

3) Development of Note-taking and Writing Skills

- Note-taking is an important language development strategy to record key information and ideas.
- Pupils can learn note-taking skills and develop writing skills through some dictation activities, e.g. **music dictation**, **running dictation**, **dicto-comp** / **dictogloss** and **keywords dictation**.

Teachers can make use of both music dictation and running dictation to guide pupils to write key words, short phrases and sentences. Music dictation requires pupils to write down key words and phrases while listening to songs. In running dictation, pupils write down sentences and short texts through group work and games.

To further develop pupils' note-taking and writing skills, teachers can conduct dicto-comp / dictogloss in which pupils are required to reconstruct the text using key phrases and main ideas noted down.

Keywords dictation provides an opportunity for pupils to apply the vocabulary learnt in a new context. It also facilitates the development of writing skills.

Music Dictation

- Music dictation is an **interesting note-taking activity** as pupils can learn English through songs.
- Pupils are asked to **fill in the missing words** and **phrases** in the lyrics while listening to the songs.
- As the **key messages** are repeated in different verses of the song and **recurrent sentence structures** are used, music dictation helps pupils listen for the **key words** and **consolidates** the learning of the **target language structures**.

In order to conduct music dictation smoothly, teachers should select songs with lyrics that are clearly comprehensible and decide how much text could be given and how much be left blank based on the level and abilities of the class. Pupils are asked to fill the gaps in the lyrics while listening to the songs.

Before listening to the song and doing the dictation, teachers could provide some background information about the song or the song title to activate pupils' prior knowledge and experience. This can also enhance pupils' engagement in the activity.

Running Dictation

- Running dictation is an **integrative learning activity** which involves reading, speaking, listening and writing.
- In running dictation, pupils **work in groups** to read and **take notes in meaningful chunks**.

Running dictation is an activity for pupils who enjoy moving around and working in teams. They have to read and memorise a short text, tell the phrases / sentences to the other group member who will write down the text. Running dictation is also called wall dictation since a short printed text is usually posted on the wall. It can be used to practise dialogues, role-plays and grammatical structures – anything pupils would find interesting. It provides an opportunity for pupils to develop their reading, speaking, listening and writing skills.

Since it is a race, pupils tend to get excited. They may run very fast and make a lot of noise. To maintain classroom discipline, adaptations could be made and rules could be set beforehand. For example, pupils could be asked to walk instead. To keep the noise down, no shouting is allowed.

Running Dictation

- The **'runner'** reads and memorises a short phrase or sentence of a text posted on the wall, runs to the **'writer'** and tells him / her the phrase or sentence.
- The **'writer'** writes down what he / she has heard from the **'runner'**. The **'writer'** can **ask the 'runner' relevant questions** about words, spelling and punctuation if necessary.
- The first group that **finishes writing with the most accurate information** wins the game.

There are different ways of conducting running dictation. Here are a few suggestions for teachers' reference:

1. Instead of reading the text posted on the wall, the 'runners' run to the teacher who will read out loud a sentence of the text, i.e. they listen and remember.
2. Instead of reading texts, pictures can be used. The 'runners' run, look at the picture and then describe what they see to the 'writers' who will draw the picture or write about it.
3. The text is cut into discrete sentences. These cut-up texts are placed around the classroom in different locations. When the group has written down all the sentences, the members have to work together to sequence the sentences to make a complete and coherent text.
4. For more able classes, the teacher can read aloud the text once for the class to get a general understanding of the text. Then, some notes are posted on the wall. The 'writers' jot down the notes read by the 'runners'. The 'runners' and 'writers' then work together to make sentences from the notes, and share their sentences with the class.

An Example of Running Dictation

- Work in groups. One pupil from each group plays the role of the 'runner' and the others the 'writers'.
- The 'runner' reads a phrase / sentence and retells it to the 'writers'. The 'writers' note down the phrase / sentence heard from the 'runner' in the spaces provided.

A short dictation text is posted on the wall far away from the 'writers'. Pupils work in groups. Each time the 'runner' memorises a phrase or a sentence of the dictation text and retells it to the 'writers'. The role of the 'writers' is to write down the whole text based on what they have heard. Depending on the pupils' abilities, the teacher could decide the number of times the 'runner' can go and read the text. The 'writers' of the same group may compare what they have written to come up with an agreed version of the text.

Dicto-comp / Dictogloss

- Dicto-comp / Dictogloss is a combination of **dictation** and **composition**.
- Pupils listen to the teacher reading a short text **at normal speed twice**. During the first reading, they try to understand **the meaning of the text**. During the second reading, they **note down the key words**.
- Then they **share their information / ideas** in groups and **reconstruct the text**, using the words they have written down.

