



Theory of Knowledge

TOK

Handbook

for Parents and Students



Irmak High School is a Candidate School for the Diploma Programme. This school is pursuing authorization as an IB World School. These are schools that share a common philosophy—a commitment to high quality, challenging, international education that Irmak High School believes is important for our students.

TOK in the IB Diploma Programme

Theory of Knowledge (TOK) is one of the three courses comprising the Core of the IB Diploma Programme curriculum. The TOK course includes 100 hours of class time over the two years of the DP programme and is also integrated into each of the subject courses. TOK provides an interdisciplinary approach to learning that helps students to consider TOK concepts as they apply to each Area of Knowledge (History, The human sciences, The natural sciences, The arts, and Mathematics) and to make connections between school subjects and their lives outside the classroom.

Using the fundamental question **“How do we know?”**, the TOK course aims to help students to:

- make connections between what they learn in class and how they live in the world,
- increase their awareness of the ways in which they learn, perceive, evaluate, and communicate knowledge,
- think critically about the information they are exposed to and their own beliefs and actions,
- develop an international perspective with an appreciation and respect for diversity and cultural richness,
- recognize their responsibility in the acquisition, application and dissemination of knowledge in their communities and society at large.



TOK Concepts

- Evidence
- Certainty
- Truth
- Interpretation
- Power
- Justification
- Explanation
- Objectivity
- Perspective
- Culture
- Values
- Responsibility



Organization of the TOK Course

The TOK course is organized around the exploration of Knowledge Questions. Knowledge Questions are contestable questions about humanity's pursuit of knowledge that specifically address the TOK concepts listed above. The TOK course identifies and explores knowledge questions in depth with regard to three transdisciplinary themes and five Areas of Knowledge.



At Irmak High School, the TOK course will focus on the following three **transdisciplinary themes**:

- **Knowledge and the Knower** - This is the core theme of TOK, in which the class explores what it means to be a person with knowledge and to be part of different communities of knowers. [In TOK, the term knower is synonymous with person]
- **Knowledge and Technology** - This is an optional TOK theme, in which the class looks at the roles of technology in our lives and technology's effect on our perception of and interaction with the world.
- **Knowledge and Language** - This is an optional TOK theme, in which the class looks at the ways in which language shapes our experiences in the world.

The following are examples of **Knowledge Questions** that will be explored for each of these themes.

» Theme 1: Knowledge and the Knower.

- What shapes my perspective as a knower?
- Why should we care about acquiring knowledge?
- How much of our knowledge depends on our interactions with other knowers?

» Theme 2: Knowledge and Technology

- To what extent is the internet changing what it means to know something?
- How does technology extend or transform different modes of human cognition and communication?
- In what sense, if any, can a machine be said to know something?

» Theme 3: Knowledge and Language

- Can all knowledge be expressed in words or symbols?
- What knowledge might be lost if the whole world shared one common language?
- In what ways can language be used to influence, persuade or manipulate people's emotions?

In the TOK course, knowledge questions like these will be explored through study of classical and contemporary thinkers, experiential learning, reflection and integration of TOK concepts with all DP subjects. Throughout study of the three major interdisciplinary themes and five areas

of knowledge, internal assessments, such as short essays, presentations, reports, and reflective response writing will be assigned to help students develop their skills and knowledge.

Expected learning outcomes of TOK

By exploring the limits of our individual knowledge, practicing awareness of our own perspectives and assumptions, and recognizing our responsibility to behave ethically and conscientiously in our actions and relationships, TOK cultivates students with international mindedness and all of the traits of the IB Learner Profile.



ATL (Approaches to Learning) skills developed in TOK



In the TOK course, students develop their communication skills through writing and presenting and also recognize the importance of technology and language in effectively communicating through various media.

While the students will produce the two major assignments as individuals, in TOK the development of social skills is emphasized through recognition of and building of empathy with the perspectives of others - this is primarily achieved through in class discussions and informal group work assignments.

Self-management is an essential learning skill that is developed in the TOK course through focus on a combination of time management and student reflections and self-assessments.

In the TOK course, students are encouraged to develop their thinking skills by thinking critically and analytically as well as creatively. They are expected to both question sources of information and be open to new ideas, recognizing that different kinds of knowledge may be useful in different contexts.

