

Theory of knowledge prescribed titles

May 2018 examination session

TOK Essay
Packet

May 2018

Instructions to candidates

Your theory of knowledge essay for examination must be submitted to your teacher for authentication. It must be written on one of the six titles (questions) provided overleaf. You may choose any title, but are recommended to consult with your teacher. Your essay will be marked according to the assessment instrument published in the **theory of knowledge guide**. The focus of your essay should be on knowledge questions. Where appropriate, refer to other parts of your IB programme and to your experiences as a knower. Always justify your statements and provide relevant examples to illustrate your arguments. Pay attention to the implications of your arguments, and remember to consider what can be said against them. If you use external sources, cite them according to a recognized convention.

Note that statements in quotations in these titles are not necessarily authentic: they present a real point of view but may not be direct quotes. It is appropriate to analyse them but it is unnecessary, even unwise, to spend time on researching a context for them.

Examiners mark essays against the title as set. Respond to the title exactly as given; do not alter it in any way.

Your essay must have a maximum of 1600 words.

1. "The fields of study of academic disciplines can overlap, but adopting interdisciplinary approaches to the production of knowledge leads only to confusion." Discuss this claim.
2. "We know with confidence only when we know little; with knowledge doubt increases" (adapted from JW von Goethe). Discuss this statement with reference to two areas of knowledge.
3. "Without the assumption of the existence of uniformities there can be no knowledge." Discuss this claim with reference to two areas of knowledge.
4. "Suspension of disbelief" is an essential feature of theatre. Is it essential in other areas of knowledge? Develop your answer with reference to two areas of knowledge.
5. "The quality of knowledge produced by an academic discipline is directly proportional to the duration of historical development of that discipline." Explore this claim with reference to two disciplines.
6. "Robust knowledge requires both consensus and disagreement." Discuss this claim with reference to two areas of knowledge.

Assessment outline

First assessment 2015

The assessment model in theory of knowledge (TOK) has two components, both of which should be completed within the 100 hours designated for the course.

Both the essay and the presentation are assessed using global impression marking. The essay contributes **67%** of the final mark and the presentation contributes **33%** of the final mark.

Assessment component	Marks available
<p>Part 1 Essay on a prescribed title</p> <p>One essay on a title chosen from a list of six titles prescribed by the IB for each examination session. The prescribed titles will be issued on the OCC in the September prior to submission for May session schools, and in the March prior to submission for November session schools.</p> <p>The maximum length for the essay is 1,600 words.</p> <p>All essays are externally assessed by the IB.</p>	10 marks
<p>Part 2 The presentation</p> <p>One presentation to the class by an individual or a group (a maximum of three persons in a group). Approximately 10 minutes per student is allowed for the presentation.</p> <p>One written presentation planning document (TK/PPD) for each student.</p> <p>The teacher must use the assessment descriptors published in this guide to arrive at a mark for the presentation based on the student's presentation plan (on the TK/PPD) and his/her observation of the presentation itself. The teacher must record his/her observations of the presentation on the TK/PPD. A sample of TK/PPDs is selected and moderated by the IB.</p>	10 marks

* See TOK Guide PBF
Pg 28 - 49

TOK Essay Format and Appearance Tips

★**NOTE:** Everything in 12 pt Times New Roman with 1 inch margins; the actual essay is double-spaced (AKA everything after bolded essay prompt and the four informational lines above the essay prompt)

★**NOTE:** There is no required cover sheet given the assignment will be uploaded on IB's site. **The only four acceptable file types are .doc, .docx, .pdf, .rtf ...** Please save your final draft in two locations (jumpdrive, CD-R, your email, email to teacher) and have it saved in at least 2 file types (example: .docx and .pdf).

- On <https://candidates.ibo.org> you will be required to enter the mandatory fields: 1) Prescribed title: Title (no quotations, no number); 2) Number of words; 3) Select file (browse); 4) Declaration - Confirm the work is your own and is the final version. [IF THEY FIND AN HONOR CODE VIOLATION YOU LOSE ANY SHOT AT AN IB DIPLOMA]

From IB: Schools are advised that the electronic coversheet contains all the candidate information required by the examiner. Candidates must not use headers or footers to add their name, session number or school name/logo to each page of their TOK essay. It is possible to name the uploaded PDF/DOC files after the candidate's name, it's only required that those details are not present in actual document.

