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Theory of Knowledge Handbook



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CONTENTS

Welcome to – TOK	2
The Curriculum at a glance.....	2
TOK Framework	2
Knowledge and the Knower	4
Knowledge and Language	5
Knowledge and Technology.....	6
Areas of Knowledge.....	7
Assessment.....	8
The exhibition	8
Exhibition Rubric	9
Tok Essay	9
Essay Rubric.....	10
Grading.....	10
Further Reading	11
Further Watching	12
Links.....	13

WELCOME TO THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE – TOK

What is TOK?

TOK is part of the IB Diploma Core alongside, CAS and Extended Essay. TOK is a subject fascinated with the nature of knowledge, also known as epistemology. TOK is a course about critical thinking and exploring the process of learning. “How do we know what we know?” ***The main goal of TOK is to explore and reflect on the nature of knowledge and the process of knowing. (TOK guide 2022)***

TOK is a subject where we explore the big questions and wrestling with the search for truth. You will enjoy this course if you embrace the IB Learner Profile attributes of:

- Open mindedness
- Thinkers
- Inquirers
- Reflective



All IB Diploma students around the world study TOK and it must be completed to graduate with a DP certificate.

Why TOK

TOK is fun, thought provoking and opens up a new paradigm of curiosity in your mind. Where else do you have the chance to ask existential questions about the meaning of life, the universe and explore the nature of existence? TOK develops important critical thinking, study, philosophy and research skills, all needed for lifelong learning. TOK is often the subject that makes the most sense afterwards. When you start University studies and you realize TOK has equipped you for a high level of study and you will be much more confident to engage with academic rigor than non IB DP graduates.

Students that succeed at TOK get places for the top universities in the world.

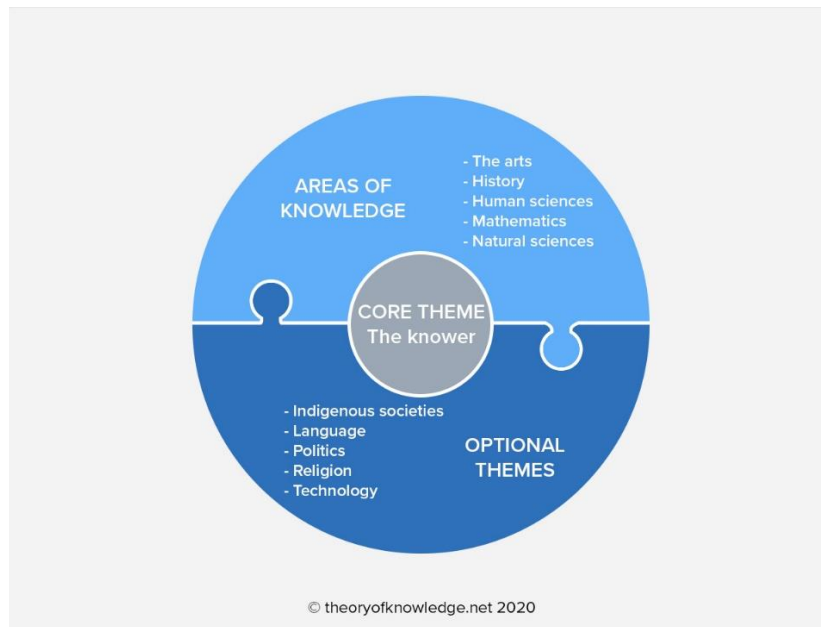
THE CURRICULUM AT A GLANCE

1. The core themes Knowledge and the Knower
2. Optional Themes
3. Areas of Knowledge

TOK FRAMEWORK

TOK has a framework for analyzing areas of knowledge:

1. Scope
2. Perspectives
3. Methods and Tools
4. Ethics



Area of Knowledge (AOK)

Areas of knowledge are structures within which human knowledge is organized. In these areas there are often socially established methods for producing knowledge, as well as norms for what counts as a fact or a good explanation (TOK Guide 2022)

In TOK we will study 5 AOKs:

1. History
2. The Human Sciences
3. The Natural Sciences
4. The Arts
5. Mathematics



KNOWLEDGE AND THE KNOWER

The first unit we will study is a core theme entitled Knowledge and the Knower.

