Pearson English International Certificate

Lesson Plan Ideas: Skill Building Activities

Listen and then Write (Dictation)
Task Introduction

- Listen and then Write (Dictation) tasks assess test takers’ listening and writing skills.
- There are 4–5 Listen and then Write (Dictation) tasks on each test.
- Test takers listen to a sentence or short text and then write what they have heard.
- Listen and then Write (Dictation) tasks test listening comprehension at the word and sentence level. They also test the ability to write accurately and understand sentence structure, word order and connectors.
- On screen, the task will look like this:

  The Audio Status box will count down from 7 seconds to zero and then the recording will play.
- The recording is played only once.
- Test takers can begin typing the sentence into the box while the recording is playing.
- Alternatively, test takers can write the sentence into the erasable booklet while listening and then type the sentence once the recording ends.
- At the end of the recording, once test takers have finished typing, they should click ‘Next’ to move to the next task.
Strategies for Success

- It will usually be quicker to type directly into the box while listening, but some test takers may find it easier to use the onscreen notepad first and then type once the recording ends. Test takers should identify what works best for them as individuals before taking the test by practising both methods.

- Be ready to listen as soon as the recording begins. During the 7-second countdown before the recording begins, there is nothing to do apart from get ready to listen and type. Test takers should make sure they are fully focused on the recording when it begins.

- Listen carefully. Test takers should concentrate on every word while listening. If they hear a word that they are unsure of, they must make sure they do not become distracted from the rest of the recording.

- Use abbreviations and symbols. Especially for longer words, it is usually better to use abbreviations and/or symbols while listening (e.g. ‘imp’ for ‘important’ or ‘+’ for ‘and’). This will help test takers to get everything down as they listen. There is time once the recording ends to then write out the words in full.

- Type as much as possible accurately, even if you can’t catch everything. Test takers can still get a good score, even if they miss one or two words. It is important that they do not become distracted or distressed when they hear a word they don’t know. They may be able to correctly type the words that follow.

- Proofread carefully. The recording will contain a full, grammatically correct sentence. Test takers should carefully proofread what they have written, particularly looking out for short unstressed words, such as prepositions (‘on’ ‘at’ etc.) and articles (‘a’ ‘an’ ‘the’) that they may have missed.
Listen and then Write (Dictation): Activities for all learners

Listen and then Write (Dictation) tasks feature sentences that vary in length, complexity and vocabulary level according to the level of the test. Test takers at lower levels will hear sentences of around 5–7 words containing common vocabulary, while higher-level test takers can expect sentences of between 8 and 11 words that will include higher-level vocabulary and may contain more than one clause.

To prepare for Listen and then Write (Dictation), all learners practise short dictation activities. All learners should also be trying to build their vocabulary so that they are familiar with the words they hear on the recordings.

Understanding the task

You could use dictation activities when introducing the format of Listen and then Write (Dictation). This would help learners get ready for the demands of the task while learning about it. Ask your learners to dictate these sentences:

1. These tasks assess listening and writing skills.
2. Make sure you are listening carefully to the recording.
3. You should type every word that you hear.
4. Use abbreviations and symbols while listening, especially for longer words.*
5. When the recording ends, check your work thoroughly.

*Lower-level learners are likely to have trouble dictating the word ‘abbreviation’ and may struggle with one or two other words in these five sentences. Tell them not to worry and to do their best with the other words. Use this as an opportunity to explain that they should not become distracted by a difficult word and that they should make sure they dictate as much as possible accurately.

After introducing the format of tasks and explaining the Strategies for Success on page 1, check that they have understood by using the following gap-fill summary.
Listen and then Write (Dictation):
Activities for all learners

Gap-fill summary

Decide whether to (i) __________ or handwrite while listening before you take the test. There will be a 7-second (ii) __________ before the recording begins. It is important to make sure you are ready to start writing as soon as it does. Try to avoid (iii) __________ while the recording plays. If you are unsure about one word, keep (iv) __________ and then come back to think about it once the recording ends. At the end of the recording, it is important to (v) __________ what you have written. Ensure you have typed a grammatically (vi) __________ sentence.

Word options

a) distraction  b) type  c) countdown  d) proofread  e) listening  f) correct

Answers: (i) b – type  (ii) c – countdown  (iii) a – distraction  (iv) e – listening  (v) d – proofread  (vi) f – correct

Typing

For many test takers, the most effective way to dictate when doing Listen and then Write (Dictation) tasks will be to type as they listen. Some learners, however, will be less comfortable than others with typing English on a keyboard. Before they take the test, make sure your learners get some practice typing in English and encourage them to practise at home if they can. One good way to improve typing speed is using pangrams.