SAVE ESSAY FILE AS: LASTNAME FIRSTNAME MAY ~~2017~~ 2018 TOK Essay PROMPT ?(include your #1-6)

TOK ESSAY PLEASE NOTE (don't include candidate number or name anywhere on your PDF/DOC/essay file): Candidates must not insert in any part of their essay: 1) *illustrations and graphics (unless essential to support the content of their essay)*; 2) *any names (for example, their own name, or the name of their school or teacher)*; 3) *their candidate session number or personal code*; 4) *the school's logo*

Actual TOK Paper:

The **Title/Prompt (exactly as it is on TOK form)** should be included in bold; single spaced with one line of space between word count line and essay prompt line. After the title/prompt, skip 1 or 2 lines and begin your essay.

★**Remember:** Your paper is to be just under 1600 words and double spaced. Make sure you consistently indent each paragraph (use the tab key), check for any spellings and/or typos; use parenthetical documentation (like WA/English paper – author name pg #) for quoted materials; and include your Word Count: ????

2018
May ~~2017~~
Word Count: 1568

In areas of knowledge such as the arts and the sciences, do we learn more from work that follows or that breaks with accepted conventions?

This is indeed my T.O.K. essay. I promise that I am consistent with my grammar and syntax and that I did not write this the night or period before it was due.

On the contrary, I spent many, many sleepless nights deliberating over how to best and

Essay is double spaced

1" margins

Works Cited (if needed):

This starts on its own page! Use MLA format; single space entries; indent 2nd line of entry if you have one; see teacher for correct MLA format on strange entries (TED videos, websites, DVDs, etc.)

From IB about the PPF form (conferences; see PDF form on website): 1) In an initial interaction the student and teacher must discuss the prescribed titles with the aim of enabling the student to choose the most appropriate title. 2) In an interim interaction the student may present the teacher with his or her work (an exploration) in some written form which might resemble a set of notes and ideas once a significant amount of progress has been made. 3) In a final interaction, towards the end of the process, students may present a full draft of the essay, and teachers may provide written comments of a global nature (but are not permitted to mark or edit this draft). The student is encouraged to include a short summary of each interaction directly on the form during or after each interaction. Additionally, both the student and teacher are required to sign the form to ensure that the information included in the form is their own. The completion of this form is mandatory for all TOK candidates in all schools

Suspected plagiarism: In the event of suspected plagiarism and other issues, examiners are requested to raise an exception within RM Assessor and use the appropriate heading.

The essay is not written on one of the prescribed titles: If a candidate's essay has not been written on one of the titles prescribed by the IB for this session, or if the prescribed title has been altered in some significant way, examiners should award zero.

The word count: The TOK essay should be a maximum of 1,600 words in length. Essays that exceed the word limit will be penalized in the following ways: examiners are instructed to stop reading after 1,600 words and to base their assessment on just the first 1,600 words & a 1 mark penalty must be applied to the essay.

Slight variations in automatic word counts should be taken into account. However, if an examiner suspects that the candidate's word count is not correct, he or she should count the number of words and apply the above instruction if appropriate. Examiners are not obliged to read appendices or footnotes.

Some of the common mistakes seen in TOK essays are identified below, along with advice on how they can be avoided.

Misunderstanding the nature of the essay

The goal of the TOK essay is not to evaluate the personal values of students, to explore conspiracy theories or to debate moral issues and themes. The essay invites students to consider the factors that influence our willingness to accept or reject information as knowledge. Students who do not appreciate this will often produce essays that fail to address the task and the criteria. Students should also remember that the TOK essay is not a research essay and so is not subject to the same requirements as the extended essay (apart from the requirements associated with academic honesty).

The scope of the essay

It is important that students are realistic about how much they can cover in a TOK essay which can be a maximum of 1,600 words. They are not being asked to consider all of the points that could potentially be made; indeed they should recognize that doing so will limit their ability to explore the points that they do raise in sufficient depth. Students need to be guided to reflect on, evaluate and select the most relevant ideas from the many that they have generated in the planning of their essay.

Unfocused introduction

Successful introductions tend to be dedicated to three main goals: 1) establishing some clarity about the key terms and concepts used in the title; 2) stating a position, that is, agree, disagree, agree with reservations, disagree with reservations ; 3) identifying the WOKs and AOKs that the essay will focus on.

Essays that open with generalized observations about mankind's eternal quest for knowledge tend to set the scene for a descriptive essay, and often cause the student to digress. These introductions also tend to cause readers to quickly lose faith in the purpose of the essay.

