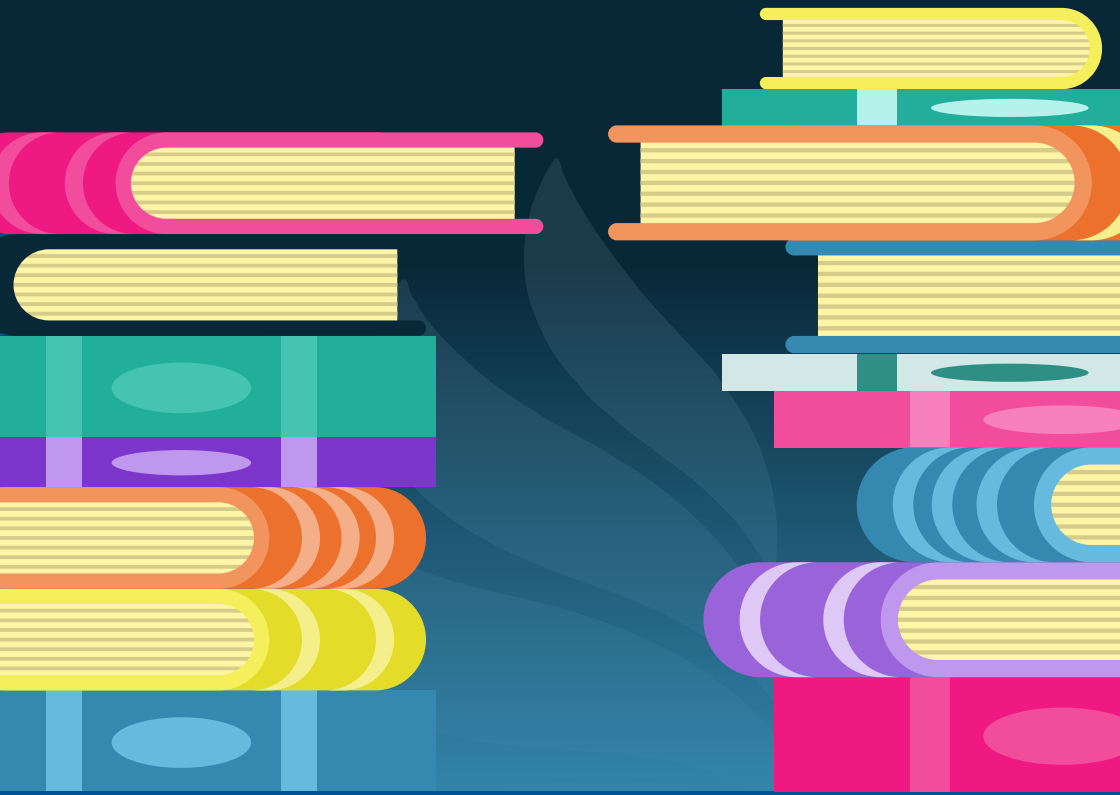


# QUICK STARTER GUIDE IB EXTENDED ESSAY



From the IB graduates at



**Lanterna**  
education



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# WHAT IS IT?





The extended essay (often called the EE) is a 4000-word structured essay on a topic of your choice, which can take many different forms. Ultimately, what your EE ends up looking like depends on the topic that you choose. Some students choose to write their extended essay on an aspect of literature or history, which means they write an academic essay in a traditional style. You can, however, choose to conduct an experiment and write up the results if you choose this focus. Or, you can try to solve an arithmetic problem if you choose maths. As long as it adopts an academic format, it should all be okay!

## What does it include?

There are several things that you have to include in your extended essay. As a side note, the requirements for the EE were changed quite drastically in 2016, so it's important that when you research the EE that you are looking at the updated guidelines!

Based on these new guidelines, your EE needs to contain:

- A research question
- A cover-page
- A table of contents
- An introduction
- A main body
- A conclusion
- A bibliography
- 3 reflections from the beginning, middle and end of the research process.

## Do I get any help?

Of course you do! In fact, you actually get a lot of help. Your school will assign you a 'supervisor'. Your supervisor will be an IB teacher at your school and it is their responsibility to meet with you and discuss your research question, your planning and also your first draft.



