

Tips for selecting a bilingual dictionary

As you know, students may take monolingual and/or bilingual print dictionaries into the HSC Continuers and Extension written examinations. (Students are permitted to take a dictionary into the HSC Beginners written examination from 2008). When making recommendations to students, the following checklist may be of use.

Up-to-dateness

- How recently was the dictionary brought out or revised?
- Are technology terms included in the dictionary? (e.g. *E-Mail*, *downloaden*)
- Does the dictionary contain the new German spellings? (e.g. *daß* → *dass*)

Presentation

- Is the text clearly legible?
- Does each page look cramped, or does it look inviting?

Practical issues

- How much does the dictionary cost?
- How large and how heavy is it?
- Is it readily available?

Individual entries

- Do headwords stand out?
- Is colour used to highlight headwords?
- How many examples of usage are given for each entry?
- Does the dictionary contain many idiomatic/colloquial usages and are they clearly identified as such?
- Does an entry give helpful hints? (e.g. whether a verb takes the dative case)
- Are plural forms easily identified? (e.g. *das Buch* → *die Bücher*)

Appropriateness for high school students

- Is the guide on how to use the dictionary easy for students to follow?
- Are there any useful additional sections in the dictionary, e.g. grammar section, letter-writing section?
- Was it written with English learners of the target language in mind? E.g. if there is an additional grammar section, is it in English? If there are examples of formal/informal letters, are they target language examples? (This is sometimes stated in the introduction.)
- Are there any graphics or pictures?

Clearly you will need to decide which of these things carry the most importance for your students and your situation. It might be helpful to jot down a short checklist of words your students will be using in their course and use definitions for these to compare dictionaries.