
TOK ESSAY

Instructions

WHAT IS THE TOK ESSAY?

- Your TOK grade is based on the TOK exhibition (1/3) and the **TOK essay** (2/3s of the grade)
 - The essay is an exploration of a prescribed **knowledge question**
 - For your essay, you have to choose one of the six prescribed titles
 - The question must be discussed with reference to real-life situations drawn from two different areas of knowledge
 - Maximum word count of the TOK essay is **1600 words** (font size 12, double spacing, the count does not include citations and bibliography)
 - The work is graded on a scale from 0 to 10
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TOK AREAS OF KNOWLEDGE

TOK essay is based on different areas of knowledge (AOKs):

1. **History** (historiography, not historical events)
 2. **The Arts** (incl. art theory and criticism)
 3. **Human Sciences**
 - Economics
 - Psychology
 - Anthropology and Religious Studies
 - Sociology and Political Science (not current affairs)
 4. **Natural Sciences**
 - Physics
 - Chemistry
 - Biology
 5. **Mathematics**
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REQUIREMENTS OF THE TASK

- For your essay, you have to choose one of the six prescribed titles
 - Maximum word count of the TOK essay is **1600 words** (font size 12, double spacing, the count does not include citations and bibliography)
 - In addition to the essay, you have to complete three teacher-student interactions and write reflections on them
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Three required teacher–student interactions for the TOK essay

1. Discuss the list of prescribed titles with the student.	2. Discuss the student's initial exploration of their selected title (for example, an essay plan).	3. Comment on one draft of the student's essay.
The student should discuss the prescribed titles with the teacher. The final choice of title remains with the student, who should develop their own thinking and ideas.	After choosing the title and developing their initial ideas in relation to it, the student must discuss their initial work/explorations with the teacher by sharing them in written form. For example, this could take the form of a set of notes and ideas that could then be turned into a more formal essay plan following the discussion with the teacher.	After this, the student is permitted to present one full draft of the essay to the teacher. The teacher should provide oral or written advice on how the work could be improved. This advice may take the form of written comments of a global nature, but teachers are not permitted to mark or edit this draft. While the student may seek further advice from the teacher, for example, on the appropriateness of a particular example or on the clarity of a section of writing, no further written advice on drafts is permitted. The next version handed to the teacher must be the final version for submission.

IMPORTANT DATES

- **Choosing a prompt:** during the Autumn break
 - **First interactions:** after the Autumn break
 - **Second interactions:** right before Christmas break
 - **First 800 words:** by the Christmas break
 - **First draft DL:**
 - **Third interactions (feedback):**
 - **Final draft DL:**
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REAL-LIFE SITUATIONS

- The TOK essay requires you to discuss the prompt with reference to **real-life situations**
 - Real-life situations are specific examples drawn from different areas of knowledge, that shed light on the question
 - They are the main evidence you're supposed to use to back your claims
 - RLS must be **real** and **concrete**, not made-up and abstract
 - A good RLS is also **representative** of the AOK (i.e. a typical example of how things are done within the AOK)
 - Nb! Current events not related to AOKs do not count as real-life situations
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KQ: "WHY IS MATHEMATICS SO IMPORTANT IN OTHER AREAS OF KNOWLEDGE?"

A good RLS

- "Steinmetz's equation" (specific and concrete)

NOT a good RLS

- "Engineering" (not specific/concrete enough)
- "Laws of physics" (not specific enough)
- "Donald Trump's presidency" (not related to the AOK)

ACTIVITY

Skim through the sample TOK essay

Underline/highlight the following:

- A. What is the prompt?
 - B. What is the word count?
 - C. What two AOKs does the writer refer to?
 - D. A real-life situation related to the first AOK?
 - E. A real-life situation related to the second AOK?
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FLINGA.FI - QUESTIONS ABOUT THE TOK ESSAY

Flinga - SYK

UNPACKING AN ESSAY TITLE

- Example (M2023): "**Is replicability necessary in the production of knowledge? Discuss with reference to two areas of knowledge.**"
- What is *replicability*?
- What is *production of knowledge*?
 - Discovery of new knowledge?
- Is it *necessary*?
 - Yes:
 - Replicability is necessary in the production of knowledge, because... (AOK1)
 - Replicability is necessary in the production of knowledge, because... (AOK2)
 - No:
 - On the other hand, replicability is not always necessary, because... (AOK1)
 - On the other hand, replicability is not always necessary, because... (AOK2)

ACTIVITY

- Next, we'll go to the school library
- Form six groups (no more, no less)
- In the library, there are six A3-sized paper, each representing one of the May 2026 essay prompts
- Each group will spend 5-10 minutes with one prompt, after which we'll rotate (prompt 1 group moves to prompt 2, etc.)
- Brainstorm and discuss the prompt, do some Googling if needed, and write down your ideas on the paper

HOMEWORK

- During this week and the Autumn break, think about which prompt you will choose
- By the time you come back to school from the break, you should've decided on which prompt you start working on