Strong essay introductions ensure that they address all aspects of the title, and that they consider any assumptions that are written into the title. They do not assume that the title can only ever be addressed from one position.

Ineffective use of examples

Strong essays will seek to employ a range of specific examples (contemporary, drawn from personal experience, cross-cultural, from multiple eras, drawn from the course) and will make relevant use of them. When we refer to specific examples we mean making reference to a particular artist/artwork or scientist/scientific theory, rather than making a generic reference to "artists" or "scientists". Effective examples invariably seek to relate the example back to the title, and to extend, fairly directly, from the example to the knowledge question that it was employed to illustrate. Students should avoid using hypothetical examples. Students who base their arguments on hypothetical examples that are invariably vague, unconvincing and anecdotal usually produce essays that fail to arrive at clear knowledge conclusions.

Students should also avoid using too many examples. Students who approach the essay from a content perspective tend often to make the mistake of filling the essay with large numbers of examples, skipping from one to the other without unpacking the significance of each. This tends to make the essay more descriptive than analytical.

Failure to refer to WOKs and AOKs

Students should identify which WOKs and AOKs their essay will focus on in their opening statements. It is crucial that students use the language of TOK appropriately, making explicit reference to the terms "ways of knowing" and "areas of knowledge."

Claims are not fully explored and evaluated

Strong students often fail to achieve full return for their efforts because they fail to fully develop the claims that they incorporate into their discussion, and fail to justify and evaluate those claims.

Counterclaims are ignored

Essays that explore counterclaims are more likely to approach the title as a debate about knowledge and are therefore less likely to make the mistake of treating the essay simply as one-sided statements of the student's own viewpoint or opinion.

Failure to consider implications

Many students fail to achieve the highest marks because although they make sound arguments, they fail to consider the implications of their arguments.

TOK ESSAY ISSUES TO WATCH FOR:

Essays/oral presentations are descriptive with little analysis.

The essays are unfocused and not relevant to the prescribed title.

The essay or oral presentation examples are vague/not relevant or not of good quality.

The ways of knowing are simply stated rather than used as part of effective discussion.

Essays/oral presentations contain no consideration of different perspectives.

Assessment details

Nature of assessment tasks

The two assessment tasks, the essay and the presentation, both have at their centre reflection on knowledge questions, but this reflection is demonstrated differently in each. The emphasis in the TOK presentation is on demonstrating an understanding of knowledge at work in the world, and is in a sense an extensive TOK reflection on a single example (the real-life situation). It is thus distinguished from the TOK essay, where students are required to show their TOK thinking skills in the discussion of a prescribed title that may be primarily conceptual in nature.

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 usually unconvincing. Anecdotal examples may be relevant but cannot on their own support the analysis in an essay. Neither the essay nor the presentation is primarily a research exercise, although some factual information may need to be included. If so, its reliability needs to be established through proper checks and referencing.

Part 1: Essay on a prescribed title

General instructions

Each student must submit for external assessment an essay on any **one** of the **six** titles prescribed by the IB for each examination session.

The titles ask generic questions about knowledge and are cross-disciplinary in nature. They may be answered with reference to any part or parts of the TOK course, to specific disciplines, or with reference to opinions gained about knowledge both inside and outside the classroom.

The titles are not meant to be treated only in the abstract, or on the basis of external authorities. In all cases, essays should express the conclusions reached by students through a sustained consideration of knowledge questions. Claims and counterclaims should be formulated and main ideas should be illustrated with varied and effective examples that show the approach consciously taken by the student. Essays should demonstrate the student's ability to link knowledge questions to AOKs and WOKs.

The chosen title must be used exactly as given; it must not be altered in any way. Students who modify the titles are likely to receive lower scores, since the knowledge questions that are explored in the essay must be connected to the titles in their prescribed formulation.

- If the title has been modified but it is still clear which prescribed title for the current session it refers to, the essay will be marked against that prescribed title. Any lack of relevance in the student's response to the prescribed title arising from this modification will be reflected in the score awarded.
- If it is clear that the title bears no literal resemblance to any title for the current session, the essay will be awarded a score of zero, in accordance with the TOK essay assessment instrument.

The essay must be written in standard 12 font and double spaced.

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.

These responsibilities should be met through the following interactions.

