

1. Introduction

“I was so grateful for the guidance that my teacher gave me when it came to TOK assessment. The trouble with TOK is that it covers such a wide area and such huge, life-encompassing issues. When you come to your presentation and your final essay, you can just end up thinking, how can I fit all these questions and arguments into a few minutes talking or a few hundred typed words? I needed to be reminded how to stay focused, be structured and to be selective in my inquiry.” (Rita)

How to use this book

The purpose of this book is to help you use the skills and knowledge that you have developed in your theory of knowledge (TOK) classes to prepare for your final TOK assessment tasks. Although this book contains lots of advice and information, it cannot replace your classroom activities, discussions and experiences, or your own reading and reflection throughout your TOK programme. These are essential for building up your critical thinking skills and your awareness of knowledge processes. This book is not a TOK textbook, and we have specifically avoided going into detail about your TOK course.

You will be able to read TOK essays and watch recordings of TOK presentations produced by former IB students, accompanied by commentary highlighting how marks were gained or lost. We suggest that before you read the students’ responses and examiner’s comments, you try to respond to some or even all of the essay titles by yourself. In the case of the oral presentation, we encourage you to reflect on how you would go about planning and preparing some of the presentation topics which can be found on the accompanying DVD.

What is in this book?

- **Chapter 2** focuses on the TOK and the IB Diploma Programme. In this chapter, we look at the importance of TOK as a core element in the IB Diploma Programme and its relationship with the Diploma Programme as a whole. We also explore the impact of TOK as an interdisciplinary inquiry. Furthermore, we highlight the relevance of TOK in your own lifelong learning, drawing on the experience of previous IB Diploma students. This chapter provides you with guidance on how you can use your TOK assessment tasks to evaluate your overall, general learning in order to further maximize the benefits that you gain, not only for your IB Diploma but for your continuing education, whether it be higher education studies or an alternative path. TOK can provide you with a lifelong learning programme! Finally, there are details of how each element of TOK relates to other core Diploma Programme areas and how TOK contributes to the overall diploma score.
- **Chapter 3** addresses the question, “What is theory of knowledge?” This chapter is a reminder of the key elements of TOK. Whether you are a first or a final year student, it will help you to revisit the nature and aims of the TOK course.

We highlight the centrality of the traditional TOK diagram as a way of understanding how knowledge works in your Diploma studies. We also emphasize the unique flexibility of TOK, meaning that you, the student, will approach TOK according to your own (and your learning community’s) background, situation and interests,

echoing the vital role in TOK of the knower and of knowledge communities. Nevertheless, you should also be systematic and critical in your approach to evaluating knowledge issues (KIs) and in your development of analysis and argument, aware of the public standards and constraints on knowledge. Further sections summarize the importance of the ways of knowing (WOIs) and the areas of knowledge (AOKs), with attention paid to key TOK terminology, concepts and linking questions.

- **Chapter 4** addresses the TOK external assessment task: the TOK essay. We give advice on how you can approach your TOK essay, providing kits for unpacking the essay title, and walk you through the stages of choosing, unpacking, brainstorming, planning and writing your final essay. We also provide a full explanation of the TOK essay assessment criteria and how examiners mark an essay.

Authentic essays and essay extracts follow, accompanied by examiners' marks and commentaries, to show you how marks were gained (↑) or lost (↓). The commentaries for each essay include full explanations of the marking as well as essential advice and guidance on how to satisfy the essay criteria (↓).

- **Chapter 5** introduces the TOK internal assessment task: the oral presentation. We outline the essential stages to consider when preparing and developing a presentation to present a real-life situation and address a knowledge issue that it raises thoroughly and critically.

We provide you with guidance on how to choose a topic and put together an effective TOK presentation, discussing the presentation assessment criteria and the way in which marks are awarded to TOK presentations. You can watch

real student presentations on the DVD while reading the examiner's commentaries and we show you how marks were gained or lost as well as essential advice and guidance on how to satisfy the essay criteria (↓). As well as more general advice and tips, we offer guidance and completed examples regarding the two forms you must complete.

