

The Exhibition: a guide

Exhibition · From prompt to commentary · Handout

The question behind the mark: *Does the exhibition successfully show how TOK manifests in the world around us?* Marked out of 10 by your teacher, checked by the IB, one third of your TOK grade.

1 · The rules

- **One prompt** from the IB's list of 35, copied **word for word** as your title. A reworded prompt is marked against the original; no listed prompt scores 0.
- **Three objects**, physical or digital. Your own work is allowed (an artwork, your Extended Essay), but the object must **already exist**: you cannot make it for the exhibition. Two objects cap the mark at 6.
- **Three commentaries**, 950 words in total, references not counted. The marker stops reading at word 951.
- Classmates may use the same prompt, **not the same object**. Add a reference list.

2 · Choose the prompt

- **Write three different answers** the prompt allows before you commit. *Is bias inevitable in the production of knowledge?* → *yes, and it does damage* · *yes, but it can be corrected* · *no, here is a method that removes it*. One answer only means three objects making one point.
- **Read the key term exactly.** *Values* means moral values, not what something is worth. A prompt about *improvement* asks how we *know* new knowledge is better, not whether microscopes got better. Underline the term and define it in one sentence.
- A TOK theme (the core theme or an optional theme) narrows the search. Recommended, not required.

3 · Choose the objects

Collect early and widely, for more than one prompt, and decide late. Then test each candidate.

Test	Ask yourself	Fails the test
Specific Provenance	Is it <i>one</i> object with its own real-world context? Can I photograph it myself and say in one sentence whose it is, where and when it came into my life?	"a laptop," "the radio," a stock image of "a baby" product photos, book covers from a shop page
Swap	If I replace it with another of its kind (another dictionary, another banknote), does my commentary still work?	It does: you are writing about "language" or "money," not about this object
No metaphor	Was it made by people knowing, or trying to know, something?	a face mask standing for "hidden values"
Own job	Does it show something the other two objects do not?	two objects that both show "a bold claim later disproved"

As Henly and Sprague put it: "The objects are not the TOK, the prompts are."

4 · Design the three as one argument

1. **Place each object at a different point of the range.** For *Can new knowledge change established values or beliefs?*: one where values changed completely, one partially, one hardly at all. Or show three different *mechanisms* by which the prompt's process works.
2. **Connect them on the page.** One sentence per commentary: "Unlike my first object, where..." Comparison is not required, but it is the easiest way to show "the particular contribution that each individual object makes."
3. **End each commentary with an answer in the prompt's own words.** Not "this shows that values matter," but "one way values affect the production of knowledge is..."
4. **Take evidence from the object itself.** A statistics table: quote its figures, then ask what its categories assume and who chose them.

5 • Write each commentary (about 300 words)

1. **Context, briefly.** What it is, whose, when, where: two or three sentences, only what the prompt needs.
2. **The knowledge issue.** In one precise sentence: what problem does this object raise *for this prompt*?
3. **The mechanism.** *How* does the object show it, through what process? A link explained is worth far more than a link asserted.
4. **One checkable fact doing work.** A date, a figure, a ruling, a quotation, with its source.
5. **The other side,** if there is room. One sentence that limits your claim makes it stronger.
6. **The verdict,** in the prompt's words, and how it differs from the other two.

Colour test. Mark the printed draft: description of the object red, its context blue, discussion of the prompt green. The page should be mostly green. Keep the key term in **the same sense** in all three commentaries, and use a TOK term only where you apply it.

6 • Evidence and finish

- At least **one cited fact per object** that the argument needs. Check every one: a single wrong fact in the case that carries your argument can cost a band.
- Not references: "(Wikipedia)" alone, a dictionary definition doing the arguing, a stock-photo URL, a shopping page. Remove tracking tags (utm_source=...). Cite AI tools if you used them.
- Say in the caption when an image is your own photograph or your own work.
- **Use the words:** aim for 850 to 950. Proofread; no comments or highlighting left on the page.

Last question, for each object: what is the core problem this object raises for this prompt, and is that what my commentary discusses?

How TOK counts in the diploma

Your two marks are combined, the essay counting twice: $\text{essay} \times 2 + \text{exhibition}$, out of 30. The IB turns that total into a grade from **A** (excellent) to **E** (elementary), with grade boundaries set anew each session. The TOK grade then meets your **Extended Essay** grade in this table, which gives up to **3 of the diploma's 45 points**:

TOK ↓ · EE →	A	B	C	D	E
A	3	3	2	2	fail
B	3	2	2	1	fail
C	2	2	1	0	fail
D	2	1	0	0	fail
E	fail	fail	fail	fail	fail

An E in TOK or in the Extended Essay means no diploma, however good your six subjects are. So does a missing component: no exhibition or no essay means no TOK grade. The other failing conditions: fewer than 24 points in total; CAS not completed; a grade 1 in any subject; grade 2 three or more times; grade 3 or below four or more times; fewer than 12 points from higher-level subjects or 9 from standard-level subjects (with three of each); and any case of academic misconduct.