Research questions, evidence and academic integrity

IB DP Extended Essay core component

Research questions, evidence and academic integrity

- write a research question that is focused, arguable and researchable;
- tell primary sources from secondary sources and evaluate both;
- plan the 4,000 words so that every paragraph serves the argument;

Research questions, evidence and academic integrity (2)

- cite every source where you use it, and use AI tools honestly;
- prepare for the three **reflection** sessions and write real reflections.

The research question

- **focused**: one case, one period, one angle, not a whole field;
- **arguable**: more than one reasonable answer, so you must argue, not just describe;
- **researchable**: you can reach enough sources or collect enough data in the time you have.

Evidence and the 4,000 words

- **Primary sources** are the raw material: documents, data you collect, a novel, an experiment.
- **Secondary sources** are what experts have written about it. Use them to show the debate, not to copy their answers.
- For each source ask: who made it, when, for whom, and how reliable is it?
- Every paragraph should move the argument forward. Description that does not help answer the question wastes words.

Academic integrity

- Give a **citation** every time you use someone else's words, ideas, data or images, at the point where you use them.
- Use one **citation** style consistently, and list every source in the **bibliography** .
- Paraphrasing still needs a citation. Changing a few words in someone else's sentence is not your own writing.
- Do not let anyone else, including an AI tool, write the essay for you. If you use an AI tool in your research, follow your school's rules and say how you used it.

Reflection and the three sessions

- Your written **reflections** should show real thinking about your research: a decision you made, why you made it and what it taught you.
- For example: "The central bank's records were not available in a language I could read, so I narrowed my question to the reparations side and used two historians' work on the bank.
- I learned that a question must fit the sources I can actually use."

Sources for this lesson

- International Baccalaureate, *__Extended Essay__ guide*, and *Academic integrity policy* (2023), including the appendix on artificial intelligence tools.
- A. Fergusson, *When Money Dies: The Nightmare of the Weimar Hyperinflation* (1975).
- G. D. Feldman, *The Great Disorder: Politics, Economics, and Society in the German Inflation, 1914–1924* (1993).
- Treaty of Versailles (28 June 1919), Part VIII, Reparation.

Common errors

- A topic instead of a question: "the First World War" cannot be answered in 4,000 words.
- A question that can only be described, not argued ("What happened in 1923?").
- A question you cannot research with the sources or data you can reach.

Common errors (2)

- Using secondary sources to copy answers instead of showing the debate.
- Paraphrasing without a **citation**, or putting all the citations at the end.
- Reflections that only list what happened, with no decision and no learning.

Key terms

- **Extended Essay (EE)**: an independent research essay of up to 4,000 words in one subject.
- **Supervisor**: the teacher at your school who guides your research but does not write it.
- **Research question**: the focused, arguable question that the essay answers.

Key terms (2)

- **Primary source**: raw material, such as a document, your own data, a novel or an experiment.
- **Secondary source**: what experts have written about the raw material.
- **Academic integrity**: being honest about where every idea, word, image and piece of data comes from.
- **Viva voce**: the short final interview with your **supervisor** after you hand in the essay.

Check yourself

- 1.
- Give the word limit, the hours of work, and the number of **reflection** sessions. 2.
- What three things make a good research question? 3.
- Narrow "How does pollution affect rivers?" into a research question. 4.