Types of ESL/EFL Dictation

There are many types of ESL dictation English teachers can use in class. Dictations are a great idea because they break up the monotony of just reading a text in class. Dictations employ many skills such as reading, writing, listening, speaking, spelling, and pronunciation. Students also get the chance to work on their communication skills. Below are different ESL dictations you can use in class.

 Dictation Player

This is an enjoyable ESL dictation for young learners. You will have to work quite hard in this activity, but the results are worth it.

Before class, prepare five pieces of A4 paper. Draw one media control symbol on each piece of paper. You will need to draw stop, pause, play, fast forward, and rewind.

Procedure

Divide the students into pairs. One student is the ‘reader’ and the other is the ‘writer’. Students swap roles halfway through the activity.

Stand outside the classroom with the text.

On the floor, in front of you place the five media control symbols.

The readers run to you, stand on the ‘play’ symbol, and you begin to read the text.

When the students have remembered the first sentence of the text, they stand on ‘pause’, and then they run back and tell their partner who writes the sentence down.

As the dictation progresses, students will be pressing all kinds of buttons to go back and forth through the text as students normally work at a different pace from each other.

Add in fast forward and rewind sound effects as a bit of fun. You should act like a media player only reacting when someone presses the controls. Hopefully, students will remember to press the stop button.

When everyone has finished, go through the whole text with the class. Have the students exchange their work and check for spelling and grammar mistakes.
Running Dictation

This is one of the most popular types of dictation. It is fun for the students and it helps students with grammar and spelling.

Before you begin, make copies of the text and prepare some questions for the students to answer about the text.

Procedure

Stick a text on a wall outside the classroom. Divide the students into pairs. One student is the ‘reader’ and one student is the ‘writer’.

The reader runs to the text, reads a sentence or two, remembers it, runs back, and tells the writer.

The writer writes what the reader says. Make sure the readers don’t cheat by writing on their hand or using their phones to take pictures. The students may swap if they get tired.

When a pair has completed the text, they give the text to you.

Give them some questions to answer based on the text.

When the questions have been answered correctly, give out a copy of the original text.

The pairs compare the texts and check for any spelling or grammar mistakes.

Question Dictation

This is an excellent way to make reading comprehension questions fun.

Before the dictation, make one copy of the text for each pair of students and one set of reading comprehension questions cut up and numbered.

Procedure

Stick the numbered questions in different places outside the classroom.

Divide the students into pairs. One student is the ‘reader’ and the other is the ‘writer’. Give each pair a copy of the text.

The reader runs to question number one, remembers the question, goes back, and tells the writer.

The writer writes down the question. Then, the pair reads the text and finds the answer to the question.

Once they have the answer, they show you the question and answer.

If the question and answer are correct, they move on to question two.

The pairs repeat this process until all the questions have been answered correctly.
Dictogram

In this ESL dictation, students work alone and then in teams to create a complete text.

Procedure

Tell the class that you are going to read a short text. Each student works alone at this stage of the dictation.

The first time you read the text, the students just listen to you read.

The second time, ask the students to write down the keywords they hear.

The third time, the students try to write complete sentences.

Then, divide the class into small teams. Each team works together to try to come up with the complete text.

Have the teams write their sentences on the board and give points for each correct sentence.

You may also ask follow-up questions based on the text to check the students’ understanding.

Picture Dictation

This type of dictation can be used when teaching or practicing prepositions of place.

Before the dictation, make one copy of a picture for each student.

Procedure

Divide the class into pairs.

Have the students sit back to back with their partner.

One student is given a picture and must describe the picture to their partner.

The other student draws the picture according to their partner’s instructions.

When they have finished, have the students compare their picture to the original.

Then have the students swap roles and describe a new picture.
**Shouting Dictation**

This ESL dictation helps students with their communication and listening skills.

**Procedure**

Divide the students into pairs (A and B).

Rearrange the chairs in your classroom, so there are two rows of seats facing each other. Make the space between the two rows quite big. The pairs sit opposite each other.

A <------> B

A <------> B

A <------> B

A <------> B

Hand out a different part of the text to each row.

You may wish to split the text in half, or you may split it into alternating sentences. Whatever you do, make sure each row of students (A and B) has a different text from the other.

Student A starts by reading the first part of their text to Student B.

Student B listens and writes what they hear.

When student A has finished reading, Student B starts reading and Student A listens and writes.

Continue until the text is complete.

You will find that each pair of students work at a different pace and as the pairs are sat quite far apart, there will be a lot of shouting.

Students will have to listen very carefully to understand their partner. This activity can get quite noisy, but it's a lot of fun for the students.

When everyone has completed their text, have the pairs of students sit together and go through their texts to check for spelling mistakes and misunderstood words.

**Silent Dictation**

This ESL dictation is the same as shouting dictation but without the noise.

Follow the same set of instructions, but tell the students that they can only whisper to each other.

You will certainly see a lot of facial expressions and writing in the air in this dictation.