

TOK: evidence and judgement

Companion discussions for the current introductory lessons

Preference or learning?

- A video club survey says 80% prefer videos. A post concludes that videos always improve learning.
- Which outcome was measured? What comparison would support the learning claim?

Keep the outcome precise

- The survey supports a preference claim about its respondents. It does not measure understanding.
- Compare relevant learning outcomes, starting points and teaching conditions; limit the conclusion to the studied task.

Choose a specific object

- Compare a generic cloud picture with a dated local weather forecast.
- Which object provides context for discussing uncertainty? Explain its contribution to the chosen official prompt.

Explain the object's contribution

- The dated forecast identifies a predicted event and its probability in a particular setting.
- Explain that connection in the commentary and credit the exact source. An attractive image alone supplies no argument.
- Use the current official exhibition instructions; this discussion is planning practice.

One river, two questions

- A scientist asks whether a sample is safe to drink. A historian asks why a family settled nearby.
- Can a water test and a dated letter answer the same question?

Judge methods for their purpose

- The test supports a claim about a measured substance under recorded conditions. The letter can support an account of a family's reasons.
- Compare accuracy, context and corroboration for the particular claims. One example cannot rank entire areas of knowledge.

When experts disagree

- Two engineers disagree about a bridge. One inspected it recently; the other used an older photograph.
- What would justify trusting one conclusion? What still needs checking?

Let the challenge change the claim

- Relevant expertise supports trust when the evidence and method fit the decision. A title alone does not settle it.
- Compare the inspections, their scope and uncertainty. Explain how disagreement qualifies the conclusion.
- For assessed essay work, use the prescribed title for the correct session.

Why did the library close?

- A later memory mentions a meeting; a dated notice announces a power repair.
- Which record proves that the announced event happened? What independent check would help?

Corroboration and inference

- The notice records a plan. A completed repair log and opening-time record can strengthen the repair explanation.
- Copied notices are not independent confirmation. Surviving records may still leave intentions or other experiences unknown.

Whom does the poll represent?

- Of 400 students, 100 volunteer responses include 80 supporters of later library hours.
- Does 80% support describe respondents or all students? Who might be missing?

Keep sample and population distinct

- 80% describes the recorded respondents. Generalising requires a defensible link to the wider population.
- A library-interest channel may miss non-users. More responses through the same channel need not remove selection bias.
- Use an approved, neutrally worded follow-up reaching relevant groups; preference still does not measure improved learning.

Do the cup readings isolate material?

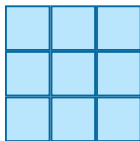
- Two cups read 28 and 25 degrees Celsius. Their distances from the lamp and sensor readings also differ.
- Which checks would address these competing explanations?

Improve the comparison

- Match relevant starting conditions and position, check sensors against a reference and exchange sensors between cups.
- Repeated readings describe variation; repetition alone does not correct bias or separate confounded factors.
- State the conditions tested and remaining uncertainty before proposing a general explanation.

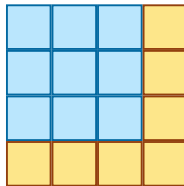
Examples or a general proof?

A finite picture explains the general step



$3^2 = 9$ cells

Add $2 \times 3 + 1$



9 existing + 7 new = 16

For any positive integer n : $n^2 + (2n + 1) = (n + 1)^2$

- What does the added row and column explain?
- What remains to justify for every positive integer?

Start the chain and justify its step

- For $n=1$, the sum is 1. Assume the first n positive odd numbers sum to n squared.
- Adding the next term gives the next square. The base case and general transition cover every positive integer.
- The sequence 3, 5, 7 starts differently; it is outside the original claim.

$$n^2 + (2n + 1) = (n + 1)^2$$

Peaceful or lonely?

- A sunrise photograph has soft light, open space and an isolated figure. Two viewers disagree about its effect.
- What features support each reading? Does either establish the photographer's intention?

Compare reasons for a reading

- Peaceful can be supported by light and open space; lonely by isolation. Connect each feature to the proposed effect.
- Intention may require contextual evidence. A framed moment cannot show that the school is always empty.
- Ambiguity allows reasoned alternatives; it does not make every reading equally supported.

May became must

- A notice permits library use; a translation requires it.
- How did the obligation change? Would the same meaning of may apply in every context?

Preserve the strength of the claim

- Read the wording in its setting: permission differs from requirement, and possibility differs from certainty.
- Keep qualifiers such as some and under these conditions. Removing them can turn a limited claim into a universal one.
- Clear language makes reasoning easier to check; it does not establish truth by itself.

Three reports, one origin

- Three top search results repeat one club press release claiming doubled membership.
- Are they three independent checks? What does the ranking measure?

Trace provenance before counting evidence

- The results share one origin. Repetition adds little independent support without new checks.
- Registered membership differs from active attendance. Seek records for the exact quantity claimed.
- Relevance or popularity rankings are not proof of accuracy. Shared provenance does not itself prove the release false.

Two visits, two perspectives

- A morning visitor says the library is quiet; an afternoon visitor reports group discussion.
- Do the observations contradict? What would change an all-day claim?

Locate the knower's judgement

- Both observations can be accurate in different settings. Reliable afternoon evidence narrows the all-day claim.
- Separate the factual pattern from values about silence and collaboration. Another perspective helps when it supplies relevant missing evidence.
- Name the evidence that would justify revision rather than accepting every opinion equally.

Check yourself

- Explain why repeated headlines can share only one source of evidence.
- Compare the reasons for a measured scientific claim and a mathematical proof.
- Use a specific object, its context and a clear inference to answer a knowledge question.
- Name what would change your judgement and explain how the claim would narrow.