A fundamental component of TOK is critically evaluating sources of information and learning how to logically interpret and understand their meaning. As with other subjects, students will practice academic scholarship and develop their research skills.

TOK Assessments

Students are evaluated through two TOK assessment components: The TOK exhibition at the end of the first year and the TOK essay at the end of the second year. Students work individually under the supervision of the TOK teacher both to curate their exhibition and to write their essay.

Assessment component	Weight in Final Grade
Theory of Knowledge exhibition - Year 1, spring Internal assessment with external moderation For this component, students are required to create an exhibition that explores how TOK manifests in the world around us.	1/3 (33%)
Theory of Knowledge essay on a prescribed title - Year 2 (due in March) External assessment For this component, students are required to write an essay in response to one of the six prescribed titles that are issued by the IB for each examination session.	2/3 (67%)

TOK - EE grade

At the end of the two year DP, TOK and the EE are graded on a scale of A-E, with A being the highest grade. These two grades are then combined in the diploma points matrix seen below to award between 0 and 3 points toward the student's total IB score. A grade of E in either TOK or EE results in failure and the IB diploma is not obtained until the requirement has been satisfactorily completed.

		Theory of Knowledge (TOK)				
Grade awarded		A	B	C	D	E or N
Extended Essay	A	3	3	2	2	Failing condition
	B	3	2	2	1	Failing condition
	C	2	2	1	0	
	D	2	1	0	0	
	E or N	Failing condition				

TOK exhibition

For the TOK exhibition, students will respond to one of the IA prompts (a list of 35 knowledge questions) with the selection and presentation of three objects with original commentary and analysis showing how the objects relate to the exploration of the knowledge question through the lens of one of the TOK themes.

List of IA prompts

The chosen IA prompt must be used exactly as given; it must not be altered in any way.

1. What counts as knowledge?
2. Are some types of knowledge more useful than others?
3. What features of knowledge have an impact on its reliability?
4. On what grounds might we doubt a claim?
5. What counts as good evidence for a claim?
6. How does the way that we organize or classify knowledge affect what we know?
7. What are the implications of having, or not having, knowledge?
8. To what extent is certainty attainable?
9. Are some types of knowledge less open to interpretation than others?
10. What challenges are raised by the dissemination and/or communication of knowledge?
11. Can new knowledge change established values or beliefs?
12. Is bias inevitable in the production of knowledge?
13. How can we know that current knowledge is an improvement upon past knowledge?
14. Does some knowledge belong only to particular communities of knowers?
15. What constraints are there on the pursuit of knowledge?
16. Should some knowledge not be sought on ethical grounds?
17. Why do we seek knowledge?
18. Are some things unknowable?
19. What counts as a good justification for a claim?
20. What is the relationship between personal experience and knowledge?
21. What is the relationship between knowledge and culture?
22. What role do experts play in influencing our consumption or acquisition of knowledge?

23. How important are material tools in the production or acquisition of knowledge?
24. How might the context in which knowledge is presented influence whether it is accepted or rejected?
25. How can we distinguish between knowledge, belief and opinion?
26. Does our knowledge depend on our interactions with other knowers?
27. Does all knowledge impose ethical obligations on those who know it?
28. To what extent is objectivity possible in the production or acquisition of knowledge?
29. Who owns knowledge?
30. What role does imagination play in producing knowledge about the world?
31. How can we judge when evidence is adequate?
32. What makes a good explanation?
33. How is current knowledge shaped by its historical development?
34. In what ways do our values affect our acquisition of knowledge?
35. In what ways do values affect the production of knowledge?

