

TOK Essay Structure

Section 1: The Introduction 150-200 words

Paragraph 1

-Give your KQ. For example, “To what extent is math more reliable than other areas of knowledge?”

-State your thesis. What is your short answer to the KQ (your question of knowledge). “While looking at mathematics, natural science and ethics, we will see that mathematics isn’t necessarily more reliable; however, we will see that knowledge is different in different fields.”

-Give us a roadmap, a sentence that gives us a preview, showing us what you’re going to do in your body paragraphs. Make it clear how you are going to explore the KQ, which ways of knowing and/or areas of knowledge you’re going to use. This will make it easy for the marker to know what to look for. An example: “Mathematics can be seen as more reliable because it uses reason. . . Natural science can be less reliable because it relies on reason and observation. And ethics can be less reliable because it is related to the norms of a person’s society, (which may change over time.”)

Section 2: Two paragraphs totaling 400 words

Paragraph 2

-Claim. A topic sentence that outlines your argument about the KQ. For example you could claim that, “Mathematics can be relied on because it is a purely logical system.” It also helps to develop a specific KQ for the AOK you are exploring: “How reliable is historical, cause-effect, reasoning?”

-Explain. Elaborate and clarify your claim. “Mathematics is axiomatic and independent of subjective experience.”

-Example. A real life example, to clarify and support the claim from your own experience. Examples should be personal, specific, precise and real. Did something happen in your Science class? Did you have a conversation with your teacher or hear a story from your grandfather? Attempt to use evidence from your own life rather than examples from Darwin or Lincoln. You could talk about how, “In mathematics we learned that the inside angles of a triangle, in Euclidian space, sum up to 180 degrees.”

Link to KQ and prompt: Mathematics provides single solutions to clear problems (answer the “So What?” question

Paragraph 3

-Counter-claim. Argue against your claim above. “However, it is possible to come to different conclusions using different systems of mathematics.”

-Example. An example that supports your counter claim: “While it is possible to demonstrate that the interior angles of a triangle equal 180 degrees in Euclidian space, this cannot be proven within other systems, such as spherical geometry or hyperbolic geometry.”

-Link to KQ. Quickly sum up the (complicated) insights of this section. “It is clear that mathematics is reliable to an extent, but often it can only show something to be true within one fixed system or approach.” Answer the “So What” question to develop implications.

Section 3: You may continue to elaborate on your AOK and WOKs above or look at your second combination of AoK and WoKs. Write these using the same approach you saw in paragraphs 2 and 3. 400 words

Paragraph 4

-Claim.

-Explain.

-Example.

Paragraph 5

-Counter-claim.

-Example.

-Link to KQ.

Section 4: Continue with further examples or start anew if you have a third AoK or WoK. Write these using the same approach you saw in paragraphs 2 and 3. 400 words

Paragraph 6

-**Claim.**

-**Explain.**

-**Example.**

Paragraph 7

-**Counter-claim.**

-**Example.**

-**Link to KQ.**

Section 5: Conclusion with two paragraphs totaling 200-250 words

Paragraph 8

-**Implications and significance.** Why is it important that we know about this?

-**Perspective.** Explain another view that someone may have (i.e. an older person, someone who's had different life experiences than you)

Paragraph 9

-**Sum up the argument.** The thesis again, in short.