1. The student should **discuss the prescribed titles** with the teacher, although the final choice remains with the student who should be encouraged wherever possible to develop his or her own ideas.
2. After choosing the title and unpacking/developing ideas in relation to it, the student may present his or her work (an **exploration**) to the teacher in some written form. For example, this might resemble a set of notes and ideas, with tentative connections drawn between them, spread over a large piece of paper. Discussion with the teacher should subsequently allow the student to create a **plan** in which the structure of the essay can be laid out by paragraph.
3. After this, the student is permitted (and should be encouraged) to present to the teacher one **full draft** of the essay. The teacher is permitted to provide written comments of a global nature, but is not permitted to mark or edit this draft.
4. While the student may seek further advice, for instance, on the appropriateness of a particular example, or on the degree of clarity if writing in a second or third language, **no further written advice** on drafts is permitted. It is the student's responsibility to correct mistakes and make improvements.

The procedure for uploading the TOK essay can be found in the *Handbook of procedures for the Diploma Programme*.

Academic honesty

Authenticity

Teachers must ensure to the best of their ability that essays are the student's own work. In cases where there is concern, the authenticity of the essay can be checked through a discussion with the student and scrutiny of one or more of the following before uploading:

- the student's initial exploration of the title
- the full draft of the essay
- the student's references and/or bibliography for the essay, where appropriate
- the style of the writing, which may reveal obvious discrepancies
- a report from an online plagiarism detection service.

Acknowledgments and references

Students are expected to acknowledge fully and in detail the work, thoughts or ideas of another person if incorporated in work submitted for assessment, and to ensure that their own work is never given to another student, either in the form of hard copy or by electronic means, knowing that it might be submitted for assessment as the work of that other student.

The IB does not prescribe which style(s) of referencing or in-text citation should be used by students; this is left to the discretion of appropriate faculty/staff in the school. Regardless of the reference style adopted by the school for a given subject, it is expected that the minimum information given includes name of author(s), date of publication, title of source, and page numbers as applicable.

Students are expected to use a standard style and use it consistently so that credit is given to all sources used, including sources that have been paraphrased or summarized. When writing text a student must clearly distinguish between their words and those of others by the use of quotation marks (or other method such as indentation) followed by an appropriate reference that denotes an entry in the bibliography or works cited. The title "bibliography" or "works cited" depends on the referencing style that has been chosen. If an electronic source is cited, the date of access must be indicated.

Students are not expected to show faultless expertise in referencing, but are expected to demonstrate that all sources have been acknowledged. Students must be advised that visual material, text, graphs, images and/or data published in print or in electronic sources that is not their own must also be attributed to the source. Again, an appropriate style of referencing/citation must be used.

Factual claims that may be considered common knowledge (for example, "animals are not capable of performing photosynthesis") do not need to be referenced. However, it should be noted that what one person thinks of as common knowledge within a particular culture, may be unfamiliar to someone else, for example, an examiner in a different part of the world. This would relate particularly to examples given from popular culture. If in doubt, give an authoritative source for the claim.

Classroom handouts, if they are the original work of a teacher, must be cited in the same way as a book. If their contents have been taken from a separate source, that source should be cited.

Bibliography or works cited

The TOK essay is not primarily a research paper but it is expected that specific sources will be used and these must be acknowledged in a bibliography or works cited list.

The bibliography or works cited should include only those works (such as books, journals, magazines and online sources) used by the student. There needs to be a clear connection between the works listed and where they are used in the text. A list of books at the end of the essay is not useful unless reference has been made to all of them within the essay.

As appropriate, the bibliography or works cited list should specify:

- author(s), title, date and place of publication
- the name of the publisher or URL (<http://...>)
- the date when the web page was accessed, adhering to one standard method of listing sources.

Failure to comply with this requirement will be viewed as plagiarism and will, therefore, be treated as a case of academic misconduct.

Essay length

The maximum length of the essay is **1,600 words**. Extended notes, extensive footnotes or appendices are not appropriate to a TOK essay and may not be read.

The word count includes:

- the main part of the essay
- any quotations.

The word count does not include:

- any acknowledgments
- the references (whether given in footnotes, endnotes or in-text)
- any maps, charts, diagrams, annotated illustrations or tables
- the bibliography.

*1 mark penalty
if over 1600
words. Examiners
also stop reading
at 1600 words.*

Assessment instruments

Using global impression marking

The method of assessing the essay on a prescribed title and the presentation in TOK judges each piece of work in relation to written descriptions of performance and not in relation to the work of other students.

