goals for further interaction.

<http://olc.spsd.sk.ca/de/pd/instr/strats/jigsaw/>

The Reading

Members of the U.S. House of Representatives are elected by their constituents to represent their districts in Congress. Representatives, the title given to Members of the U.S. House of Representatives, are elected to serve a two-year term. There is no limit to the number of terms a Representative can serve.

Determining Representation (Group 1)

There are 435 Members in the U.S. House of Representatives. They are apportioned, or divided proportionally, among the 50 states. The number of Representatives each state has is based on its population—the more citizens, the more Representatives. Each state is then divided into districts, one district for each Representative apportioned to the state. Representatives are reapportioned every 10 years. If a state's population has changed, it may lose or gain Representatives because there can only be 435 Members in the U.S. House of Representatives.

Some states have too few citizens to be apportioned more than one Representative. Those states are represented by a Member-at-Large—a Member who represents and entire state. There are currently seven states represented by a Member-at-Large: Alaska, Delaware, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Vermont, and Wyoming. With 53 Representatives in Congress, California has the largest Representation.

Becoming a Representative (Group 2)

Elections for Representatives are held on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November of even-numbered years. There are three requirements to run for election to the U.S. House of Representatives outlined in the **Constitution of the United States**. The Constitution says that candidates must be at least 25 years old, have lived in the United States for at least seven years, and live in the state they would represent. There is, however, more to being elected Representative than meeting these requirements.

In order to become a Member of the U.S. House of Representatives, candidates must make themselves well known in their communities. Many Representatives begin their political careers in their city or state governments. This helps them get to know their constituents and learn about the needs of their community. In addition to participating in local politics, the early careers of some Representatives includes military service, practicing law, practicing medicine, or owning their own businesses. To learn more about Representatives and their past careers, visit the **Biographical Directory of the United States Congress, 1774 to Present**.

Responsibilities of a Representative (Group 3)

Since the first Congress in 1789, Members of the U.S. House of Representatives have been sent to the United States Capitol to represent their constituents in Congress. However, the responsibilities of Representatives are not outlined in the Constitution of the United States. Over time, their specific responsibilities have grown to include duties both in Washington, D.C. and home.

Members of the U.S. House of Representatives spend their weeks in Washington, D.C., acting as ambassadors for local industries and advocates on behalf of the economic needs and political interests of the residents and communities within their districts. While in Washington, they debate and vote on legislation, oversee government agency spending, and serve on committees. They return home on weekends and during district work periods to work more closely with their constituents.

(Group 4)

Representatives serve their districts by studying legislation under consideration and understanding how it will affect their districts. Researching how the legislation will affect their district helps Representatives decide whether or not to support a bill. In addition to their time spent on legislation, Representatives assist their constituents in getting federal benefits and grants or locating funding for local programs and projects, such as after school programs.

In addition to their legislative duties and constituent services, Representatives are responsible for managing their offices in their districts and in Washington, D.C. This includes overseeing the office's budget and managing the office staff. Their office staff includes experts in areas of public policy, office managers and assistants, and college-aged interns.

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