



## Introduction

Theory of Knowledge (TOK) is a central subject in the IB diploma; it is quite unlike any other course offered at upper secondary school level anywhere in the world.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps the main thing is to learn to think critically about various knowledge claims we encounter in our lives. Another important skill TOK aims to develop is clear and coherent communication both in terms of written and oral presentation. These skills are very likely to be useful in your future studies and working life, especially if you decide to pursue an academic career.

Among other things, TOK is an excellent subject for implementing the IB mission statement: “to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect” and “encourage students across the world to become active, compassionate and lifelong learners who understand that other people, with their differences, can also be right”. For instance, balanced enquiry is one key skill in TOK; it necessarily requires appreciating and respecting various viewpoints. This means that international-mindedness is an important value in TOK as well.

The TOK course repeatedly addresses so called knowledge questions. These are not questions about various disciplines as such; instead, they are questions about knowing in a given Area of Knowledge (such as history, mathematics, social sciences and human sciences). An important aspect related to knowledge questions is ways of knowing (such as language, perception, reason and emotion). In other words, TOK provides certain tools for analyzing knowledge in different contexts. Furthermore, while TOK supports a deeper understanding of the nature of an IB subject, also the subjects can support TOK. Teachers are expected to provide links to TOK where appropriate in their subjects. For instance, physics offers a very natural link to TOK in terms of building and validating models (e.g., historical development of atomic models).

TOK invites you to reflect your own thinking and experiences. This means that the way we study TOK is probably a bit different from other IB subjects: we use a lot of small group discussions which are sometimes condensed into a mini-presentation for your peers (we occasionally use whiteboarding for this purpose). In addition, you will write so called reaction papers in which you are invited to ponder on topics covered in lessons from your personal perspective.

We want to encourage communication between teacher and students also outside the classroom. This is facilitated using social media such as the Facebook (closed groups), Edmodo or some other electronic environment which allows an easy sharing of ideas, files and Internet links.

What follows is an outline of the course structure (for a more detailed description, consult the TOK guide). We truly hope that you will enjoy TOK. We know that we do!!

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<sup>1</sup> Well, we do not claim to have investigated all the syllabuses in the world so you need to take this with some reservation. ☺

## Semester 1

Topics	Weeks
Why do we need Theory of Knowledge?	2
Personal and shared knowledge	2
Knowledge framework	3
AoK: Natural sciences	5
Human sciences	5

## Semester 2

Topics	Weeks
AoK: Maths	5
History	5
The arts	5
Introduction to the assessment tasks	3

## Alternative second course outline

Topics	Weeks
History	5
Indigenous Knowledge	5
Religion	
AoKs: The arts	
Introduction to the assessment tasks	

## Semester 3

Topics	Weeks
Ethics	5
Essay	3
Personal knowledge, ways of knowing	3
Presentations	4
Essay preparations	3

## Semester 4

Topics	Weeks
Essay feedback	1
Another presentation block	3
Closure	2