The assessment of both tasks is envisaged as a process of holistic or global judgment rather than an analytical process of totalling the assessment of separate criteria. Although in the essay the assessment is presented as two aspects, they are integrated into five described levels of performance, allowing for variation in student performance across different parts of the overall assessment. Because of the requirement for a reasonable mark range along which to differentiate student performance, each markband level descriptor corresponds to a range of two different marks.

Assessment judgments should in the first instance be made with reference to the level descriptors for **typical characteristics**. The **possible characteristics** underneath are intended as starting prompts for discussion and development of a shared vocabulary among examiners, moderators, teachers and students as to how work at each level might be described.

The possible characteristics corresponding to a level of performance should not be thought of as a checklist of attributes; they are intended to function only as tentative descriptions, some of which may seem appropriate to apply to work at that level.

The achievement level descriptors concentrate on positive achievement, although for the lower levels (zero is the lowest level of achievement) failure to achieve is included in the description.

These level descriptors are designed to be used as a whole, and operate at a global level. It is to be understood that:

- the described levels are not a checklist or necessary minimum
- the different levels of performance are not discrete, and differences of degree are involved
- different levels suggest typical performance, and there are always exceptions requiring individual or case by case judgments
- the performance of students can be uneven across different aspects, but it is the overall impression that is most important.

Examiners and moderators will use the levels of performance as the terms on which they make a judgment that draws on their knowledge of what students at this level can do with tasks of this kind. How examiners and moderators will make a judgement about the level of performance attained in a particular student response will vary.

Essay examiners may make a decision in the course of reading the piece, and then review it and make a final judgment after completing a reading. Or they may register the comments and arguments of a student, read the essay as a whole and make a decision in retrospect. In either case the described levels are to be seen as global and holistic rather than a checklist of necessary characteristics. Examiners will make judgments about individual pieces of work by taking into account and evaluating the distinctive characteristics of a particular script.

Presentation moderators will similarly endeavour to reach a holistic judgment based on the responses of the student(s) and teacher on the TK/PPD form.

The markbands for each assessment task in effect represent a single holistic criterion applied to the piece of work, which is judged as a whole. The highest descriptor levels do not imply faultless performance and examiners and teachers should not hesitate to use the extremes if they are appropriate descriptions of the work being assessed.

Part 1: Essay on a prescribed title

The following diagram shows the question underpinning a global impression judgment of the TOK essay. This question is to shape the reading and assessing of TOK essays.

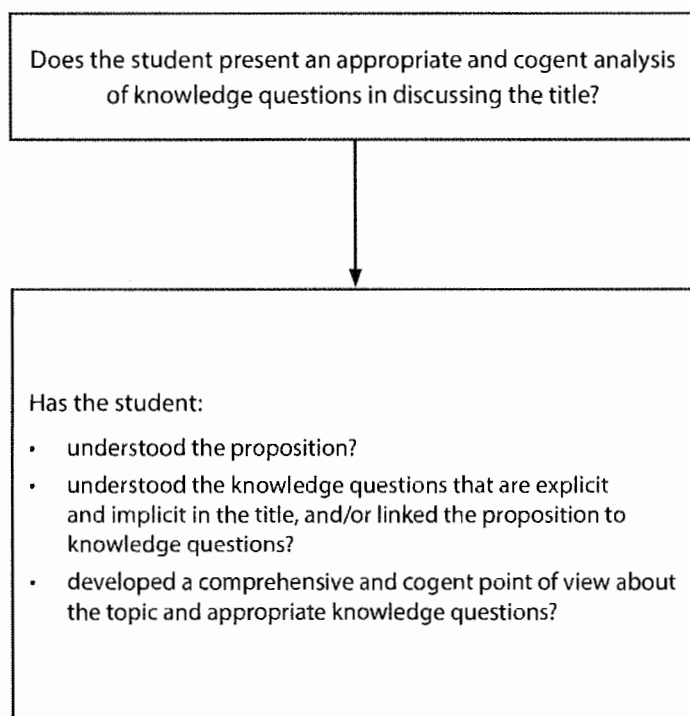


Figure 20

The judgment about the TOK essay is to be made on the basis of the following two aspects:

1. Understanding knowledge questions

This aspect is concerned with the extent to which the essay focuses on knowledge questions relevant to the prescribed title, and with the depth and breadth of the understanding demonstrated in the essay.

Knowledge questions addressed in the essay should be shown to have a direct connection to the chosen prescribed title, or to be important in relation to it.