Summary of the TOK exhibition process

Step 1:	<p>Students select one IA prompt and three objects, or images of objects, that show how this question manifests in the world around us.</p> <p>The three objects must be linked to the same prompt. Students are encouraged to choose objects that are of personal interest and that they have come across in their academic studies and/or their lives beyond the classroom.</p> <p>It is strongly recommended that students base their exhibition on one of the themes (the core theme or one of the optional themes).</p>
Step 2:	<p>Students produce a single file containing their TOK exhibition. This must include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A title clearly indicating their selected IA prompt • Images of their three objects • A typed original commentary on each object. (In this commentary students identify each object and its specific real-world context and justify each object's inclusion in the exhibition and links to the IA prompt.) This commentary should be a maximum of 950 words in total and must adhere to standards of academic honesty. <p>Once complete, this file is submitted to the TOK teacher to be marked. Samples of the student work are then submitted to the IB for moderation.</p>
Step 3:	<p>Students will showcase their completed exhibitions by presenting them to an audience in person or virtually.</p>

TOK essay

The TOK essay is an original expository and academic exploration of a knowledge question that should not exceed 1600 words (not including references, figures, tables and acknowledgements). The student will choose to respond to one of six prescribed essay titles issued by the International Baccalaureate (IB). The prescribed titles change in each examination session.

Below are examples of previous **TOK essay titles** (from May 2022).

Title 1. Can there be knowledge that is independent of culture? Discuss with reference to mathematics and one other area of knowledge.

Title 2. To what extent do you agree with the claim that “there’s a world of difference between truth and facts”. (Maya Angelou) Answer with reference to two areas of knowledge.

Title 3. Is there solid justification for regarding knowledge in the natural sciences more highly than another area of knowledge? Discuss with reference to the natural sciences and one other area of knowledge.

Title 4. How do historians and human scientists give knowledge meaning through the telling of stories? Discuss with reference to history and the human sciences.

Title 5. How can we distinguish between good and bad interpretations? Discuss with reference to the arts and one other area of knowledge.

Title 6. If we conclude that there is some knowledge we should not pursue on ethical grounds, how can we determine the boundaries of acceptable investigation within an area of knowledge? Discuss with reference to two areas of knowledge.

The essay must be the original work of the student author and must adhere to the standards of academic honesty expected of all students. Students should use evidence and sources to support their assertions and must use appropriate citations and formatting when submitting their essay. The TOK teacher will provide guidance during the essay writing process in the form of three required teacher-student interactions which will be recorded on the TOK essay Planning and Progress Form.



Three required teacher-student interactions for TOK essay

1. Discuss the list of prescribed titles	2. Discussion of the student's initial exploration of their selected title	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.	The student is permitted to present one full draft of the essay to the teacher. The teacher will 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.

Exhibition assessment instrument

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 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 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>There is some justification for the inclusion of each object in the exhibition. Some of the points are supported by evidence and references 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 selected IA 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 of 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 exhibition does not reach the standard described by the other levels or does not use one of the IA prompts provided.</p>
Possible characteristics					
<p>Convincing Lucid Precise</p>	<p>Focused Relevant Coherent</p>	<p>Adequate Competent Acceptable</p>	<p>Simplistic Limited Underdeveloped</p>	<p>Ineffective Descriptive Incoherent</p>	

Essay assessment instrument

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 discussion is connected to the title and makes superficial or limited links to areas of knowledge.</p> <p>The discussion is largely descriptive.</p> <p>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 discussion does not reach the standard described by the other levels or is not a response to one of the prescribed titles for the correct examination session.</p>
Possible characteristics					
<p>Insightful Convincing Accomplished Lucid</p>	<p>Pertinent Relevant Analytical Organized</p>	<p>Acceptable Mainstream Adequate Competent</p>	<p>Underdeveloped Basic Superficial Limited</p>	<p>Ineffective Descriptive Incoherent Formless</p>	

TOK course outline

Year 1							
Semester 1				Semester 2			
Unit 1: Introduction to TOK	Unit 2: Core Theme - Knowledge & The Knower	Unit 3: Optional Theme - Knowledge and Language	Unit 4: Optional Theme - Knowledge and Technology	Unit 5: Area of Knowledge - History	Unit 6: Exhibition	Unit 7: Area of Knowledge - The Natural Sciences	Unit 8: Area of Knowledge - mathematics
Year 2							
Semester 1				Semester 2			
Unit 9: TOK essay introduction	Unit 10: Area of Knowledge - The human sciences (psychology, social and cultural anthropology, economics, political science and geography)	Unit 11: Area of Knowledge - The Arts		Unit 12: TOK essay completion	Unit 13: Reflections - Truth and Wisdom	Unit 14: Reflections - Values and Responsibilities	

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