

THE BASICS FOR STARTING YOUR EXTENDED ESSAY

Key features:

- The extended essay is compulsory for all students taking the Diploma Programme.
- A student **must achieve a D grade** or higher to be awarded the Diploma.
- The extended essay is externally assessed and, in combination with the grade for theory of knowledge, **contributes up to three points** to the total score for the IB Diploma.
- The extended essay process helps prepare students for success at university and in other pathways beyond the Diploma Programme.
- When choosing a subject for the extended essay, students must consult the list of available Diploma Programme subjects published in the [Handbook of procedures for the Diploma Programme](#) for the session in question.
- The extended essay is a piece of independent research on a topic chosen by the student in consultation with a supervisor in the school.
- It is presented as a formal piece of sustained academic writing containing **no more than 4,000 words** accompanied by a **reflection form of no more than 500 words**.
- It is the result of approximately 40 hours of work by the student.
- Students are supported by a supervision process recommended to be 3–5 hours, which includes three mandatory reflection sessions.
- The third and final mandatory reflection session is the *viva voce*, which is a concluding interview with the supervising teacher.

When researching the extended essay, students should follow the steps below:

1

Choose an available Diploma Programme subject for the extended essay for the session in question (subject to any restrictions imposed by the school).

2

Read the following materials: the assessment criteria, relevant subject-specific chapter of the *Extended essay guide*, the IB's ethical guidelines and other associated policies where relevant, such as those relating to animal experiments.

3

Set up the Researcher's reflection space (RRS) and use this as the key planning and reflection tool for the extended essay process.

4

Choose a topic and undertake some background reading on it.

5

Formulate a preliminary research question. Try to incorporate an IB command term in the research question if possible.

6

Draw up an outline plan for the research and writing process. This should include a timeline.

7

Begin to identify how and where they will gather source material for their research.

8

Identify which system of academic referencing they will use, ensuring that this meets the minimum requirements for the IB.

9

Set deadlines for themselves that are realistic and take into consideration the school's own internal deadlines.

10

Plan a structure for the essay. This may change as the research develops but it is useful to have a sense of direction from the start.

11

Undertake some preparatory reading in light of the proposed research question. *If students discover that it will not be possible to obtain the evidence needed in the time available, the research question should be changed. This should be done sooner rather than later: students should not lose time waiting and hoping that something will turn up. Students should go back to stage 3, 2 or 1, and choose a new research question that can be answered.*

12

Carry out the research. *The material collected should be assembled in a logical order, linked to the structure of the essay and clearly focused on the research question posed. Only then will students know whether they have enough evidence for each stage of the argument so that they can proceed to the next. Students should be prepared for things to go wrong. Sometimes they may discover something later in the research that undermines what they thought had been established earlier. If that happens, the research plan needs to be revised.*

There are six required elements of the final work to be submitted. More details about each element are given in the “Presentation” section. Your supervisor will provide you with detailed info on this. Please note that the order in which these elements are presented here is not necessarily the order in which they should be written.

Six required elements of the extended essay:

1. Title page a.k.a The Cover Page

The title page should include only the following information:

- the title of the essay
- the research question
- the subject for which the essay is registered (if it is a language essay also state which category it falls into; if a world studies essay also state the theme and the two subjects utilized)
- word count.

2. Contents page

3. Introduction

4. Body of the essay

5. Conclusion

6. References and bibliography

In working on the extended essay, students are expected to achieve the following assessment objectives.

Assessment objectives	
Knowledge and understanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the topic chosen and the research question posed.• To demonstrate knowledge and understanding of subject specific terminology and/or concepts.• To demonstrate knowledge and understanding of relevant and/or appropriate research sources and/or methods used to gather information.

Application and analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To select and apply research that is relevant and appropriate to the research question. • To analyse the research effectively and focus on the research question.
Synthesis and evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be able to discuss the research in terms of a clear and coherent reasoned argument in relation to the research question. • To be able to critically evaluate the arguments presented in the essay. • To be able to reflect on and evaluate the research process.
A variety of (research) skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be able to present information in an appropriate academic format. • To understand and demonstrate academic integrity.

Formal reflection sessions

These are the mandatory sessions that must be recorded on the *Reflections on planning and progress form*. It is recommended that these sessions last 20–30 minutes. During these sessions students should share excerpts from their Researcher’s reflection space with their supervisor. These sessions should focus on progress made so far and set clear objectives for moving forward in the research process. Students should be prepared for these sessions and the meetings should be a dialogue guided by questions posed by the supervisor. Examples of these are given in the document [Guiding student reflection](#).

