

Theory of knowledge prescribed titles

November 2012

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 six 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. Can we have beliefs or knowledge which are independent of our culture?
2. *"It is a capital mistake to theorize before one has data. Insensibly one begins to twist facts to suit theories, instead of theories to suit facts"* (Arthur Conan Doyle). Consider the extent to which this statement may be true in two or more areas of knowledge.
3. *"Imagination is more important than knowledge. For knowledge is limited to all we now know and understand, while imagination embraces the entire world, and all there ever will be to know and understand."* (Albert Einstein) Do you agree?
4. What counts as knowledge in the arts? Discuss by comparing to one other area of knowledge.
5. *"Habit is stronger than reason."* To what extent is this true in two areas of knowledge?
6. *"The ultimate protection against research error and bias is supposed to come from the way scientists constantly re-test each other's results."* To what extent would you agree with this claim in the natural sciences and the human sciences?