- **Chapter 6** provides a final snappy overview of your two TOK assessment tasks. We outline the main differences in the requirements of, and approaches to, your essay and your presentation. Use it as a checklist. We follow this with our top tips for the preparation and completion of your final assessment tasks.
- Finally in chapter 7 we provide a **glossary** of the key terms used in both the IB documentation concerning the essay and presentation, and throughout this book, as they are to be understood in the TOK assessment context.

Please be aware that there are many good ways to approach your TOK assessment: all that is essential is that you meet the criteria well. This book should be used as guidance only, as reading this book will not guarantee you a high mark—that is down to you. In particular, slavishly following the pattern of the high-scoring essays and presentations is not a good idea. Certainly, picking up hints and pointers from them is valuable, but remember that many other essays and presentations have achieved well by following other patterns and using different techniques. Your ideas and experience are an essential element of your TOK final assessment tasks: examiners value evidence of your own unique “knower’s perspective”!

We hope you find this book useful, and we wish you good luck in your TOK assessment.

3. What is theory of knowledge?

“I found that TOK helped me to get to know myself better through getting me to think how I knew and also why I knew what I did know.”
(Carla)

“TOK has also, even more importantly, taught me that what I think and believe is not necessarily always right and what someone else thinks is often right.” (Georgie)

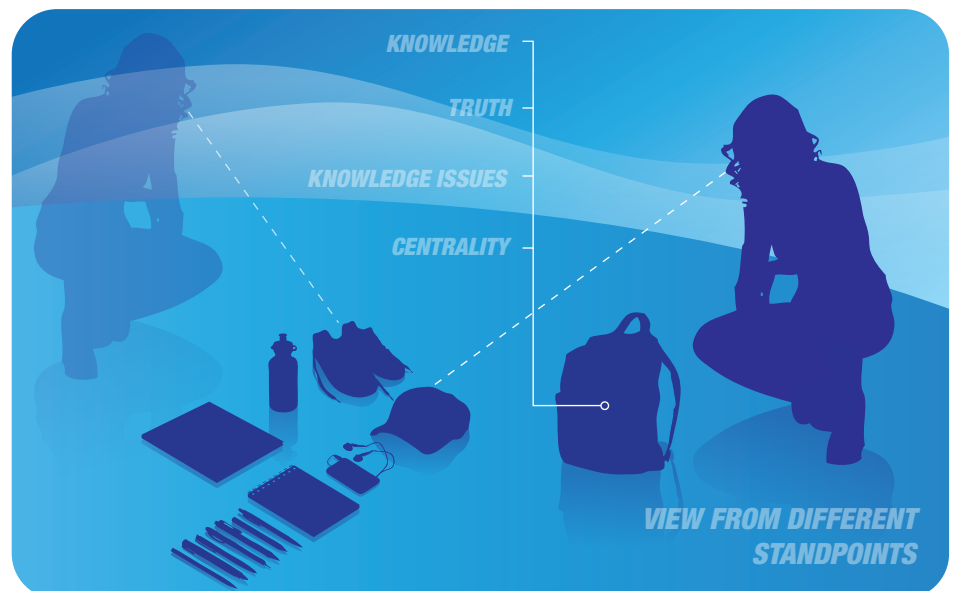
Shifting viewpoints

There are many metaphors we can use for your TOK adventure and here’s one. Generally at school, your task has been to add to your collection of “stuff”—facts and skills—as your teachers present them to you. You put the stuff in your bag, and get bits out again when you need them. TOK takes a quite different approach: in TOK, you lay out the stuff you already have, and walk around it, looking in at it from different standpoints. You reflect on how you (and others) came to know it, and the extent to which this knowledge is good, useful, valuable, insightful or reliable.

You might be thinking we are only talking about your school learning, but TOK aims much wider than that. You should be thinking about all the sorts of things you know: not just things you can state clearly, but also things you rely on whenever you do something, even if you might not be able to explain it. Potentially, you should be able to explore how *all* your knowledge relates to, or differs from, the other bits.

