



Guide to TOK Essay Writing May 2022

*The essay should be written in standard 12 Times Roman or Arial font and double-spaced.
The maximum word count is **1600 words**.
Details on uploading the finalized essays to the IB system will be provided at the time of upload*

General Guidelines & Instructions to students

- **Remember that writing is a process.** It does not just happen. No one sits in front of a pen and a paper (or a computer screen) and writes an award winning essay (in your case an A grade essay) on the first try.
- The key here is to **be patient** - to accept that the first draft will not be good and will require you to go back and revise it.
- If you become nervous, remind yourself that even the best of writers need **multiple drafts** to get to the final one.
- Remember that finding **supporting examples for our claims and counterclaims** through research / real life situations that can support your arguments is a must. **Reference your examples** please, in other words tell us that those are indeed real.
- Examples can vary from **real life situations** you saw on the news, in a YouTube video or an article you read, or an example that is inspired from your IB studies/CAS experiences.
- Your references need not be all **primary resources**; they can be **secondary resources**, as long as they are verified and credible resources. For example: The Onion is not a resource as it writes imaginary news.
- **Choose a title from the prescribed list of 6 essay titles** (which will be released in **September 2021**). Stick to it, tackle it and do not be afraid. Do not change your mind unless there is good reason.
- **Choose AOKs that you enjoy and are familiar with.** Make this an enjoyable experience. Why write about something you are not comfortable with just because your friend has Chosen it?
- Once you have that, it is time to tackle your **outline**.
- Outlines will be prepared in the classroom. Ask your teachers for outlines of essay plans.

Specific Guidelines

I. Prescribed Titles (PTs)

- 1. Note what the title is asking you to do.** Make sure you understand the **command term** and the question it is asking. What kind of knowledge is being elicited? Will you focus on personal knowledge or shared? (*For a list of the IBDP Command terms that are specific to the 2022 essay titles, please refer to the end of this document*).
- Essays are generally **comparative** in nature, when choosing your areas of knowledge (AoK) make sure that you are able to draw contrasts and comparisons.
- Take note whether the PT is asking you to take on **two Areas of Knowledge or two disciplines**. With the exception of History and Math (these are AOKs and Disciplines at the same time), you will need to be very clear on what AOK or what discipline you are choosing.
- You will need to **spend some time unpacking the title**. In other words, defining key terms, understanding what the title is actually asking and then developing your own response to it (this will be your thesis/main argument).
- 5. Respect the title.** Do not rephrase it or rewrite it in your own words.

"The chosen title must be used exactly as given; it must not be altered in any way." (Please see TOK Guide p.43 for more detail)

- Your main job in the essay is to **respond to the title**.

"Titles ask generic questions about knowledge and are flexible and cross disciplinary. They may be analyzed with reference to any part of the TOK course, to specific disciplines or to opinions gained about knowledge inside or outside the classroom. (TOK Guide)

II. Analysis

- The majority of your essay should be analysis.
- Describe your example and then analyze it using **appropriate TOK terminology**. How does this example support your claim? How does it serve your main argument?
- Use examples that **link from your DP discipline studies** (biology, chemistry, economics, business, CAS...etc.)
- Engage with AOKs.** Do not just mention them. AOKs are analytical tools. You do not offer a selection of AOKs that you will use at the beginning of your essay and never use them. Do not do that at the end of the essay either.

III. Essay Content

1. Pick your title, do your own analysis. Don't seek help until you have written something.
2. Do **not** search for responses to PTs on help websites – they are **not** always reliable, current or helpful. Once you do, your own thought process is clogged by other people's ideas and that cannot be undone! Do your work, go ahead grab a pen and jot down your own ideas!
3. Brainstorm and unpack the PTs with your teachers.
4. Describe your examples with accuracy, connect them well with the point you are making. Make sure that the examiner is clear on why you chose this example and how it supports your claim/counter claim.
5. Do not be afraid to use examples from your DP studies. Those are highly encouraged.

Real-life examples play an important role in the essay by illustrating the main ideas or taking forward the argument. Real life examples should come from the student's academic experience or from life beyond the classroom, as hypothetical examples are unconvincing. Anecdotal examples may be relevant but cannot on their own support the analysis in an essay. (TOK Guide, 2017 p. 52)

6. Do not be afraid to try new examples rather than recycling old examples used in previous years. Just make sure you research your new examples very well so you can show in detail why you chose them. (Steer clear of Darwin's evolution theory – please!)

TOK Essay Outline

Your teachers will offer you **sample outlines and essays** that walk you through how you go about building your essay. Please be prepared for the structure of your essay to change throughout the writing process. Once you write the essay, it may become clear that you need to rearrange your structure. So, choose one of the structures offered below, write your first draft and take it from there.

I. Introduction: Start strong. Unpack your title – define the key terms/ideas in the PT in your own words- never use a dictionary for TOK.. Tell your examiner what this title implies in your own words.. State your main argument and how you would challenge the assumption implicit in the title. A good essay tells an examiner what it is about from the first paragraph. Remember you have a limited number of words, so use them wisely and effectively.

A Note on Knowledge Questions:

- Do **not** begin your essay with a knowledge question (KQ) that overshadows the title. If the title is framed as knowledge question, do not begin your essay by rephrasing the title. Respect the title.
- You do **not** have to explicitly write your KQ. In a strong essay, knowledge questions will shine through the analysis.