Pangrams are sentences that contain every letter of the alphabet at least once. They can often sound a little strange – that is, they are rarely sentences that people would naturally use in conversation. But practising typing using pangrams is an excellent way to ensure you can locate every letter on the keyboard quickly. Here are some examples of pangrams:

- The five boxing wizards jump quickly.
- The quick brown fox jumps over a lazy dog.
- A mad boxer shot a quick, gloved jab to the jaw of his dizzy opponent.
- The job requires extra pluck and zeal from every young wage earner.
- Watch Jeopardy, Alex Trebek’s fun TV quiz game.
- My girl wove six plaid jackets before she quit.
- Brown jars prevented the mixture from freezing too quickly.
### Listen and then Write (Dictation):

**Activities for all learners**

#### Typing (Continued)

Ask your learners to choose one pangram and, using their phone or another device, to time themselves typing it as quickly as possible. Tell them to record how long it took and then to try again, aiming to reduce their 'best time' by one or two seconds. Ask them to repeat this activity regularly, always trying to get a little quicker each time.

#### Spelling

Due to the growing prevalence of devices with predictive text and people’s increasing reliance on software with a spellcheck function, some people believe that language users are generally becoming poorer spellers, even in their first language. It is important to emphasise the importance of accurate spelling to your learners. Test takers will need to spell words accurately when doing Listen and the Write (Dictation) tasks in order to get their best possible score.

Regular spelling tests focusing on commonly misspelled words can be of great benefit to learners. Select words according to the needs of your learners. Words containing unstressed and/or omitted vowels are often misspelled, and so may be a good place to start spelling practice. You could use these words for example:

- **boundary** /ˈbaʊnd(ə)ri/
- **chocolate** /ˈtʃɒk(ə)lət/
- **desperate** /ˈdɛsp(ə)rət/
- **generally** /ˈdʒɛn(ə)rəli/
- **medicine** /ˈmɛds(ə)n/
- **separate** /ˈsɛp(ə)rət/
- **valuable** /ˈvaljʊb(ə)l/

Focusing on the difference between how these words sound and how they are spelled can also help your learners to improve their pronunciation. Keep spelling activities fun by varying the way you focus on spelling. For example, you could jumble letters and ask learners to organise them into the correct spelling of the word.
Listen and then Write (Dictation):
Activities for A1/A2

A1 English users can recognise familiar words and basic phrases related to their immediate surroundings. They can write simple isolated phrases and sentences. At A2, learners can understand phrases and the highest frequency vocabulary related to areas of most immediate personal relevance. They can write sentences using connecting words and containing vocabulary to describe familiar topics, such as living conditions, jobs and education. Listen and then Write (Dictation) tasks assess test takers’ ability to use English in this way. You can help your learners prepare for the test by using the A2 example task below and other practice tasks on page 4.

She is going to plan our trip.

Stop rewind!

Pretending to be a tape recorder can be an effective way to assess your learners’ ability to dictate and to give them some valuable practice. Read sentences from a story or another kind of text that you will use in class and ask your learners to write down what you are saying word for word. They will need time to write which they can request from you by saying ‘Pause’ and ‘Rewind’. Put them in control by letting them say ‘Play’ when they are ready to continue. You should read at a normal speed using accurate pronunciation and stress. When saying something for someone else to write down, it is common to slow down a bit and emphasise certain syllables more than usual. Fight this instinct and don’t do this. Learners need practice dictating sentences spoken in a natural way.

Gap fill dictation

Another useful dictation activity can get learners up on the feet, shouting across the room. Divide your group into pairs. Find a short text and produce two version of it, each with different words gapped. Give one version to each student in a pair. For example:

Student A: She _____ going to _____ our _____.

Student B: _____ is _____ _____ plan _____ trip.

It is usually best to use a text of at least four sentences, even with lower-level learners. Ensure that vocabulary in the text is suitable for your group by using the GSE Teacher Toolkit.
**Listen and then Write (Dictation):**

**Activities for A1/A2**

**Building stress**

A1 and A2 learners can sometimes struggle with Listen and then Write (Dictation) tasks if they do not know how common words sound. Many lower-level learners are familiar with words in their written but not spoken form. Raise your learners’ awareness of syllables and how words are stressed by using building blocks or another kind of stackable object. Physically representing the way words are stressed can help learners greatly to remember different stress patterns and to produce words accurately.