In a nutshell, the point of TOK is to get you to think about the variety of things that you—and others—know (or think you know). You will reflect on how people came to these bits of knowledge, and whether the claim to know them is justified. In other words, you are being encouraged to become a critical knower, and your essay and presentation are designed for you to demonstrate that you have.

“I have found [TOK] challenging though, because the questions are so open ended, and many do not have an obvious answer.” (Charlotte)



Knowledge claim	Possible knowledge issue
Wikipedia says that Bangkok is in Thailand	How can I use reason to know whether information from an internet source is accurate and reliable?
My mother says that she can show me how to cook cassava so it is not poisonous	When should I believe folk knowledge that has not been scientifically tested?
A force of attraction exists between any two material objects	Why should we believe a general scientific law when we have not tested every instance?
Modern art is more meaningful than Renaissance representative art	What are the criteria we can use to distinguish more meaningful art from less meaningful?
My eyes tell me that this stick bends when it goes into the water	How can we know when our senses are giving us accurate information about the world?
There can be no knowledge without emotion ... until we have felt the force of the knowledge, it is not ours	What impact do our emotional states have on our gathering of knowledge, and on the knowledge we gather?
Shakespeare tells us that Richard III was a cruel, ruthless man	In what ways does literature tell the truth: about historical events? or about the way human beings are?
People in country X jail homosexuals; people in country Y allow them to marry	Does the fact that different societies have opposing moral views mean that there is no absolute moral truth?
Being educated means learning to see through the clichés of my society	In what ways do common beliefs in a society help and hinder us in finding the truth?
My homeopath says the contents of this bottle will cure me, but my doctor says they will do nothing at all	How reliable are scientific methods when used to test apparently incompatible claims about how the world works?
The choice of the phrase “all men are created equal” instead of “all humans ...” set back women’s rights 200 years	To what extent does the choice of words to express ideas subconsciously alter our understanding of them?
I saw a video last night that proves that global warming is a swindle	What emotional techniques do documentary makers use to shape our judgments about experts’ claims to knowledge?

You should be able to:

- understand the aims and purpose of TOK
- recognize the main elements of the TOK course: knower(s), ways of knowing, areas of knowledge, TOK terms and concepts
- identify and write down knowledge issues.

4. The TOK essay

“Once I got used to Theory of Knowledge, I enjoyed writing the essays because I found that they were an opportunity for me to think for myself about the way I was building up my knowledge and values. Writing a TOK essay was my ‘me space’ for reflecting on a very wonderful but confusing world of knowledge and issues around me and to decide what is and what is not most important. My final essay was a chance to calmly evaluate some of the knowledge I’d discovered on my Diploma!” (Isobel)

Unpacking a strange bag

We have described the TOK course as a voyage over the sea of knowledge. Now, we will liken the two TOK assessment tasks to two different types of bags for the voyage. The essay title can be understood to be a bag of things provided to you. Each title, then, is like a bag provided for your convenience by a shipping company. This bag will contain somebody else’s idea of essential articles for your voyage, such as toiletries, soap or shampoo. Your job is to unpack the bag, identify its contents, and then build a display (your essay) that explains how the bag’s contents can be understood in terms of, and applied to a part of, the knowledge sea. The TOK prescribed titles are a collection of 10 bags from which you must try to choose the one that is best for you. A bag provided by a stranger might at first seem strange but, on opening it, you will soon find items that are familiar to you, like those in the bag described above.



a higher achievement level, ⬇️ comments explain what features of this essay contributed to the award of a lower achievement level, and ⬇️ required comments offer more general advice to you about what you can do to show your examiner that you are meeting the requirements of the criteria. For certain titles we have also added extracts, with comments, from essays that offer a different approach to the title.

Finally, in Appendix 1, we provide an essay-unpacking/brainstorming form based on the unpacking kits, in case you would like to use it to help you choose an actual prescribed title, and start to plan your response. Using the table is not the only way to unpack and brainstorm, of course. You may choose to do it on a computer, or blank paper. Moreover, as we have said, this form will not write your essay for you. The contents of your essay should be based upon your own ideas, studies, examples, experience and observations, and following the form will help you gather that material. Planning and writing the essay, however, is up to you. We wish you well!

