

Part 3: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

- Common Misconceptions
- Useful Tips for Conducting Dictation



FAQ - Common Misconceptions



1. Is it true that pupils with good dictation results must be good at English?

- **No.** Dictation only reflects a **small part of pupils' performance (mainly spelling)** in English language learning.
- To get a **comprehensive picture of pupils' progress**, teachers need to **engage pupils in other learning activities** which provide them with opportunities to **demonstrate their ability in different language skills.**

FAQ – Common Misconceptions



2. Should dictation be used as a testing device only?

- **No.** With **well-planned teaching strategies**, dictation can be turned into **effective learning activities**.
- **Effective dictation activities** provide **meaningful contexts** for pupils to apply their **phonics skills** (e.g. spelling of words), practise the **integrated use of language skills** (e.g. listening and writing skills) and demonstrate their **grammar knowledge** in proofreading.

FAQ – Common Misconceptions



3. Is spelling the only focus of dictation?

- **No.** Spelling is only **one of the focuses** of dictation.
- Pupils can develop their awareness of **the letter-sound relationships** through **phonics dictation**.
- Pupils can demonstrate their **understanding of the listening text** through **picture dictation** and **'Bad Cold' dictation**.
- Pupils can develop **autonomy in learning** through **theme-based free dictation**.
- Pupils can practise **the integrated use of listening and writing skills** through various dictation activities such as **music dictation, running dictation, dicto-comp / dictogloss** and **keywords dictation**.

FAQ – Common Misconceptions



4. Can teachers help pupils better prepare for dictation by asking them to copy the passages several times?

- **No.** Excessive copying **kills pupils' interest** in learning English. It is **harmful to the lower primary pupils** whose muscular development has not reached maturity.
- To help pupils better prepare for dictation, it is **important to teach them the enabling skills explicitly** (e.g. drawing their attention to the letter-sound relationships, guiding them to divide words into small parts and to understand the meanings of words).

FAQ – Common Misconceptions



5. Does frequent dictation help improve pupils' English proficiency?

- **No.** Dictation is only **a small part of English language learning**.
- Simply spending much time and effort on dictation **may not lead to any great improvement** in language proficiency.
- **A balanced development of language skills and learning strategies** is more important than giving dictation frequently.

FAQ – Useful Tips for Conducting Dictation



1. Should pupils be asked to write down all the words on the EDB wordlists in dictation?

- **No.** Teachers should **not ask pupils to memorise and write down** all the words on the EDB wordlists out of context in dictation.
- The wordlists for KS1 and KS2 included in the resource package *Enhancing English Vocabulary Learning and Teaching at Primary Level* (2009) are **for reference only**.
- Teachers should design **meaningful tasks and activities** to help pupils **develop their vocabulary building skills**, and provide **ample opportunities** for **vocabulary use in context**.

FAQ – Useful Tips for Conducting Dictation



2. When should unseen dictation be conducted?

- **Effective learning strategies**, such as applying the knowledge of **phonics skills** and **making use of contextual clues** as well as **grammar knowledge**, should be **taught before** unseen dictation is conducted.
- **More seen dictation** should be given to **lower primary pupils** to help them build up confidence in learning English.

FAQ – Useful Tips for Conducting Dictation



3. Can pupils check dictation for themselves?

- **Yes.** Pupils should be encouraged to check their work **during** and **after** dictation since **developing the habit of self editing** and **correcting** at an early stage is helpful to language learning.
- Pupils should be **taught to apply their grammar knowledge** and **phonics skills** when they check their work.

FAQ – Useful Tips for Conducting Dictation



4. Is mechanical copying of the correct answers an effective way of doing corrections?

- **No.** Mechanical copying of the correct answers may not effectively help pupils make improvement.
- **To facilitate assessment for learning**, teachers should think about how to **help pupils learn from the mistakes they have made** (e.g. highlighting the letter-sound relationships, dividing words into small parts, making use of the context to figure out the correct words, having pupils read aloud the words while doing corrections to reinforce learning).