Teachers should pay attention to the following points when conducting dicto-comp / dictogloss:

1. Allow time for pupils to discuss the topic before the activity. It is helpful for them to revisit or acquire some vocabulary and language items in the process.
2. Read the text at normal speed for pupils to understand the meaning of the text in the first reading.
3. Read the text again at normal speed for pupils to take notes.
4. Ask pupils to work in groups to reconstruct the text from the notes.
5. With the teacher as the facilitator, pupils compare and discuss the text in groups, paying attention to language accuracy. Through the process, pupils are guided to apply their grammar knowledge to write the text.

Adaptations of Dicto-comp / Dictogloss to Suit the Primary Classroom in Hong Kong

- The text can be **read aloud more than twice** to make it **easier for pupils**.
- Pupils could be asked to **note down** and **re-organise sentences** read to them in a **jumbled order**.
- Pupils could be asked to **give their opinions about the reconstructed text**.

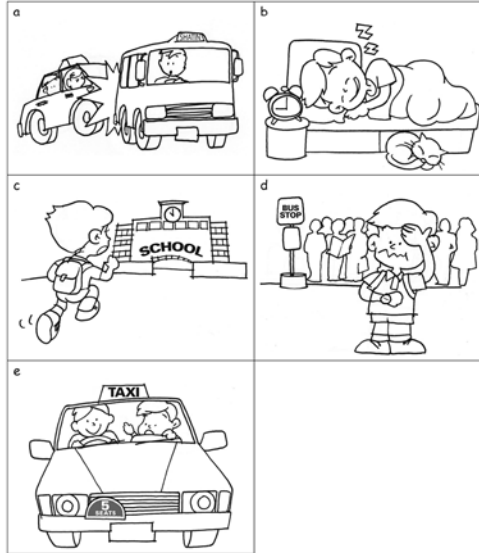
To suit the primary classroom in Hong Kong, adaptations could be made to dicto-comp / dictogloss. Below are some suggestions:

1. The text can be read aloud more than twice to make it easier for pupils, but not to such an extent that pupils have time to write down every single word. Teachers should make it clear to pupils that they are not expected to write every word down and they may use their own words.
2. Pupils could be asked to note down sentences read to them in a jumbled order and then re-organise the sentences. It provides an opportunity for pupils to be more aware of the organisation of texts.
3. The teacher reads aloud a thought-provoking text. After reconstructing the text as in dicto-comp / dictogloss, pupils are asked to give their opinions about it by either adding a new paragraph at the end or inserting their opinions within the reconstructed text.

Dicto-comp / Dictogloss – Example (1)

Part 1: Listen to Andrew's story and arrange the following pictures in the correct order.

1. b (example)	2.	3.	4.	5.
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Dicto-comp / dictogloss may be challenging to some pupils during the first listening. The teacher could provide support (e.g. pictures) to help pupils understand the story. Through arranging the pictures in the correct order, pupils can have a better understanding of the sequence of events before they start taking notes.


Dicto-comp / Dictogloss – Example (1)

Part 2: Listen to Andrew's story again. Write down the key words in the spaces provided.

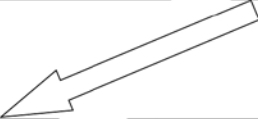
e.g.
 - *woke up late*

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During the second listening, pupils are guided to take notes using a sequence chart. They only write down the key words as they listen to Andrew's story.

Pupils should be reminded to use short forms, abbreviations and symbols where appropriate. To cater for learner diversity, less familiar words (e.g. rushed) could be provided to pupils. The teacher could also play the recording one more time for the less able pupils.

Dicto-comp / Dictogloss – Example (1)

Part 3: Work in pairs to revise the notes and help each other fill in any missing points.

Part 4: Write Andrew's story in the spaces provided.

A Special Day for Andrew	
Yesterday, Andrew woke up late. _____	

Pupils are asked to work in pairs to share the notes taken in Part 3. It facilitates the development of collaborative learning skills and allows pupils to learn from each other. Then they finish the writing independently.

Please refer to LT 3.1 in Appendix A for the dictation worksheets.

Dicto-comp / Dictogloss – Example (2)

Part 1: Listen to the descriptions about Miss Lee and try to understand the main ideas.

Part 2: Listen to the descriptions again and take notes in the following table.

What makes Miss Lee a good teacher?



	Qualities	Reasons
1.		
2.		
3.		

Pupils listen to an oral presentation about a teacher called Miss Lee. To prepare pupils for the dicto-comp / dictogloss, a table is provided for them to take notes. Pupils have to note down the main ideas (i.e. the qualities that make her a good teacher) and the supporting details (i.e. the reasons).

Dicto-comp / Dictogloss – Example (2)

Part 3: Write about Miss Lee using the notes you have taken. You can use the original wording or your own words.

My Favourite Teacher

Part 4: Discuss with your neighbour and help each other revise the work.

Pupils use the original wording or their own words to reconstruct the text. Finally, they are asked to help each other revise their work.

Please refer to LT 3.2 in Appendix A for the dictation worksheets.

