

Theory of knowledge prescribed titles

November 2009 and May 2010

Instructions to candidates

Your theory of knowledge essay for examination must be submitted to your teacher for authentication. It must be written on one of the ten titles (questions) provided below. You may choose any title, but are recommended to consult with your teacher. Your essay will be marked according to the assessment criteria published in the *Theory of Knowledge* guide. Remember to centre your essay on knowledge issues and, where appropriate, refer to other parts of your IB programme and to your experiences as a knower. Always justify your statements and provide relevant examples to illustrate your arguments. Pay attention to the implications of your arguments, and remember to consider what can be said against them. If you use external sources, cite them according to a recognized convention.

Note that statements in quotations in these titles are not necessarily authentic: they present a real point of view but may not have been spoken or written by an actual person. It is appropriate to analyse them but it is unnecessary, even unwise, to spend time on researching a context for them.

Examiners mark essays against the title as set. Respond to the title exactly as given; do not alter it in any way.

Your essay must be between 1200 and 1600 words in length.

1. To what extent is truth different in mathematics, the arts and ethics?
2. Examine the ways empirical evidence should be used to make progress in different areas of knowledge.
3. Discuss the strengths and limitations of quantitative and qualitative data in supporting knowledge claims in the human sciences and at least one other area of knowledge.
4. How can the different ways of knowing help us to distinguish between something that is true and something that is believed to be true?
5. "What separates science from all other human activities is its belief in the provisional nature of all conclusions" (Michael Shermer, www.edge.org). Critically evaluate this way of distinguishing the sciences from other areas of knowledge.
6. All knowledge claims should be open to rational criticism. On what grounds and to what extent would you agree with this assertion?
7. "We see and understand things not as they are but as we are." Discuss this claim in relation to at least two ways of knowing.
8. "People need to believe that order can be glimpsed in the chaos of events" (adapted from John Gray, *Heresies*, 2004). In what ways and to what extent would you say this claim is relevant in at least two areas of knowledge?
9. Discuss the claim that some areas of knowledge are discovered and others are invented.
10. What similarities and differences are there between historical and scientific explanations?