Depth of understanding is often indicated by drawing distinctions within WOKs and AOKs, or by connecting several facets of knowledge questions to these.

Breadth of understanding is often indicated by making comparisons between WOKs and AOKs. Since not all prescribed titles lend themselves to an extensive treatment of an equal range of AOKs or WOKs, this element in the descriptors should be applied with concern for the particularity of the title.

Relevant questions to be considered include the following.

- Does the essay demonstrate understanding of knowledge questions that are relevant to the prescribed title?
- Does the essay demonstrate an awareness of the connections between knowledge questions, AOKs and WOKs?
- Does the student show an awareness of his or her own perspective as a knower in relation to other perspectives, such as those that may arise, for example, from academic and philosophical traditions, culture or position in society (gender, age, and so on)?

2. Quality of analysis of knowledge questions

This aspect is concerned only with knowledge questions that are relevant to the prescribed title.

Relevant questions to be considered include the following.

- What is the quality of the inquiry into knowledge questions?
- Are the main points in the essay justified?
- Are the arguments coherent and compelling?
- Have counterclaims been considered?
- Are the implications and underlying assumptions of the essay's argument identified?
- Are the arguments effectively evaluated?

Analysis of a knowledge question that is not relevant to the prescribed title will not be assessed.

Note: The TOK essay is not an assessment of first or second language literacy. Students should have properly edited their work, but whether they have done so is not in itself a matter for assessment. While the two are usually highly correlated, assessors will be wary of taking linguistic fluency for substantive understanding and analysis of knowledge questions. A fluent and stylish rendition of different knowledge questions does not in itself amount to analysis or argument. Discussion of knowledge questions must be clearly related and appropriately linked to a set title. Equally, an essay written with minor mechanical and grammatical errors can still be an excellent essay and examiners will not take these errors into consideration when marking the essay. It is only when these errors become major and impede the comprehension of the essay that they will be taken into account.

Preparing for the TOK essay

Students who produce their essays without adequate preparation may fail to:

- fully consider the implications of the title
- apply it to their own experiences
- research and unpack relevant examples
- arrive at a complex understanding of the criteria that they are addressing
- meaningfully reflect on the response that they are formulating
- draw from their course experience
- fully consider the implications of the knowledge issues that the title addresses
- phrase their response in a manner that allows them to maximize use of the word limit that the task is governed by.

Teachers should give thought to breaking the task down into stages. One suggested breakdown would be the following stages:

1) Interpret the title

Students often complete and submit their TOK essays having only arrived at a broad superficial understanding of the title that they are addressing. This commonly leads to essays that fail to address the title, or that quickly deviate from the title.

In many instances students produce wordy and descriptive essays because they are actually attempting to arrive at an understanding of the title while in the process of completing their responses. For this reason a strong starting point is to simply invite students to rephrase the title in their own terms, "I believe that this title is stating ..."

If students find it difficult to explain the title in their own terms, or even are initially unable to do this, the experience itself will encourage detailed discussion of the title which will deepen their understanding and ensure that the rest of the process is more meaningful and productive.

2) Define the key terms and concepts in the title

While lengthy dictionary definitions of terms are often a feature of weak descriptive responses, essays that fail to consider the central terms and concepts also tend not to explore the knowledge questions raised by the title. If the student is presented with a title which includes a phrase such as "There are no absolute distinctions between what is true and what is false" they will need to arrive at some personal understanding of the terms "absolute", "distinction", "true" and "false".

Strong essays will often produce ongoing consideration of the key concepts in the title, possibly establishing that what is true for one context such as ethics may vary from what is true in another such as mathematics. Students who skip past this process are at great risk of overlooking key parts of the question or of producing responses without having fully understood the title itself.

Students who define these terms in their own words are more likely to quickly take control of the essay and tend more often to produce essays that demonstrate personal engagement.

3) Identify the knowledge questions that are central to the discussion

Students should then be invited to formally identify the knowledge questions related to the title. If they do this they are far more likely to make effective use of the examples that they incorporate into their essay and they will be better equipped to respond to the title as a discussion of knowledge claims and their implications.

4) State a position

In most instances TOK titles invite students to adopt a position with respect to the title:

I agree

I disagree

I agree with reservations

I disagree to an extent.

If students are required to adopt a position then they are better equipped to recognize their response as a discussion of knowledge that naturally invites counterclaims and they are less likely to gravitate to the format that remains most familiar to them, the opinion essay. Students who formalize their position are also less likely to produce lengthy, generalized and descriptive introductions that use up space in the essay and limit the likelihood of establishing a knowledge agenda.