What you accept as knowledge may well depend on your perspective, language, values and the community of "knowers" you are most familiar with. You may well possess assumptions and even bias you were previously unaware of. By exploring the core theme, you will hopefully learn to think more carefully about the validity of knowledge and avoid accepting things face value. Unfortunately, people can be manipulated and deliberately misinformed to serve political, religious, idealist or economic agendas. Powerful people and entities might use unreliable sources and dubious research to present things as good quality knowledge or even fact. ([Read more at TOK 2022](#)) Questions we will explore:

- How do we distinguish claims that are contestable from claims that are not?
- Are there situations where “knowing how” is more important than “knowing that”?
- What shapes my perspective as a knower?
- Is the truth what the majority?
- What constitutes a “good reason” for us to accept a claim?
- Does knowledge always require some kind of rational basis?
- Are there responsibilities that necessarily come with knowing something or knowing how to do something?
- As knowers, do we have a moral duty to examine our own assumptions and biases?



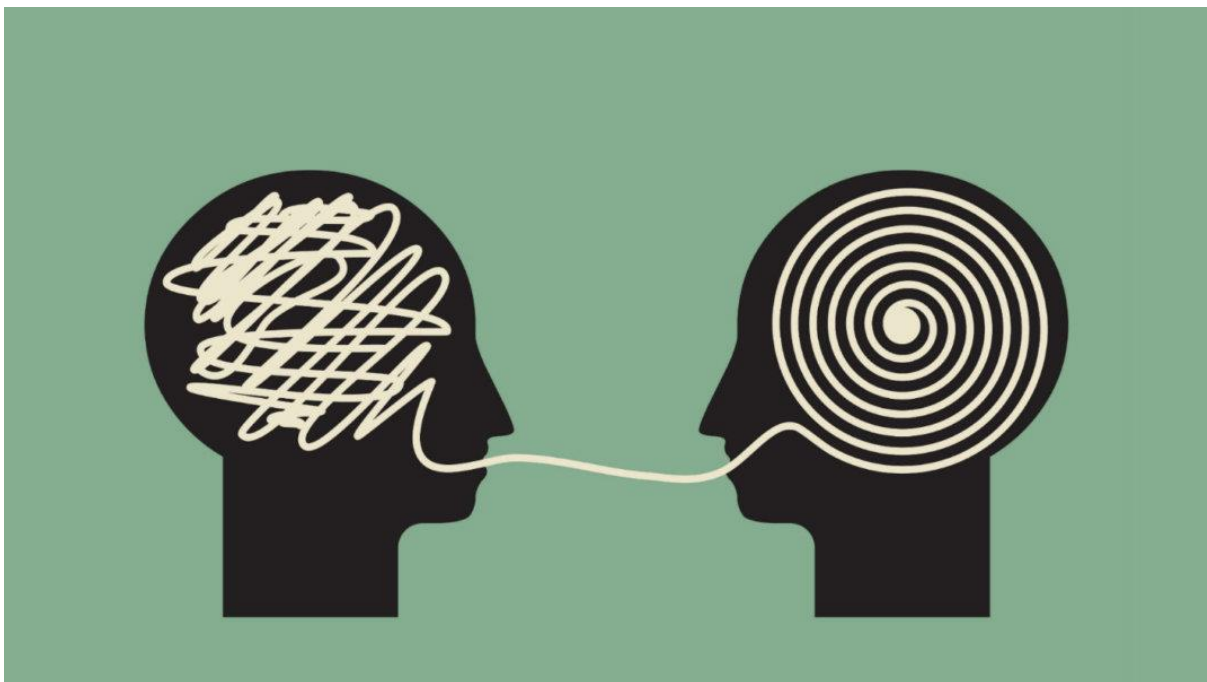
KNOWLEDGE AND LANGUAGE

Our second unit looks at the fascinating topic of knowledge and language.

Language is a medium through which we pass on most knowledge. You could ask yourself how much you would know if you had no language to gather or express knowledge. Our daily language is heavily influenced by the discourse of the most dominant groups in our communities, even though we may not always be aware of this fact. The language we speak can be used to pass on knowledge and values that exist within our community, but it also influences to some extent how we know. The connection between language, thought and knowledge is so profound that it also leads to a connection between language and power. ([TOK 22](#))

This links closely to the IB DP Groups 1 and 2. Exploring questions such as:

- Can all knowledge be expressed in words or symbols?
- Is it possible to think or know without language?
- Does the transmission of knowledge from one person or generation to another depend on language?
- What knowledge might be lost if the whole world shared one common language?
- How are metaphors used in the construction of knowledge?
- Does ethical language differ in any significant way from other types of language?



KNOWLEDGE AND TECHNOLOGY

Our third unit explores the ever important paradigm of technology.

