

# Scrambled Groups

*This noisy number gives each person in the class a chance to hear and discuss everyone else's contribution.*

## HOW?

1. Explain the learning objectives and the whole *scrambled groups* process to the students before you begin.
2. The class is divided into groups of, say, 5. Each group is given a research or discussion brief which specifies the learning objective, the required outcome, the deadline and step by step guidelines if necessary. Each brief is different. Each concerns a particular aspect of the topic in hand (e.g. different types of business: sole traders, partnerships, private limited companies, co-operatives etc.). The briefs are like pieces of a jigsaw, together they make the whole picture.
3. Each group conducts the specified research or discussion.
4. During the process, each person is responsible for understanding (they ask others in the group for clarification if necessary) and recording the main points and essential research information.
5. Towards the end of this time, the teacher gives each person a letter, A - E in each group. This determines which new group each student will move into.
6. At the end of the research/discussion period some time is given for students to prepare themselves to teach others (this can make a useful homework).
7. The groups are then rescrambled. All the A's form a group, all the B's form a group and so on. There are now 5 groups of 4 or 5 or 6 (depending on class size).
8. In these new groups, people take it in turns to report on their previous group's discussion or teach the research, being careful to relay all the key points.
9. Once all the reports have been heard, the group holds a final discussion designed to ensure that everyone understands all the material.

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10. In theory at the end of the process any one person in the class should be able to sum up the whole range of opinion or information. A formal test may be set to check this. To make matters 'worse', you could award the average mark of the rescrambled group to each of its members. This reflects the quality of their teaching as well as the quality of their learning.

## APPLICATIONS

In any subject where separate elements can be researched or discussed, e.g.

- ◆ **English:** different stanzas of a poem, different characters or scenes in a play
- ◆ **Science:** different types of molecule, different separation techniques
- ◆ **Geography:** different urban problems and solutions, different data collection techniques
- ◆ **Modern Languages:** different parts of speech, different verb patterns

## WHY DO IT?

- ◆ To reinforce listening skills and acceptance of other people's ideas.
- ◆ To reinforce the idea that learning involves asking questions and checking understanding.
- ◆ To practise the study skills of note taking, summarising and presenting.
- ◆ To encourage students to work productively in random groupings and experience interdependence.

## VARIATIONS

Naturally, group numbers will need to be altered according to the size of the class. For a small class of 12, for example, 3 groups of 4 will rescramble into 4 groups of 3 (or vice versa). So, don't forget your calculator!