



THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE (TOK)

STUDENT AND PARENT GUIDE



This document is a handbook for IBDP students with excerpts taken from the complete TOK guide from the IBO and is available for students as an e-document.

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Theory of Knowledge (TOK)

Theory of Knowledge course provides students with an opportunity to explore and reflect on the nature of knowledge and the process of knowing.

The students reflect on the knowledge, beliefs, and opinions that have built up their years of academic studies and their lives outside the classroom.

The course centers on the exploration of knowledge questions. These are contestable questions about knowledge itself.

The TOK curriculum is made up of three deeply interconnected parts:

- The core theme – knowledge and the knower
- Optional themes – 2 of the following five are selected-knowledge and technology; knowledge and language; knowledge and politics; knowledge and religion; and knowledge and indigenous societies.
- Areas of knowledge – these are specific branches of knowledge, each of which can be seen to have a distinct nature and sometimes use different methods of gaining knowledge. In TOK, students explore 5 compulsory AOKs – history; the human sciences; the natural sciences; mathematics; and the arts.

The following 12 concepts have particular prominence within the TOK course: evidence, certainty, truth, interpretation, power, justification, explanation, objectivity, perspective, culture, values, and responsibility.

Specifically, the **aims of the TOK course** are for students to:

1. make connections between a critical approach to the construction of knowledge, the academic disciplines, and the wider world
2. develop an awareness of how individuals and communities construct knowledge and how this is critically examined
3. develop an interest in the diversity and richness of cultural perspectives and an awareness of personal and ideological assumptions
4. critically reflect on their own beliefs and assumptions, leading to more thoughtful, responsible, and purposeful lives
5. understand that knowledge brings responsibility which leads to commitment and action.

TOK Assessment.

Students complete **100 hours** over the **two-year** course. There are 2 assessment tasks in the TOK course.

- The TOK exhibition assesses the ability of the student to show how the TOK manifests in the world around us. The exhibition is an internal assessment component; it is marked by the teacher and is externally moderated by the IB.
- The TOK essay is an external assessment component; it is marked by the IB examiners. The essay must be a maximum of 1600 words and must be one of the 6 prescribed titles issued by the IB for each examination session.

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

The final TOK grade and the final Extended Essay grade are entered into the **Diploma Points Matrix** (see below) to award a possible maximum of 3 extra points to be added to a student’s Diploma score.

		Theory of knowledge					
		Excellent A	Good B	Satisfactory C	Mediocre D	Elementary E	Not submitted
Extended essay	Excellent A	3	3	2	2	1 + Failing condition*	N
	Good B	3	2	1	1	Failing condition*	N
	Satisfactory C	2	1	1	0	Failing condition*	N
	Mediocre D	2	1	0	0	Failing condition*	N
	Elementary E	1 + Failing condition*	Failing condition*	Failing condition*	Failing condition*	Failing condition*	N
	Not submitted	N	N	N	N	N	N

Candidates not submitting satisfactory work in either area will fail the Diploma.

Part 1 Theory of Knowledge exhibition (10 marks)

Students are required to create an exhibition of 3 objects that connect to 1 of the 35 “IA prompts” and an accompanying written commentary on each object. To enable their exhibition to be marked by their TOK teacher and for samples of student work to be submitted to the IB for moderation, students are required to produce a single file containing:

- A title clearly indicating their selected prompt
- Images of their 3 objects
- A typed commentary on each object that identifies each object and its specific real-world context, justifies its inclusion in the exhibition and links to the IA prompt (maximum 950 words)
- Appropriate citations and references

Part 2 Essay on a prescribed title (10 marks)

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 shared with students in September prior to submission for the May exam session.

The maximum length for the essay is **1,600 words**.

Essays that exceed the word limit will be penalized; examiners are instructed to stop reading after 1600 words and base their assessment on the first 1600 words. A 1-point penalty will be applied to the essay.

Students are required to indicate the number of words when the essay is uploaded during the submission process.

The IB externally assesses all essays.

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 based on 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 themes.

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.

The role of the teacher during essay writing

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.

For the TOK essay, 3 formal recorded interactions between the student and the teacher are required. These must be recorded on the **TOK essay Planning and Progress Form (TK/PPF)**. It is submitted to the IB as important evidence that steps have been taken to help ensure the authenticity of the student's work.

Academic honesty and Authenticity

Academic honesty is an embedded expectation and practice at RWA.

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; RWA prefers the **Harvard Referencing style**, which needs to be used. It is expected that the minimum information given includes name of author(s), date of publication, title of source, and page numbers as applicable.