You only need to be browsing the Internet for a few minutes before you come across a wealth of knowledge claims. On the one hand, it's fantastic that we have so much information at our disposal. When I was your age and I needed some information for a history project, it took me a lot of time to get what I wanted. I had to physically cycle to the town library, research the index box, find the historical journal I needed, copy the details I needed by hand, and then cycle back home. Now, it takes a few seconds to "Google" the same information. On the other hand, the very same wealth of information and knowledge that we have at our disposal, can be overwhelming. After all, how do we select the best and most reliable sources? How do we know what we should believe? It can indeed be difficult to distinguish between genuine, well founded knowledge and well-presented but unfounded claims. ([Tok 22](#))

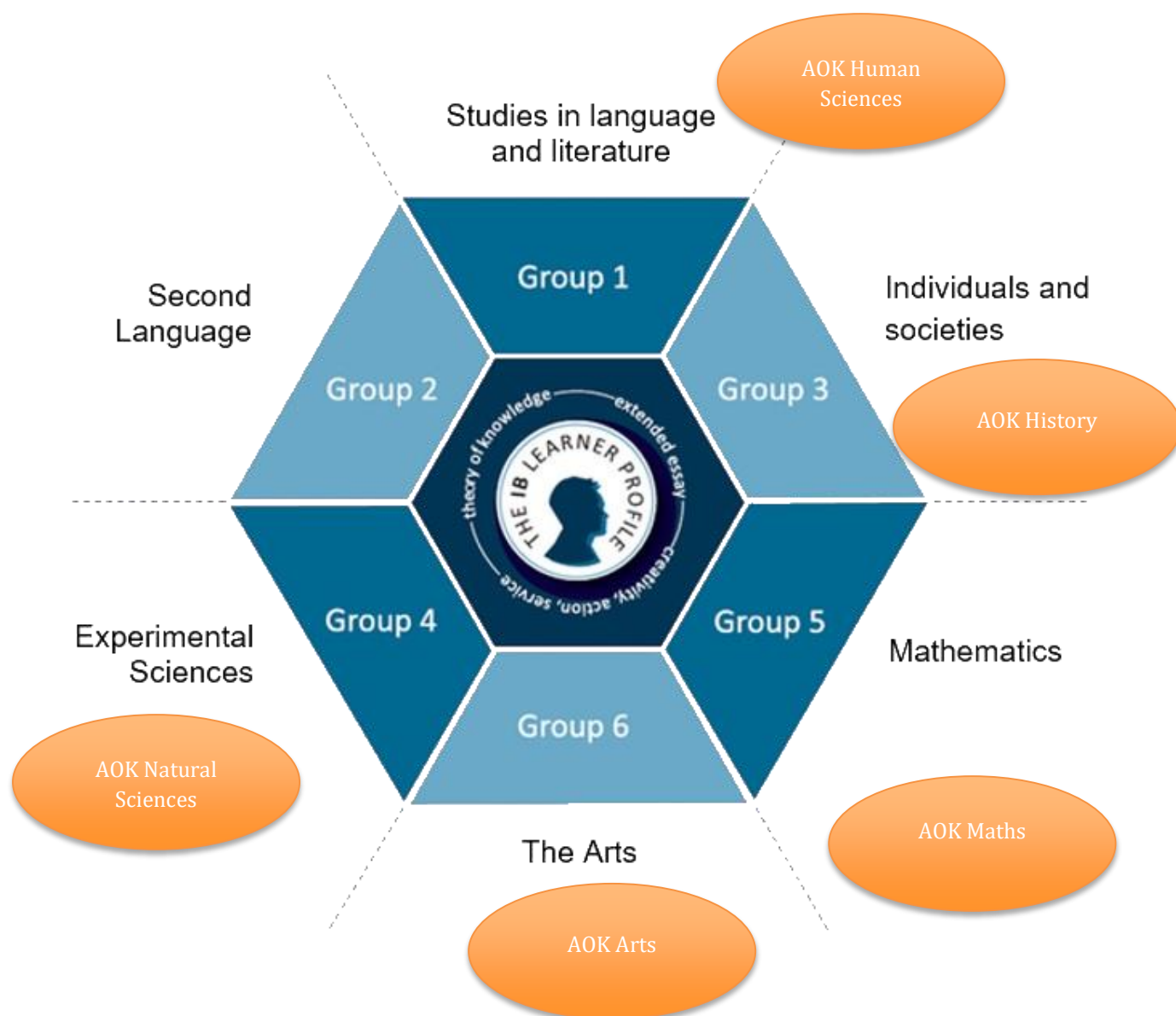
We will wrestle with questions such as:

- How technology has an impact on collective memory and how knowledge is preserved?
- What is the difference between “data,” “information” and “knowledge”?
- To what extent is the internet changing what it means to know something?
- How are online or virtual communities similar or different from “traditional communities of knowers?”
- How do tools that we use shape the knowledge that we produce?
- Are there situations where ignorance / lack of knowledge is an excuse for unethical behavior?