5) Identify the ways of knowing that are most significant to the discussion

Some prescribed titles specify which or how many WOKs should be addressed. However, others leave it to the students to decide which WOKs to include. As the TOK essay is only a maximum 1,600 words, it is not possible to cover all of the WOKs in depth in a single essay. Students should be encouraged to identify which WOKs they will focus on from the beginning, as this tends to produce a more focused in-depth response. It is suggested that students should select two or three WOKs which allows for effective contrasts to be made.

6) Identify the areas of knowledge that will be central to the response

Some prescribed titles specify which or how many AOKs should be addressed. However, others leave it to the students to decide which AOKs to cover. Essays that seek to address too many AOKs tend to become overloaded and consequently lose depth. For that reason, students can benefit from making an initial decision of which AOKs to include, perhaps the two AOKs they feel are most relevant and helpful to their response.

7) Identify the significant claims and counterclaims

Students must be able to develop claims in response to the knowledge questions through reasoned argument and the use of appropriate real-world examples. Students may need help in producing argumentative essays. To access the highest markbands for the essay students must explicitly, and in detail, explore counterclaims.

Example of the steps at work

If we go back to the question “There are no absolute distinctions between what is true and what is false” we should see a set of notes that looks something like the following.

Interpret the title: I think this title is stating that you can’t really cut a clean line between what is true and what is false, that there is a sort of grey line between them where things are relatively true or relatively false, as opposed to a clean border where you cross over into the world of truthness.

Define the key terms and concepts in the title:

Absolute: Something that is complete and unequivocal, not something that has fuzzy edges.

Distinction: Being able to tell one thing from the other.

False: Something that is not true. This can be something that is believed, at the time to be true, but later gets disproven. If this occurs then, even though it was believed it was, all that time, false.

True: Something that is justifiable and believable. In this case it could be something that you can show to people or that you can sufficiently justify.

Identifying the knowledge questions: The title is inviting me to consider what truth and falseness are and whether or not they remain absolute across time, in different areas of knowledge and even in different cultures.

State a position: I mostly agree with this. I think that true and false are spectrums but I only agree to an extent because I acknowledge that this is less so in some areas of knowledge than it is in others.

Identify the key WOKs: I think that this applies to all of the WOKs, but the most significant ones are reason, emotion and sense perception.

Identify the AOKs: I intend to use mathematics, science and history to illustrate my response.

Identify the most significant claims and counterclaims: The key counterclaim that I will use is that in mathematics equations are generally regarded as clearly either true or false but I will show that in some cases an equation can be both.

Brainstorming and organizing ideas

Students need to work frequently to generate more ideas, locate better examples, discuss the question with more people such as their parents, and eventually provide themselves with a better range of ideas to draw from. It is important for students to put down all the ideas that they think they can use, even if they initially seem a bit strange. Students should be encouraged to avoid editing out ideas during this stage.

Researching examples

Some students will choose to do this as part of their brainstorming but it generally makes more sense for students to research their examples after they have decided on the points that they seek to make. One of the most common causes for weak essay responses stems from the poor selection of examples. For this reason it is worth approaching this as an overt skill and ensuring that students are directed to sites and resources (magazines, documentaries, books and so on) that are likely to furnish them with interesting and relevant examples to use. This stage of the process can provide TOK teachers with an excellent opportunity to engage other DP teachers, allowing students to discuss their titles and the examples that they intend to use.

This process is central to the production of an engaged and detailed response. It also consumes a great deal of time. For that reason it is often advisable to allow sufficient time but to stipulate a time by which students should have located the examples that they intend to use. (1st and 2nd interactions/required conferences PLEASE)

Planning and structuring the essay

Once students have completed this much preparation, they should be well placed to prepare a visual plan of the essay that they are going to complete. An effective way to do this is to have students create text boxes that represent each paragraph of the essay, beginning with a declarative, knowledge-focused opening statement that links clearly to the title.

Producing thorough structured essay plans provides a number of advantages to students.

It allows for reflection and peer assessment at a stage where the essay is still quite fluid.

It enables students to easily make significant changes to the content and the order of the essay.

It teaches students to approach the essay with an awareness of the available word limit.

It enables students to easily jettison additional or unnecessary points.

It helps students to create clear lines between the title, the opening statements and the examples.