After reading through the kits, try to use our advice to come up with ideas of your own, for example how would you unpack a title?

Evaluate the role of intuition in different areas of knowledge.

[Title 1, from November 2007/May 2008]

A type 1 title that focuses on a TOK-related term (intuition), asking for evaluation across AOKs (your choice).

Identify key words and phrases

- Evaluate, role, intuition, areas of knowledge

Contestable concept

- Intuition

What do you understand by *intuition*?

Is it a feeling, an instinct, an emotion, a kind of unconscious perception, a paranormal process like telepathy or something else?

Ambiguous words

- Role

Is the title implying that intuition plays the same sort of role in all AOKs? Or should you understand the question to be asking about the differing roles of intuition?

Action term

- Evaluate

You are being asked to make suggestions about the role (or roles) intuition has in different AOKs and to weigh up the adequacy of these suggestions. **For example, is intuition essential in some AOKs, important in others, but of little relevance in some?**

Assumptions in the title

- That intuition **has a role** to play in areas of knowledge

Are you going to question whether intuition has any role to play at all or are you going to accept that it does?

If intuition does have a role in an AOK, what is the nature and the extent of this role?

- (Possibly) that there is only one type of intuition

Does the nature of intuition change in different AOKs? Rephrase the title to check your understanding

Having thought about all the above, now is the time for you to make sure you understand the intent of the whole title. One way to do this is to try to put it in your own words. Here is one possibility:

- Come to a considered and supported opinion about how people may use intuition to gain knowledge in different professions and pursuits that belong to different AOKs.

This is just one way the question could be rewritten. It focuses upon the people who may use intuition, how they use it, why and the activities in which intuition may have a role for them. Your unpacking of the terms may be different from this.

Identify the knowledge issues

The title very clearly raises the KI “What is the role of intuition in different AOKs?”. However, to address this question you are very likely to encounter others, such as:

- What exactly is the nature of intuition?
- Are there different types or kinds of intuition?
- Does intuition enable knowledge to be gained with a degree of certainty?
- Can intuition clarify the nature of human experience and the role of subjectivity in the knowledge process?
- What is the relationship between intuition and other WOKs?

Brainstorming

Consider AOKs and WOKs

The title mentions AOKs; does intuition have a role to play in all AOKs or only in particular AOKs? Which AOKs will you concentrate on?

What is the relationship between intuition and other WOKs?

Is intuition a WOK in its own right or is it an aspect of one of the four main WOKs?

What does the way we use language when referring to intuition reveal about the nature of intuition?

Make claims and develop perspectives using authentic examples to illustrate and support your discussion

Provide your own **examples** of intuition at work in different AOKs.

Intuition is clearly related to how we know things and the title asks you to consider AOKs.

Try to find examples based upon your own experience or that of others. One way to compare different AOKs is by considering professions that look at similar occurrences through different AOKs—a firefighter with a combustion chemist, or a horse trainer with an artist who paints horses.

Can you give a conclusive definition of intuition or does intuition need to be identified differently in each AOK?

Analyse and argue

Provide effective **counterclaims**, **counter-arguments** and **counter-examples** to support them.

You may wish to provide an example of a situation where it could be claimed that intuition is a WOK used by a firefighter or a horse trainer. However, you may later wish to question this with a counterclaim that the firefighter or horse trainer is using inductive reasoning or sense perception-based knowing rather than intuition.

A counterclaim can open the way for in-depth analysis; thus you could follow your counterargument with analysis of the possible relationship between intuition and inductive reasoning and/or knowing based on experience by means of sense perception. Does consideration of this relationship reveal differences or similarities between the arts and the sciences?

Evaluate and conclude

- Does intuition have a role to play in every AOK?
- Are there different types of intuition, some more relevant to certain AOKs than others?
- Are some kinds of intuition more certain and reliable than others?
- What is the significance of intuition to the human knowledge process?

