

Knowledge and the knower

IB DP Theory of Knowledge Knowledge and the knower full package

1. TOK at a glance

TOK at a glance

IB Theory of Knowledge: reflection on the nature, scope and limits of knowledge and the process of knowing. Assessed by the essay on one of six prescribed titles (two thirds) and the exhibition of three objects with commentaries (one third).

Must-know: the knowledge question (second-order, open, contestable); five areas of knowledge compared by method; the essay's unpack, argue, exemplify, weigh, imply; the exhibition's three objects, one prompt, three different links.

2. The knowledge question

The knowledge question

A question about knowing rather than about the thing known: not why did the wall fall, but how does the historian know why, and what would count as a better answer?

Open, general, contestable: the course's central question is how do we know that.

Worked: the school ranking list turns who came first into what does the rank measure, and what does it miss: measurement itself becomes a knowledge question.

3. Five areas

Five areas

History (evidence read), the human sciences (models on people who answer back), the natural sciences (the experiment replicated), the arts (interpretation argued), mathematics (proof within chosen axioms): different in method, equal in dignity. The strongest TOK move is the comparison.

Worked: the same ranking list: a mute trace for the historian, an exact empty ordering for the mathematician, a contestable model output for the human scientist.

4. The essay

The essay

One of six prescribed titles: unpack the loaded words before using them; argue with claims met by counterclaims; exemplify through two areas with real cases; weigh perspectives; close on implications. Failure modes: the patched summary, the one-area essay, the example-free argument.

Worked: a title on expectations: history's archive read for confirmation against the natural sciences' hypothesis hiding the anomaly: disciplines as trained habits of expectation.

5. The exhibition

The exhibition

Three real objects (specific, dated, ours or our community's), each with a commentary, exploring how TOK manifests in the world around us: one IA prompt, three DIFFERENT links to it, the commentaries showing the link rather than describing the object.

Worked: the experts prompt: the weather app icon (the expert made invisible), the nutrition label (the expert translated), the chess engine record (the expert replaced and consulted): three relations to expertise, one exhibition.

Check yourself

Check yourself

Knowledge questions second-order and contestable.

Five areas compared by method.

The essay unpacked and argued in two areas.

The exhibition: three objects, three routes, one prompt.