“Writing “my knowledge question is...” near the start of the essay is usually a recipe for disaster as it means that, in effect, the title has been displaced.” TOK Subject Report 2017

- You may write your knowledge questions, but do not start by saying “My knowledge question is...” this usually leads to a recipe for disaster because essentially you did not respect the title, and instead replaced it with a main KQ of your own writing.

II. Body 1: AOK 1

Claim 1: State your claim to the specific AOK you are starting with: make it clear. It can be more than one sentence. **Example:** real life situation, describe your example, and analyze. Why is this example relevant to your main claim? How does it serve your argument? What ways of knowing are present in the example to produce knowledge? What role do they play? Are there any related Knowledge Questions that this claim/example throw up?

Counter-Claim 1: See *note on claim*. Remember counter claims do not need to be the exact opposite of your claim. What you need to present here is a different perspective. **Example:** real life situation, describe your example, and analyze. Why is this example relevant to your main claim? How does it serve your argument? What ways of knowing are present in the example to produce knowledge? What role do they play? Are there any related Knowledge Questions that this claim/example throw up?

Mini-conclusion: Connect your claims/counter claims to your thesis and prescribed title. What are you saying here about this AOK?

Tip:

* You can use one more example to analyze within the AOK if your word count is low.

* Use TOK vocabulary throughout the Body of your essay Example: **the 12 TOK concepts.**

III. Body 2: AOK 2

Claim 2: State your claim to the next AOK you are starting with, make it clear. It can be more than one sentence. **Example:** real life situation, describe your example, and analyze. Why is this example relevant to your main claim? How does it serve your argument? Which optional theme connects here, how?

Counter-Claim 2: See *note on claim*. Remember counter claims do not need to be the exact opposite of your claim. What you need to present here is a different perspective. **Example:** real life situation, describe your example, and analyze. Why is this example relevant to your main claim? How does it serve your argument? What ways of knowing are present in the example to produce knowledge? What role do they play? Are there any related Knowledge Questions that this claim/example throw up?

IV. Body 3: Here you shine light on the two AOKs and you **compare** them in reference to your argument. This will improve your grade. **The essay then becomes comparative as well as argumentative.**

V. Conclusion: Your conclusion section is the glue that will make your essay stick together.

- Reiterate your thesis (initial response).
- Use your mini conclusions to write the final conclusion.
- Tell the reader what the significance is for knowing what we know in this particular PT.
- Discuss implications and limitations of your arguments.
- If you think it is important to offer another perspective on the argument, do that. However, only if it is interesting and will strengthen your essay.
- End strong! Answer the question – but be reflective and open to alternate views rather than definitive...if you find a good quote that reflects your summation, use it.

VI. Word Count: Write an accurate word count at the end of your essay (before the bibliography). Examiners are not obligated to read your essay beyond the maximum word count.

VI. References: If you have used examples other than from your own memory or experiences, please include it in your list of references (alphabetically). Typically, TOK essays need not have more than two or three references, if at all.

Note:

1. All TOK essay will be put through **TURNITIN for a plagiarism check**, so be careful not to lift matter unless you have cited the source.
2. All **PPF documents** need to be filled in with the descriptions and dates of the interactions.
 - * **1st interaction:** When Essay titles are given to you and you brainstorm them with your teacher.
 - * **2nd interaction:** When you submit your Essay outline to your teacher and get feedback.
 - * **3rd interaction:** When you get feedback after submitting your 1st essay draft.

Appendix 1:

The Role of the Student:

1. Students are expected to do their own work.
2. Students are expected to put effort and write their own essays.
3. Students are expected to offer well thought off and research supported examples for their arguments.
4. Students are expected to meet deadlines set by their teacher.

The Role of the Teacher

In relation to the student's essay on a prescribed title, the teacher has three principal responsibilities:

- *To encourage and support the student in the writing of the essay*
- *To provide the student with advice on and guidance about the skills needed*
- *To ensure that the essay is the student's own work. (TOK guide p. 53)*

How will your teachers offer you support?

1. Your teacher is ready to **discuss the prescribed titles** with you. This will be done in class. However, your teachers are ready to offer you **individual support** to discuss the PTs with you. While your teacher might strongly recommend certain titles, the final choice on PTs is yours.
2. The teacher will offer you **feedback on your essay** outline/exploration. An exploration is a set of notes that maps out your essay journey.
3. Your teacher will offer you **one written feedback** on your written draft essay. Please do not submit a half written draft. Finalize your draft and submit it to your teacher. Write your word count.
4. You may seek further advice, guidance from your teacher, and they are obligated to help you. However, no further written feedback can be given beyond the prescribed feedback in point no. 3.

Further Support

1. Your teachers will offer you written notes on PTs shared in a document.
2. We encourage you to have your essay proof read.
3. We encourage you to check you Knowledge Questions with others.

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- **To encourage and support the student in the writing of the essay**
- **To provide the student with advice on and guidance about the skills needed**
- **To ensure that the essay is the student's own work. (TOK guide p. 53)**

Appendix 2.

Academic Integrity

Students are expected to present original authentic work they have produced on their own. Students suspected of academic malpractice will be asked to rewrite their essays and will be treated according to the School's Academic Honesty Policy. All student work will be scrutinized for authenticity by teachers.

Please refer the Academic Integrity and Honesty Policy.

References-

<https://guide.fariaedu.com/tok-part-2/-last> date accessed-30.8.21