AREAS OF KNOWLEDGE

Within our units we will explore Areas of knowledge and compare knowledge across IB DP groups. Here you have the opportunity to dig deeper into the nature of knowledge in your favorite subjects and develop a richer specialism.



ASSESSMENT

The whole TOK course is assessed by two exam pieces or Internal Assessments (IA):

1. The TOK Exhibition 33%
2. The TOK Essay 67%

All IB DP students must complete both to pass TOK and receive a pass in IB DP or Courses

THE EXHIBITION

The exhibition is introduced to students at the start of Semester 2 IB DP 1 (Grade 11). The exhibition itself takes place for the whole school community at the end of Grade 11 around May/ June time.

The exhibition process has three steps:

Step1 – Knowledge Question

The exhibition is a space for you to express your learning in TOK in response to a Knowledge Question Prompt. There are 35 Knowledge Question Prompts for you to choose from that will inspire higher order thinking. Examples of the prompt questions are:

- a) What counts as knowledge?
- b) Are some types of knowledge more useful than others?
- c) What features of knowledge have an impact on its reliability?

Step 2 –Objects

Students then select three objects that link to the Knowledge Question. The objects will be shown in the exhibition, they can be physical ex: a book or a photograph of an object. Example of possible objects :

- A tweet from US President
- An image of Guernica by Picasso
- A teddy bear from my childhood

Step3 – Commentary

Students write a commentary response to explain the significance of the three objects in relation to the Knowledge Question. In this commentary students showcase their TOK learning and engage with the TOK framework. The commentary is a only a maximum of 950 words.

Draft Feedback

Students will receive one round of written feedback from the teacher on their first draft. This is submitted around March of Grade 11.

Final Submission

The exhibition is completed by May/June. This is submitted to the teacher who will then submit to the IB through IBIS upload system. The IA is marked by the teacher and moderated by IB Examiners. The exhibition itself will then take place at school with an opportunity for you to present your objects to the school community similar an art gallery or PYP exhibition.



You should reference any images or objects. If the object is your own or if you use something you have created, you should also mention this. Otherwise teachers and moderators don't get it. But, once again, remember that you cannot create an object especially for the TOK exhibition. ([TOK 22](#))

EXHIBITION RUBRIC MARKED OUT OF 10

Does the exhibition successfully show how TOK manifests in the world around us?					
Excellent 9-10	Good 7-8	Satisfactory 5-6	Basic 3-4	Rudimentary 1-2	0
<p>The exhibition clearly identifies three objects and their specific real-world contexts. Links between each of the three objects and the selected IA prompt are clearly made and well-explained.</p> <p>There is a strong justification of the particular contribution that each individual object makes to the exhibition. All or nearly all of the points are well-supported by appropriate evidence and explicit references back to the selected IA prompt.</p>	<p>The exhibition identifies three objects and their real-world contexts. Links between each of the three objects and the selected IA prompt are explained, although this explanation may lack precision and clarity in parts.</p> <p>There is a justification of the contribution that each individual object makes to the exhibition. Many of the points are supported by appropriate evidence and references back to the selected IA prompt.</p>	<p>The exhibition identifies three objects, although the real-world contexts of these objects may be vaguely or imprecisely stated. There is some explanation of the links between the three objects and the selected IA prompt.</p> <p>The student provides some justification for the inclusion of each object in the exhibition. Some of the points are supported by evidence and references back to the selected IA prompt.</p>	<p>The exhibition identifies three objects, although the real-world contexts of the objects may be implied rather than explicitly stated. Basic links between the objects and the selected IA prompt are made, but the explanation of these links is unconvincing and/or unfocused.</p> <p>There is a superficial justification for the inclusion of each object in the exhibition. Reasons for the inclusion of the objects are offered, but these are not supported by appropriate evidence and/or lack relevance to the prompt. There may be significant repetition across the justifications of the different objects.</p>	<p>The exhibition presents three objects, but the real-world contexts of these objects are not stated, or the images presented may be highly generic images of types of object rather than being specific real-world objects. Links between the objects and the selected IA prompt are made but these are minimal, tenuous, or it is not clear what the student is trying to convey.</p> <p>There is very little justification offered for the inclusion of each object in the exhibition. The commentary on the objects is highly descriptive or consists only of unsupported assertions.</p>	<p>The response does not reach the standard described by the other levels or does not use one of the IA prompts provided.</p>

TOK ESSAY

The second IA completed in Semester 1 of IB DP 2(Grade 12) is the TOK Essay. This is 1,600 word (max) essay in response to a prescribed essay title. Essay titles are publish in September and you will have six options. Previous examples of prescribed essay titles:

- There is a sharp line between describing something and offering an explanation of it" To what extent do you agree with this claim?

