

Running dictation

Photocopy examples of the text. Pin the examples up on the walls.

Explain that each group or pair must choose one person to write down the dictated text – the *scribe*.

Explain that the other members of the group will go and read the text on the wall (call them *runners*, if you like).

Runners remember as much as they can and dictate it to the *scribe*.

You continue like this until the group has written down the whole version of your text.

Monitor for excessive cheating and other naughtiness.

The group that finishes first is the winner.

Shouting dictation

Get students to stand in two lines facing each other. The lines should be a good distance apart (at least 3 metres).

The person they face is their shouting dictation partner. One line has a text and the line facing them has a pen and paper. You can easily adapt this to information gap type activities.

The noise of so many students speaking will lead to the raising of voices, hence “Shouting dictation”.

Silent dictation

In this amusing ESL dictation, students dictate a text to a partner by whispering. Students sit in two rows facing their partner. Student A starts by whispering the first part of their text to Student B who listens and writes what they think their partner is saying. Student A can spell the words in the air for clarity. When Student A has finished, Student B starts whispering their text and so on. This continues until the text is complete. When the students have finished, ask them to go through their text with their partner to check for misunderstood words and spelling mistakes.

Whistle dictation

Prepare a text that students are familiar with from a previous lesson. Cross out a word or two in every sentence. Tell the class they are going to do a dictation. When they hear a whistling sound, they need to write a blank on their paper. Begin reading, and every time you get to a crossed out word, whistle a couple of notes. When the dictation is over, put them in pairs and ask them to check their answers. Next, ask them to guess what words go into the blanks. Discuss with the class what they think goes in the blanks. Finally, let them read the text again to check their answers.

Dictation with substitution

This is a standard dictation activity with a twist. Identify some keywords from your text (for instance, active vocabulary) and replace them with a humorous sounding alternative such as *banana*, *thingy*, *doodah*, *pudding*. After the dictation, students can try to guess what the substituted words should be.

Letter dictation

I went to school yesterday.

Spell the sentences as separate letters. Ss write down the letters. Afterwards, ask them to split them into words.

Correct the mistake dictation

This error correction dictation activity is useful for reviewing grammar or vocabulary recently covered in class. Dictate a text that contains errors to the class. Working alone, students listen and write down what they hear. As they listen, students look out for any errors and make the necessary corrections as they transcribe the dictation. When the dictation is complete, students compare their text with a partner to see if they have spotted the same errors and corrected them in the same way. To review the dictation, have the students read out their corrected versions of the text and review the corrections with the class as they are made. Lastly, dictate the whole text one more time as a final check.

Student controlled dictation

If necessary, pre-teach the verbs that label the control buttons on a tape recorder.

Tell the learners that they can control your (or another learners') reading of the text by calling out "stop", "play", "rewind" and so on.

Split dictation

Split dictation is an activity in which sentences, or a paragraph is split. Students work in pairs dictating parts of a sentence / paragraph to each other for the partner to copy down in writing what their partner has said. It is also a great way to get students to speak clearly and practise the target language orally. The dictated text could focus on:

subject specific vocabulary,

sentence structure,

the language features of a particular genre that you are expecting students to write in.

As an extension activity, once pairs have finished, you could get them to think of questions that they ask another pair in the class that are related to the split dictation they have just completed. To ensure that everyone is listening pick pairs to ask another pair at random. In this way, you can check that learners have understood the text.