

IB-Required Assessments
General Guidelines for the TOK Essay
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[EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT – 10 points; accounts for 67% of the final TOK score; the earned points are *doubled*, then added to the assessed TOK presentation score (out of 10 points) to make up your predicted score]

* For the essay to be sent to IBO, read carefully and choose ONE essay from among the six TOK Prescribed Titles designated *for same session of your year of graduation*. IBO publishes these titles in September of the beginning of your senior year, so be careful that you are picking from the list titled for **May**, and not for November. Also, read for detailed explanations of the essay requirements in the most recent TOK Curriculum Guide; what follows are my own suggestions and guidelines based on the information in the guide.

PREPARING THE ESSAY---GENERAL TIPS:

- 1) Make your introduction clear; lay out a roadmap of where you plan to take the reader in your argument. Restating the title in the introduction focuses the readers thinking, so consider doing this.
- 2) Pose a central knowledge question that is derived from the title and any other knowledge questions you can pose to show how you will approach discussion on the title.
- 3) You will need to pose counter-arguments throughout the essay in order to more effectively discuss your argument in response to the title. This demonstrates your awareness of and your ability to consider different knower's perspectives, recognizing the validity and veracity (truth) of their arguments.
- 3) Use lots of real life, actual examples/situations that clearly make a link between abstract TOK ideas/concepts learned in class to concrete examples in the real world. Avoid using hypothetical examples and using them as a means of providing evidence. In addition, try not to use the most easily thought up examples (Columbus & Flat Earthers, Hitler/WWII, Pluto not a planet, etc.). The assessors see these examples all the time, and they consider the examples to be lazy attempts at discussing concepts/ideas that could be better explained with more original, even personal, examples.
- 4) Use the first-person pronoun ("I") and try to make connections with things read and discussed in TOK class or your other classes, as you see its relevance to the prompt.
- 5) Your conclusion should bring together the ideas discussed in your central argument/thesis and suggest broader analysis and implications for future discourse related to the topic.
- 6) Re-read and revise your essay more than twice. Discuss it with your family and friends; they are a great source of ideas. They can also tell you whether or not your essay's arguments are clear and your examples are relevant. Check the *TOK essay assessment instrument* in the Curriculum Guide to see how you might score.

A CHECKLIST FOR THE **REVISION PROCESS**:

- 1) Read the introduction. Do the opening sentences make you engage the prompt immediately? Are the primary knowledge questions identified clearly?
- 2) Is there a counter-argument in the introduction? Are there counter-arguments throughout the essay?
- 3) Are knowledge questions & TOK concepts identified and discussed *explicitly* in the body?
- 4) Are the examples clear and relevant to your argument? Are the examples factually accurate and have you cited when necessary? Is any information assumed?
- 5) Are there a lot of examples that relate TOK ideas and subjects on the TOK diagram to concrete, real life situations related to the prompt?
- 6) Does the conclusion give you a sense of summary? Does it consider the most reasonable angles/perspectives from which to discuss the implications of the prompt?

A CHECKLIST FOR THE **EDITING PROCESS**:

- 1) Is the prescribed title exactly stated as given, with its corresponding number?
- 2) Do you have page numbers on the header or footer of each page except the first one?
- 3) Is the essay double-spaced?
- 4) Does it have a standard font? Is it a 12-14 point size? Is the print color in black?
- 5) Have you written more than 1600 words? Is the paper at least around 1200 words? Have you included the word count on the paper?
- 6) Is the bibliography (if you have one) organized in a standard format (MLA, APA, etc.)?
- 7) Do all quotes have parenthetical citation (Last name of author, page number of source) or at least a footnote to be referenced in the bibliography? Are all sources used properly cited in your bibliography?
- 8) Are all paragraphs indented? Also, there should be no skipped lines in between paragraphs.
- 9) Did you use spell-check? Read over the paper again to catch the mistakes spell-check cannot.

10) Did you check for obvious grammar mistakes, especially those that make it difficult to make sense of what you are saying? Beware of run-on sentences and improper capitalization/punctuation as well.

AFTER REVISIONS/EDITING & THE ESSAY IS COMPLETE:

1) There should be NO personally identifying information on the essay itself (other than a candidate code---unnecessary for junior year). Just save the file using the file naming protocol noted below.

* File Naming Protocol is as follows: **LASTNAME_FIRSTNAME-Title #.docx**

2) Upload a **DIGITAL COPY** of your final revised paper to ManageBac in the designated assignment for Essay Submission.