Write a short sentence on the board and ask learners to represent it in building blocks: one syllable = one block, with two blocks for stressed syllables. For example:

I enjoy eating dessert.

After they have done this activity a few times, with a few different sentences, for a follow-up activity you can ask your learners to mark the stress on words in a text they have been recently reading in class.
Listen and then Write (Dictation): 
Activities for B1/B2

At B1 levels, learners can understand clear speech on familiar matters and can write straightforward texts on topics that are familiar, using connected phrases and common descriptive language. B2 learners can understand a wide variety of spoken language and can write more detailed texts. Listen and then Write (Dictation) tasks assess test takers’ listening and writing ability. You can help your learners prepare for the test by using the B1 example task below and other practice tasks on page 4.

Looking at a phone screen at night can damage your sleep.

Read-Speak-Listen-Write running dictation

Running dictation activities are fun and engaging ways to help your learners develop all four language skills – reading, speaking, listening and writing – while also preparing them for Listen and then Write tasks. Divide your class into pairs, with one writer and one runner in each pair. Divide your classroom space into two: one area for the texts and another area for the writers to sit. Select a text of one or two short paragraphs containing mostly familiar vocabulary and related to your learners’ interests. Runners must read the text, try to remember as much as possible, and then dictate it to their writer partner by whispering. Each pair is racing against each other. Runners keep going back and forth between the text until the writer has written the whole thing down correctly. You will need to check to ensure the winning pairs’ dictation is correct.

Make sure learners are whispering their dictation to their partner, rather than shouting across the classroom. Shouting can lead to writers listening to runners from other pairs. If you are using two paragraphs, you can vary this activity by having partners exchange roles after the first paragraph has been dictated.
Listen and then Write (Dictation): Activities for B1/B2

Correction dictation

Another dictation activity that can help prepare learners for Listen and then Write tasks is correction dictation. For this, you will need to create two versions of a text – with around 5% of the words differing between the two versions. For example:

**Version A**

Proofread carefully. The recording will contain a full, grammatically correct sentence. Test takers should carefully proofread what they have written.

**Version B**

Proofread carefully. The speech will contain a full, grammatically accurate sentence. Test takers must carefully proofread what they have done.

You could use Listen and Read (Hotspots) tasks for this activity or create your own texts. Using single sentences is fine, as this is the length of text test takers dictate during Listen and then Write (Dictation) tasks. Using longer texts can also be effective, as this will help to develop their concentration and active listening skills.

Give your learners one version of the text and read the other to them. Instruct them to write down any corrections. They should cross out incorrect words and write the word they actually heard above. They do not need to transcribe the correct words that they hear.

The first few times you do this, you may want to read the text more than once to give your learners a chance to get used to this dictation activity. Remember though that during Listen and then Write (Dictation) tasks they will only hear the recording once, so they need to get used to this when practising. After your learners are familiar with this activity, only read the text once and challenge them to write down every correction. Give them a little time when you finish reading to go back and tidy up their work. If they have trouble writing corrections in full while listening, encourage them to use abbreviations first and then go back to write the word in full.

Last one standing

Building vocabulary is an essential part of language learning. You can get your learners up on their feet using the words they know and learning new ones by playing ‘Last one standing’. All you need is a ball and some topics. First, ask your group to stand in a circle. Say a topic (such as ‘sports’) and next say a word connected to that topic (e.g. ‘stadium’). Then, throw the ball to one learner and explain they must say another word connected to the topic before throwing the ball to a classmate. This continues with each member of the group saying a word connected to the topic and throwing the ball to someone else. When someone cannot think of a word or when someone repeats a word that has already been used, they are out. Continue until only one person is left standing. If you have a very large class, you may want to divide them into smaller groups of 4-8, using stronger learners as group leaders if necessary.
Listen and then Write (Dictation): Activities for C1/C2

C1 and C2 users of English can understand speech containing a wide range of sophisticated and colloquial vocabulary, even when it is delivered at a fast native speed. They can write clear, well-structured texts on a wide variety of topics. Listen and then Write (Dictation) tasks assess test takers’ listening and writing ability. You can help your learners prepare for the test by using the B1 example image task and other practice tasks on page 4.

The original mosaic floor was discovered during the excavations.

Jumbled Story Dictation

Jumbled story dictations work in a similar way to running dictation activities but include an element of synthesis that can provide an appropriate challenge for higher-level learners. You’ll need some kind of narrative story that can only be told in one way. Alternatively, you could use instructions for doing something (e.g. making your own pizza) that can only follow one order. Print the text and cut into separate sentences.