This essay achieved 11/40, a grade D

D Although the student attempts to define intuition (direct perception, immediate apprehension), there is a lack of clarity and explanation or any attempt to explore the terms offered.

Avoid using dictionary definitions unless investigating the roots or origins of a word. Provide your own explanation of terms, if possible illustrated however briefly, by a possible context for the term.

A The student relates the KI of intuition's subjectivity to the "role" of intuition in AOKs and cites this subjectivity as a reason why it would have different "degrees of importance" depending upon the AOK.

Once you define key terms, address KIs by considering the implications of those terms and the concepts that they represent upon relevant AOK and/or WOK.

D C There is no support for the claim that "information that was based upon intuition" cannot solve a mathematical problem.

This "negative claim" is ineffective on account of a lack of in-depth exploration of any relationship between intuition and induction/deduction or mathematics. The student makes unsupported assumptions.

It is very important to fully support a "negative" knowledge claim in the same way as you should do a straightforward "positive" knowledge claim.

B The nature of role of intuition in spiritism is asserted, but not explained in knowledge terms.

Examples should be used to clarify knowledge claims and arguments.

Intuition is direct perception of truth, fact, etc., independent of any reasoning process; it is immediate apprehension. Intuition, in my point of view, is a combination of feelings and senses that lead humans to formulate opinions about known or unknown issues. The fact that intuition is defined as a very subjective way of knowing, leads to the fact that it can have various degrees of importance in different areas of knowledge. To address these differences I will analyze the role of intuition in various areas of knowledge, such as mathematics, natural sciences, religion and literature.

Intuition does not play a very large role in the field of natural sciences and mathematics. These mentioned areas of knowledge base their truth upon forensic proof and therefore require more than intuition to lead individuals to believe. One cannot solve a mathematical problem only by writing down information that was based upon an intuition, there is a need for calculations to show the means by which one could generate the results obtained. Sometimes, the intuition for a right answer can actually be mistaken for previous knowledge. For example, if the answer you have found for a Physics problem shows that the gravity of the moon is bigger than $10 \text{ s} \times \text{m}^{-2}$, one may have an intuition that the answer is wrong. This is most likely to be your previous knowledge, a remembrance that the gravity of the moon is not bigger than the gravity of the Earth. Also, concerning mathematics, intuition cannot play a major role due to the fact that ways to know can be deductive and inductive. Both these ways consist of proving your results. In deduction, one is more inclined to the use of logic while inductions consist of trial and error that will eventually lead you to an answer. Neither way has a strong intuitive factor.

Intuition can also have different roles among the religions of the world. In the religion I believe in, Spiritism, intuition plays an important role. Spiritism is a Christian religion that has its basis on the belief of resurrection, spirits and that we, human beings, are in this life to learn and develop our souls. This development is long, and the resurrection is a way to maintain a circle of learning, until a point when our being has developed enough to break out of this circle and join our Father on another level of existence. In Spiritism we believe that spirits are among us, for different purposes and reasons. The intuition and perception for external energies can therefore determine your own personal truth and opinion about the religion. On the other hand religions such as



Examiner report

Criterion A: (4): The student makes some very encouraging claims about the KIs raised by the title, such as that a central KI regarding intuition is a “subjective” means of attaining knowledge or that intuition is about being able to perceive, judge and access truth in a very “personal” manner. However, through most of the essay these views on intuition, and KIs related to it, are not clarified and neither are they supported. There are even interesting and relevant KIs that are brought into the conclusion, where they can only be mentioned, not examined or explored in any way. Therefore, in general, KIs are identified, but they are not adequately addressed or treated.

Criterion B: (3): The student provides several examples and also does mention perspectives (spiritism); however, very little explanation is provided and, indeed, the discussion is sometimes confusing so obscures rather than clarifies the relevance of the example. The student often provides insufficient clarification of *how* the examples (the novel *The Things They Carried*) clarify and support the KIs that have been identified. Far more

explanation and justification should be provided for the claim that intuition is found in religion.

