

3.3 Introducing the TOK essay

Structuring the TOK essay handout

- *Here's one way of structuring your TOK essay.*
- *Note that there are other ways of doing it, and some essay titles don't specify a limit of two areas of knowledge, so make sure you consult with your teacher extensively*
- *Make the most of the three interactions to create an effective essay*

INTRODUCTION

1. A 'hook' to grab the attention of your readers - this could be an engaging, interesting, intriguing opening, like a quote or a key idea or theory.
2. Explain the key words and ideas of the title, and how you will interpret them .
3. Outline the scope of your essay - ie the AOKs you will focus on. Usually, TOK essays ask you to look at 2 different areas of knowledge.

The introduction of your TOK essay is massively important! If tricky terms in the title are not defined, or the scope of the essay not properly explained, your essay will always struggle to make sense.

DISCUSSION 1 (argument)

- Outline your first claim or argument in your opening sentence. The context for this should be an area of knowledge, which you should clearly identify.
- Your argument should be based **VERY CLOSELY** on the title - for example, supporting an assertion or quote it includes, and considering why it is valid.
- Discuss this argument in general terms first, without specific examples.
- If you can, mention the ideas of a key thinker.
- Support what you are saying by referring to one or two real-life situations. These can be from your own experiences, or things you have read about.

DISCUSSION 1 (counter-argument)

- Outline an alternative point of view, or counterargument, to your argument.
- This may involve considering the limitations of the assertion in the title, or disagreeing with it.
- Offer an analysis and justification in a similar way to your argument, again including real-life situations, and, if you can, the idea of a key thinker.

INTERLINKING AOKS

- Link the second AOK to the first AOK, by comparing and contrasting how they both relate to the question.

DISCUSSION 2 (argument)

- State your second claim or argument. This will probably be similar to your first argument, but now in the context of your second AOK.
- Discuss this claim in general terms first, without specific examples. Again, the idea of a key thinker would be good to include here.
- Support what you are saying by referring to one or two real-life situations. These can be from your own experiences, or things you have read about.

DISCUSSION 2 (counter-argument)

- Outline an alternative point of view, or counterargument, to your argument.
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- Offer an analysis and justification in a similar way to your argument argument, again including real-life situations, and, if you can, the idea of a key thinker.

CONCLUSION

- Restate the key points of your essay, and answer the question directly.
- Don't sit on the fence - have a position on what you're exploring.
- Try to tell your reader something they didn't already know.
- A conclusion can often be improved by drawing on a quote from a relevant thinker.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Your bibliography should include only the books, magazines, webpages, etc. that you have used directly. There's no mandatory format, but you should be consistent and clear, and arrange the publications in alphabetical order and/or in order of source type.

Characteristics of effective and ineffective essays

Highlight in different colours which of these aspects are effective, and which are ineffective.

1. Shows an awareness of his or her own perspective as a knower in relation to other perspectives
2. Lots of generalizations
3. RLSs chosen because of suitability rather than interest
4. Arguments in the essay are fully justified
5. Clear and coherent arguments
6. Examples are fresh, original, and specific
7. Not enough personal thoughts and opinions
8. Misunderstandings about the nature of the AOKs - for example, confusing 'history' with 'the past', or treating the arts purely in terms of artistic techniques