It allows students to quickly define the points that they seek to make, leaving them the space they need to address the KI/KQs the examples illustrate.

Once students have dedicated this much thought to the process they should then progress to a working draft of the essay.

Editing and reviewing the essay

In addition to planning, an important stage in writing the essay that is often neglected is allowing sufficient time for editing or reviewing the essay. Students tend to edit most effectively if they are able to leave their essay for a while and come back to it with fresh eyes.

NOTE: IB INSTRUCTIONS TO TOK EXAMINERS – PRIOR TO 2015:

Links and Comparisons may be developed through examples or through analysis.; *Examples* may provide evidence of awareness of a candidate's own perspective, or of other perspectives.; *Counterclaims* may be provided by examples, and in some cases (for example, literary fields) *argument* may be developed through examples.; *Factual Information* may be provided through examples.

Awareness of a counterclaim will generally emerge when the candidate considers more than one possible answer to a specific question, and is likely to be localized in a specific paragraph. It occurs perhaps as a result of an evaluation of arguments/assumptions in the essay and relates to the analytical depth of the essay in a logical sense. **Perspective** is a broader term: different perspectives may emerge when the candidate considers the views of people whose background and life experience are different from their own. Sensitivity to different perspectives may be shown in various ways and is not necessarily localized at a specific point in the essay.

Sources: Where sources are used, academic sources (both electronic and print) are recommended, but the essay is not a research essay and should not be treated as such (this skill is examined in the extended essay). The key point is that a source is traceable, and, therefore: 1) There is no penalty for using solely web-sources (e.g. *wikipedia.org*), as long as the last date of access is given. 2) There is no penalty for not using standard referencing throughout, or failing to order a bibliography alphabetically. 3) Untraceable references such as “TOK class notes / lectures” may incur a penalty if too much reliance is placed on them. Examiners are referred to the paragraph on acknowledgements and references in the Theory of knowledge guide.

TOK essay assessment instrument

Does the student present an appropriate and cogent analysis of knowledge questions in discussing the title?						
Aspect	Level 5 Excellent 9–10	Level 4 Very good 7–8	Level 3 Satisfactory 5–6	Level 2 Basic 3–4	Level 1 Elementary 1–2	Irrelevant 0
Understanding knowledge questions	There is a <i>sustained focus</i> on knowledge questions connected to the prescribed title and are well chosen— developed with <i>investigation</i> of different perspectives and linked effectively to areas of knowledge and/or ways of knowing .	There is a <i>focus</i> on knowledge questions connected to the prescribed title— developed with <i>acknowledgment</i> of different perspectives and linked to areas of knowledge and/or ways of knowing .	There is a <i>focus</i> on knowledge questions connected to the prescribed title—with <i>some development</i> and linking to areas of knowledge and/or ways of knowing .	<i>Some knowledge questions</i> that are connected to the prescribed title are considered, but the essay is largely <i>descriptive</i> , with <i>superficial or limited links</i> to areas of knowledge and/or ways of knowing .	The essay has only very limited relevance to the prescribed title—relevant points are <i>descriptive</i> .	The essay does not reach a standard described by levels 1–5 or is not a response to one of the prescribed titles on the list for the current session.
Quality of analysis of knowledge questions	Arguments are <i>clear</i> , supported by real-life examples and are <i>effectively evaluated</i> ; counterclaims are <i>extensively explored</i> ; implications are <i>drawn</i> .	Arguments are <i>clear</i> , supported by real-life examples and are <i>evaluated</i> ; some counterclaims are <i>identified and explored</i> .	<i>Some arguments</i> are <i>clear</i> and supported by examples ; some counterclaims are <i>identified</i> .	Arguments are offered but are <i>unclear</i> and/or <i>not supported</i> by effective examples .	Assertions are offered but are <i>not supported</i> .	
Some possible characteristics						
	Cogent Accomplished Discerning Individual Lucid Insightful Compelling	Pertinent Relevant Thoughtful Analytical Organized Credible Coherent	Typical Acceptable Mainstream Adequate Competent	Underdeveloped Basic Superficial Derivative Rudimentary Limited	Ineffective Descriptive Incoherent Formless	

Essay Title (Make sure you write it accurately, do not change it)



Let's unpack the title, what are the knowledge issues here?

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-
-
-



Which WoKs are appropriate (*if any*) to this title?



If it is not expressed explicitly in the essay title, what two AoK are appropriate for this essay?



Real Life Situations to support your arguments



Real Life Situations to support your arguments