

Planning and structuring a TOK essay

Choosing the right TOK essay title

Writing your TOK essay will be made considerably easier if you choose the right title. If you get it wrong, you'll feel like you have a mountain to climb – and with every foot forward, you'll feel like you're slipping back two.

The first thing to do is decide which TOK essay title refers to areas you're interested in. Just as with the presentation, if you're not inspired (to some extent, at least) by the relevant knowledge issues and real life situations, then you'll struggle to write anything worth reading. If we're being TOK about this, then, your first emotional reaction to the list of titles is a good guide to which one you should go with.

The second thing to consider is where your own strengths lie. Clearly, if you're gifted in the arts, but struggle in science, then a TOK essay that lends itself more on the latter than the former would not be a good choice. The reason for this isn't merely your own level of knowledge, it's the ease with which you can bring in your own experiences. If you've got lots of personal examples of how you understand and interact with the arts, but little or nothing to do with the natural sciences, you'll be better set up for an essay considering that area of knowledge. Obviously, though, many essay titles allow you to choose your own areas of knowledge or ways of knowing. Choose ones that allow you to play to your strengths, and the strengths of your school.

Third, you should receive support and guidance from your TOK teacher. They should be aware of your talents and suggest to you how they can best be used in the TOK essay; in addition, they should be able to point out the pitfalls and problems with some of the essay titles, and suggest ones that are a little more straightforward. It's always the case that some titles are inherently easier to write than others.

...if you feel you need more help in choosing the right title, then you can talk to us. We believe we know TOK like no one else

Lastly, if you feel you need more help in choosing the right title, then you can talk to us. theoryofknowledge.net is the world's most used site for theory of knowledge, and we believe we know it like no one else. Either use our session-specific [Essay Guide](#), or check out our personalized [online support for the TOK essay](#).

Basing your essay around **knowledge questions**

In all your diploma subjects, getting the structure of essays right is important. But in TOK, which can sometimes involve dealing with uncertain and nebulous areas, making sure your essay is well organized is even more paramount. It's so easy to get led astray, and veer off the subject, or find yourself talking about one issue for much too long, and neglecting others.

Your essay needs to be structured around **knowledge questions**. These, remember, should be questions about knowledge that allow you to present a two sided (ie objective) answer. The prescribed title that you choose to write should enable you to come up with three or four relevant knowledge questions. Some are easier to structure than others – for example, ones that ask you to compare different ways of knowing or areas of knowledge can be naturally structured around the comparison that you have been asked to consider.

Then you need to organize your answer to each KQ. This needs to be done rigidly around the following principles: first, a brief consideration or explanation of the KQ, putting it in the context of the main title. Then, you need to present the argument, which should be justified with evidence and your clearly-expressed opinion. Next, you need to present a counter-claim, which should offer an alternative way of interpreting the KQ, again, with justification. Finally, you need to present a conclusion, where you directly answer your KQ. Be careful not to contradict yourself during your argument. You can't say: 'Mathematics offers us a completely objective truth,' then say: 'mathematics does *not* offer us a completely objective truth'. Instead, you should say that alternative view points are the ideas of others (if you don't believe them yourself), and make it clear which view point you subscribe to.

To sum up, each KQ should be tackled in four sections:

- 1. Introduction/explanation of the KI**
- 2. Argument – with justification**
- 3. Counter-claim – with justification**
- 4. Conclusion**

There should also be an overall conclusion, rounding up your key points, and directly dealing with the actual title of the essay.