As with running dictation activities, divide your class into pairs, with one writer and one runner in each pair. Divide your classroom space into two: one area for the texts and another area for the writers to sit. In the area for texts, jumble the sentences up so that runners will not read them in the correct order.

Runners must read the sentences, try to remember as much as possible, and then dictate it to their writer partner by whispering. Each pair is racing against each other. Runners keep going back and forth between the text until the writer has written the whole thing down in the correct order. Writers should number sentences according to the correct order. They need to be thinking about the correct order as they listen and while their partner is running. The winning pair are the ones who have dictated every sentence accurately and identified the correct order for the text. You will need to check to ensure the winning pairs’ dictation is correct.

Make sure learners are whispering their dictation to their partner, rather than shouting across the classroom. Shouting can lead to writers listening to runners from other pairs. All learners should get a chance to read and to write. You can achieve this with one or two texts. If using two texts, you can ask learners to change role after the first is completed. If you only have one text, ask learners to change roles halfway through the activity.
Listen and then Write (Dictation): Activities for C1/C2

Collocation Pelmanism

During Listen and then Write (Dictation) tasks, C1 and C2 learners will need to recognise higher-level collocations and remember them when writing. Help your learners to improve their knowledge of natural word pairs and to develop their memory at the same time by using a Pelmanism brain training activity to work on collocations. You could do this activity using a variety of word pair types; e.g. adjective + noun, adverb + verb. For example, you could use these compound nouns like these:

- ice caps
- ozone layer
- greenhouse effect
- fossil fuel
- cabinet minister
- climate change

First, put each word on a card. Put the cards face down on a table and mix them up. Then, ask learners to take turns to pick up two cards. If the two cards make a natural collocation, they are removed and the learner who got them gets a point. If they are wrong, they should put them back in the same place. All learners should try to remember where words have been placed in order to help create collocations when picking cards.

For larger groups, it is best to make several sets of cards so that you can divide learners into groups of 2–6. This activity can be extended by asking learners to use the collocations they have created to write sentences, which they can then dictate to each other as further practice for Listen and then Write (Dictation) activities.
**Listen and then Write (Dictation): Activities for C1/C2**

20 words

Listen and then Write (Dictation) tasks require learners to remember words they have heard. Although some test takers may be able to write down the sentence as quickly as the speaker in the recording says it, most test takers will need to go back and complete their dictation after the recording ends – writing out words in full, correcting spellings etc. Test takers will also need to use their memory of what they heard to check what they have written is correct.

One good way to help develop their ability to remember words they have heard and their listening skills is to play 20 words – a version of ‘The Memory Game’ where instead of asking people to look at objects on a table, you simply read the names of 20 objects aloud. For example, you could read “pencil, eraser, scissors, notepad, pencil case, stapler, pencil sharpener, highlighter, etc.”

While you are reading, learners should close their eyes and try to remember as much as possible. After you have read the name of all 20 objects, ask learners to write down as many as they can remember. Once they’ve had enough time to write, ask them to compare their list with a partner or group and award points to learners who remembered the most objects.

This activity can be conducted with fewer words for lower-level learners, but it is usually best to use more words than the strongest learners in your group are likely to be able to remember as this will challenge them more. You don’t just have to use the names of objects. Instead you might want to read out 20 adjectives that you have been working on in class, for example. As this activity is intended to improve memory and focus, rather than comprehension, make sure that all the words you read are words that your learners are likely to know.
Listen and then Write (Dictation):
Practice Tasks A2

I want to buy some new paintings.

They will switch the electricity on tomorrow.

There is no furniture in the accommodation.

The engineer will arrive this afternoon.
**Listen and then Write (Dictation): Practice Tasks B1**

- Many people find it difficult to save for the future
- Adults should exercise every day in order to keep healthy.
- Sara works as an assistant in the cultural centre/center.
- The shop has a wide range of ties, scarves and umbrellas.
Listen and then Write (Dictation): Practice Tasks B2

The novel I read recently had a totally unexpected ending.

Walking in and seeing a familiar face reassured me.

The exhibition included a very impressive landscape by a local artist.

We all jumped as the lion roared in its cage.

My stepmother has just been taken on as their creative director.
**Listen and then Write (Dictation):**
*Practice Tasks C1*

- His entire playing career has been blighted by injuries.

- His entire playing career has been blighted by injuries.

- Engineering faculties only accept candidates with a solid grounding in maths/math.

- Our manager was uncharacteristically quiet during the meeting.

- The council meeting came to an abrupt end.
Be yourself in English.