Criterion C: (2): Unfortunately, the quality of analysis is such that it can be noted in terms of how little there is. The student tends to develop the essay in a very descriptive manner. It has already been noted that, regarding KIs, there are few attempts to justify the points made regarding them. There are also many unsupported assumptions made (intuition present in spiritism, the lack of intuition in mathematics). The student provides almost no counterclaims to balance the claims made, this contributing to the lack of critical analysis.

Criterion D: (2): Although the essay is fairly well organized in terms of structure, the discussion that the student develops is often irrelevant either to the points made (intuition is not found in mathematics, it is found in religion) or to the KIs highlighted in the title. It is not always easy to follow the discussion the student provides or to understand what the student intends by making certain points (intuition is subjective) or by giving particular

examples (spiritism). Finally, the student provides only very partial referencing, so does not fully acknowledge ideas and sources of information.

Overall ...

Although the essay does make some initial points that seem to address the title, the ensuing discussion of KIs, through examples such as spiritism and contexts such as religious belief and practice, is too inadequate in terms of the clarity, depth and breadth of the inquiry in order to be considered as adequate treatment of KIs implied by the title. How do you think the student could more fully support the qualities and connections claimed for intuition? Could the student have given better examples and a more adequate explanation? The low marks gained by this essay show that examples and perspectives given should be fully clarified and supported in order to develop a genuine critical inquiry that addresses the KIs.



This extract was taken from an essay that achieved 16/40, a grade D (A = 4, B = 4, C = 3, D = 5)



The student refers to historians' use of educated and natural intuition, but does not clarify or explain how or why this would involve intuition. Apart from a brief mention of primary and secondary resources, there is insufficient treatment of the historian's approach and methodologies.

When considering how knowledge tools are used in any particular AOK, explore in detail, referring to the common methods of the discipline.

History seeks to study and explain the significant events of the past on the basis of currently existing evidence. Although History is based, in part on primary sources, they are interpreted from a limited point of view. It is impossible to achieve a completely objective view of the past. Natural intuition would play a bigger part compared to educated intuition in History. Historians would probably use their educated intuition in order to do their work efficiently. **But in terms of the understanding of the past itself, from the limited primary and not completely reliable secondary sources, historians would attempt to use their natural intuition to interpret the past.** However, this interpretation cannot be deemed as a complete certainty. As an example, how would you interpret an ancient situation of a culture: the woman was sitting

Within this presentation, the student raises an interesting knowledge issue, but merely reports on some human science research findings without digging into the TOK concerns that are raised, so that the question of how we can be sure is never really addressed.

Can we be sure if a serial killer is made or born?

[Presentation 1, from May 2008]



This answer achieved 8/20 and received a grade E

Time	Comment	Time	Comment
0.15	 States the KI Clearly A question which starts 'how can we be sure' clearly concerns a KI	3.40	 Lists more attributes of serial killers found in research Finding information shows some engagement, but the information must be analysed for its TOK implications, or linked to relevant examples. Information must be linked to TOK considerations, such as the methods used by an AOK to generate it, or the WOKs used in gaining it
0.20	 Asks a few relevant sub-questions. Understanding of the KI can be shown by identifying further related questions	5.45	 Restates the KI, contrasting the born killer with the made killer, then lists attributes of the born killer Needs consideration of how we would know whether a killer was born or made.
0.25	 Fails to explain or expand further on the KI, or to present a real-life situation from which to derive it. You need to draw your KI out of a real life situation, then look at its meaning and significance.	6.50	 Fields questions about the facts already stated
0.45	 Lists a summary of attributes of the serial killer. A list of facts, no matter how accurate or interesting, does not show an understanding of a KI	8.40	 When asked about the KIs involved, answers by restating facts Take the opportunity raised by questions to reflect on and deepen your TOK inquiry
1.50	 States a number of possible sociological factors The KI raised would be better explored by asking how these factors were identified, and if the methods were reliable	throughout	 Fails to mention any AOK explicitly, or any WOK, or to address the questions of "being sure" Ensure that TOK concepts are at the heart of your presentation
3.10	 Relates a personal example of the sorts of feelings a killer may have Drawing examples from personal experience illustrates personal engagement		