Dicto-comp / Dictogloss – Example (3)

Part 1: Listen to the descriptions about cooking scrambled eggs and try to understand the main ideas.

Part 2: Listen to the descriptions again and note down the key words in the spaces provided.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____



Pupils listen to a procedural text (e.g. cooking scrambled eggs) in a jumbled order twice. They try to understand the text during the first listening and write down the key words during the second listening.

Dicto-comp / Dictogloss – Example (3)

Part 3: Write the sentences about cooking scrambled eggs with the help of key words.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

Part 4: Discuss in pairs / groups and put the sentences in the right order.

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In Part 3, pupils write the sentences about cooking scrambled eggs with the help of key words.

In Part 4, pupils compare their notes with their partner / group members and discuss the correct order of the sentences by considering the logical development of the text and the cohesive devices used. It is a good way to develop pupils' organisation skills and improve their writing skills.

Please refer to LT 3.3 in Appendix A for the dictation worksheets.

Dicto-comp / Dictogloss – Example (4)

Part 1: Listen to the story about the Fox and the Crow and try to understand the main ideas.

Part 2: Listen to the story again and note down the key words in the spaces provided.

The Fox and the Crow	
	Key words
Opening	
Body	
Ending	



Pupils listen to the story about the Fox and the Crow twice. They get an understanding of the story during the first listening and write down the key words during the second listening.

Dicto-comp / Dictogloss – Example (4)

Part 3: Work in groups and help each other revise the notes taken.

Part 4: Write the story using the notes you have taken and add your own opinions.

The Fox and the Crow

Pupils compare their notes in groups and reconstruct the story individually in the spaces provided. After reconstructing the text, pupils are asked to comment on the behaviour of the animals, using adjectives they have learnt, e.g. ‘I think the fox is cunning and the crow is foolish.’

Please refer to LT 3.4 in Appendix A for the dictation worksheets.

Keywords Dictation

- Keywords dictation is a good way to encourage pupils to **use the vocabulary they have learnt** in a new context.
- The teacher dictates **some key words or phrases** related to a theme to pupils. The pupils have to **write a new text** using the words provided.

The idea of keywords dictation is that some key words or phrases (about 15 – 20) are chosen from an interesting text or a short story. The teacher dictates these words to pupils in exactly the same order and the original form without showing them the text. Based on these key words, pupils write a new text which they will share with the class. Keywords dictation is a good way to encourage pupils to use the vocabulary in a new context and they can learn from their peers when they share their work.

The dictation activity can be adapted to suit the ability of primary pupils. For instance, pupils could be taught the target language and vocabulary items related to the topic in advance. For the less able and average pupils, they can use some or all the key words or phrases to write about the same topic. As for the more able pupils, they could be encouraged to write about a new topic using the key words provided. To provide more flexibility, pupils could be allowed to change the word forms if necessary.

An Example of Keywords Dictation

Part 1: Listen and write down the key words / phrases about a tourist attraction.

After introducing the text about Stanley Market and learning the topic of tourist attractions in Hong Kong, the teacher dictates fifteen key words and phrases related to the text to pupils. Based on the key words provided, pupils have to write about a tourist attraction they like most.

Reference Reading Text

Stanley Market

Hong Kong is a nice place for tourists. I am amazed by the big shopping centres and beautiful beaches. Among the many attractions in Hong Kong, I think Stanley Market is a must-go place because the market town is very interesting and the sea view is wonderful.

Last Sunday, I visited Stanley Market. It was crowded with many tourists and shoppers. I bought some Chinese paintings and souvenirs at reasonable prices. Then I enjoyed a delicious seafood meal on the waterfront. I looked at people playing water sports. I also took photos of the beautiful beach and the old buildings.

Stanley is certainly the best place to spend a relaxing day.

(The key words and phrases selected from the text are underlined.)

An Example of Keywords Dictation

Part 2: Use the outline below to help you write about the tourist attraction you like most.

(Name of the tourist attraction)

Paragraphs	Guiding questions	Key words
Opening	Which tourist attraction do you like? Why?	
Body	When did you visit the place? What did you see? What did you buy? What did you eat? What else did you do?	
Ending	How do you feel about the place?	

To help pupils make good use of the key words, a writing framework could be provided. Some guiding questions are given for them to write each paragraph with a clear focus. Pupils should think about when to use the key words, e.g. in the opening paragraph, the body or the ending paragraph.

An Example of Keywords Dictation

Part 3: Write about a visit to the tourist attraction you like.

(Name of the tourist attraction)

After drafting their ideas, pupils write about a visit to a tourist attraction in Hong Kong. They could write about Stanley Market or any tourist attraction they like using the key words provided.

Pupils should be reminded to proofread their writing before submission as the word forms of the key words provided may need to be changed to suit the new context.

Please refer to LT 3.5 in Appendix A for the dictation worksheets.