- Does it matter that your personal circumstances influence how seriously your knowledge is taken?
- “The quality of knowledge is best measured by how many people accept it.” Discuss this claim with reference to two areas of knowledge.

The examiners will give you a global mark for your essay. In this sense, please keep the main criterion in mind: **"Does the student provide a clear, coherent and critical exploration of the essay title?"** The best grades are awarded to students who maintain focus on the essay title and write a clear essay.

The TOK essay must be written **in standard 12 font** and be **double spaced**. The TOK essay is not an EE, so you don't have a "research question" and you don't need to give endless lists of resources in your bibliography. However, it is expected that specific sources will be used and these must be acknowledged. All work must be your own, so ensure to **reference correctly** and use tools such as Google originality Report or Turnitin **to avoid plagiarism.** (TOK22)

Your TOK is submitted for first draft at the end of December. You then receive detailed written feedback from your teacher. Final Essay submission is the start of February. The essay is submitted by your IB Coordinator to the IBIS system and marked by an IB Examiner.

ESSAY RUBRIC

Does the student provide a clear, coherent and critical exploration of the essay title?					
Excellent 9-10	Good 7-8	Satisfactory 5-6	Basic 3-4	Rudimentary 1-2	0
<p>The discussion has a sustained focus on the title and is linked effectively to areas of knowledge.</p> <p>Arguments are clear, coherent and effectively supported by specific examples. The implications of arguments are considered.</p> <p>There is clear awareness and evaluation of different points of view.</p>	<p>The discussion is focused on the title and is linked effectively to areas of knowledge.</p> <p>Arguments are clear, coherent and supported by examples.</p> <p>There is awareness and some evaluation of different points of view.</p>	<p>The discussion is focused on the title and is developed with some links to areas of knowledge.</p> <p>Arguments are offered and are supported by examples.</p> <p>There is some awareness of different points of view.</p>	<p>The essay is connected to the title and makes superficial or limited links to areas of knowledge.</p> <p>The discussion is largely descriptive. Limited arguments are offered but they are unclear and are not supported by effective examples.</p>	<p>The discussion is weakly connected to the title.</p> <p>While there may be links to the areas of knowledge, any relevant points are descriptive or consist only of unsupported assertions.</p>	<p>The essay does not reach the standard described by the other levels or is not a response to one of the prescribed titles for the correct assessment session.</p>
Possible characteristics					
<i>Insightful Convincing Accomplished Lucid</i>	<i>Pertinent Relevant Analytical Organized</i>	<i>Acceptable Mainstream Adequate Competent</i>	<i>Underdeveloped Basic Superficial Limited</i>	<i>Ineffective Descriptive Incoherent Formless</i>	

GRADING IN TOK

The diploma points matrix

		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

FURTHER READING

Here is a list of books that link to AOK or key concepts in our TOK course:

Sophie's World, Garder 1991

Freakanomics, Levitt, Dubner, 2005

Blink Malcom Gladwell, 2005

Knowledge a very Short Introduction, Nagel, 2014

The Philosophy Book, Big Ideas, Buckingham et al. 2015

How the Mind Works, Pinker, 1997

A Complete History of Nearly Everything, Bryson, 2003

The Skeptics Guide to the Universe, Novella, 2018

FURTHER WATCHING

Here is a list of films that link to key aspects of our TOK course:

Philosophical questions of reality:

The Matrix, 1999

Inception 2010

The Truman Show 1998

Exploring Language:

Babel, 2006

The Professor and the Madman, 2019

Exploring Ethical issues:

Million Dollar Baby, 2004

A Beautiful Mind, 2001

Juno, 2007

Hotel Rwanda, 2004

Children of Men, 2006

Downsizing, 2017

Gattaca, 1997

Questions about Technology:

Minority Report, 2002

The Social Network, 2010

Total Recall, 2012 (remake)

Passengers, 2016

I Robot, 2004

Interstellar, 2014

TOK LINKS

- <https://www.tokresource.org/>
- <https://www.tokresource.org/>
- <https://tok2022.weebly.com/>
- <https://toktopics.com/>
- [IB TOK official site](#)

TOK text book

[IB Theory of Knowledge, Oxford University Press, 2020](#)



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