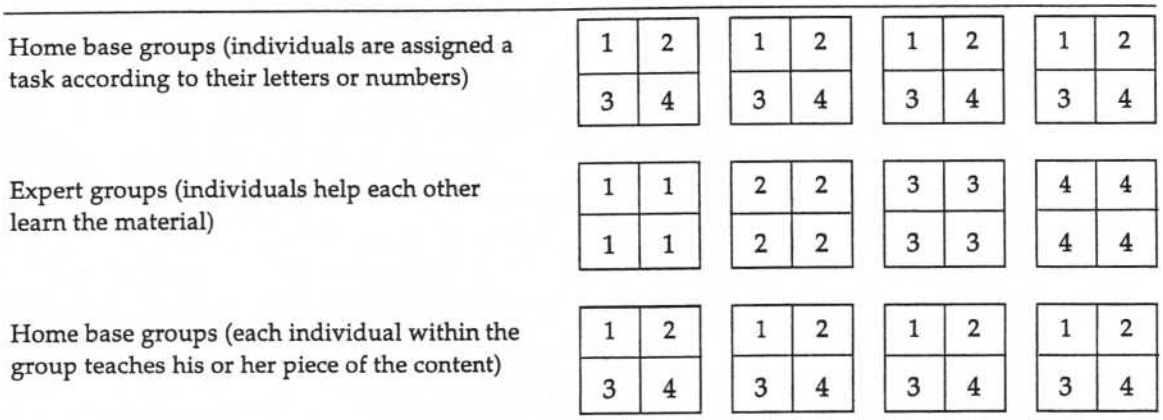
Figure 7.2. How Jigsaw Groups Meet



Jigsaw. This useful strategy includes the use of expert groups as part of the process. This strategy was first introduced by Elliot Aronson in 1978, as well as by Johnson et al. (1988), and Kagan (1992). Although this is an interesting and engaging as well as efficient technique for examining a large amount of content, it is a much more involved strategy than those previously outlined and should not be attempted until students have developed adequate social skills to cope with larger groups and complex tasks.

Initially, students are organized into groups of three, four, or five members, often referred to as the base group. Each group member is given a letter or number (e.g., 1, 2, 3, 4, 5). The material to be examined is divided into the same number of pieces as there are members in the group (e.g., 3, 4, 5). Then, the material is distributed to each member of the group. The next step is forming expert groups in which all the 1s meet together, all the 2s, and so on (see Figure 7.2). In the expert groups, the members examine the material, information, or model; analyze the critical points (the what); and decide how to share that information back in their base group (the how). After the experts have finished their dialogue and have reached a level of understanding, they return to their base groups and each group member, in turn, teaches teammates what he or she has learned.

This strategy is powerful in fostering interdependence as each person has a key piece to the whole that is valuable for a shared understanding. Having to understand new information thoroughly enough to share it with others requires careful examination and critical-thinking skills. The ability to articulate, explain, or interpret helps the individual with long-term and enduring understanding.

An example of using Jigsaw in action is as students are studying a new topic, such as the countries of Africa. They would be assigned the areas of geography, people, wildlife, food, and agriculture. The expert groups would meet and explore these five areas and, once their expertise was developed, they would return to their home or base groups and teach each other. Jigsaw can be used in any subject discipline with almost any content. It can serve as an advance organizer, as an strategy for presenting information (input phase), or as a closure activity to consolidate student learning.