## What should I be doing now?

Your extended essay is typically something you write towards the end of your first year of your IB studies, so I wouldn't worry too much about it right now. However, it's likely you will have to choose your topic and research question sooner rather than later. What I would recommend, therefore, is to start thinking about what subject would interest you enough to write 4,000 words on it. Once you come across an attractive topic, I would start to look for some related articles and other content. If you find lots, this should suggest to you that it is probably a good topic to select for your EE! If there isn't very much, that doesn't mean that it's a bad idea to pursue, but you might want to change the focus a little to make it something that's easier to research.



# YOUR TOPIC

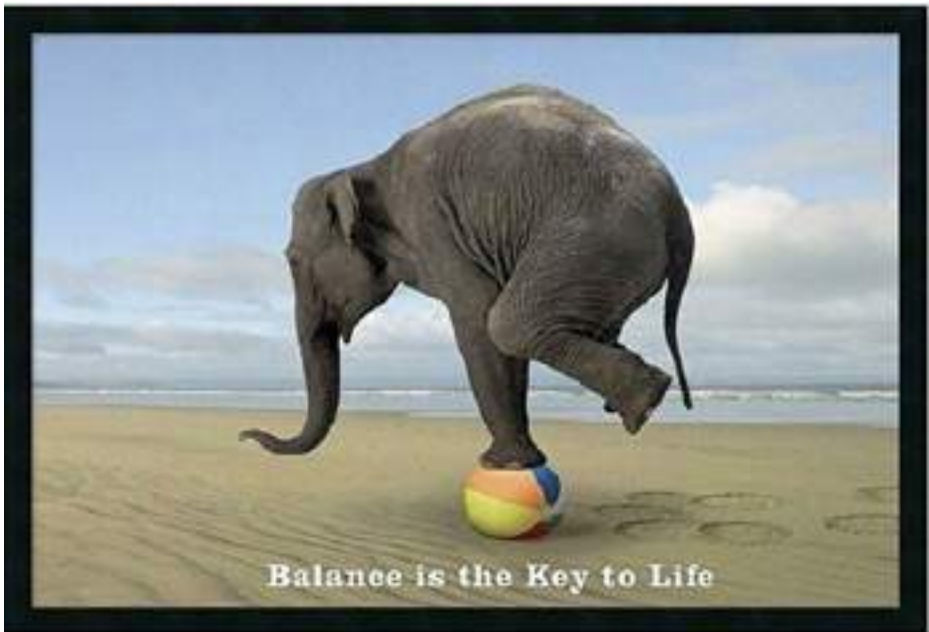




There is a secret that could help all first year IB students... It is the key to making next year a whole lot easier... It will reduce stress, make the workload easier to handle, and give you time...

What's the secret? You're better off starting the extended essay as soon as possible!

I know, it's not what you wanted to hear. But I promise you that putting time and effort into your extended essay now will save you the equivalent of five times that same effort later on. Balancing the extended essay alongside Internal Assessments, Theory of Knowledge and IB revision is really not fun.



*Ateeq Ahmed Siddiqui*



In this guide we're going to take you step-by-step through the process of writing the extended essay. We started with the first step: we looked generally at what it is. Now it's time to find a topic. If you are sitting there thinking that you have no idea how you will ever find something to write about, you aren't alone. That's why we've chosen our four favourite tricks to help you identify what it is you will spend those 40 hours working on. Yes, 40 hours. That's how long the IB recommends you spend! Hopefully now you see why it's better to start now!

### **Plan Your 'Topic Choosing Time'**

Unfortunately, your perfect topic is not going to suddenly be delivered to you one day by the inspiration bunny. With all that other homework, CAS and whatever else you have going on, you are not going to find your topic until you commit quality time to thinking about it. And that means scheduling sessions for yourself which are exclusively devoted to 'topic choosing'.

Three hour-long sessions over the course of three weeks might not sound like a lot, but it might be all you need to identify what it is that you want to write about. And it may well be three hours more than you would have spent if you hadn't scheduled any sessions ahead of time. Note that you should space out these sessions, because this lets your ideas 'ferment' and gives your subconscious the chance to work on it on the side (time and sleep are both great for this sort of problem solving!).

During these sessions, do expect some amount of metaphorical 'banging your head against the wall' before you arrive at the right topic. If you sit there feeling like it's impossible, just keep going. It's part of the process. However, if you're really at a loss for what exactly to do, we have some exercises you can try that just might do the trick.

**Exercise 1:** Brainstorm your interests. If you know what subject you want to write about then take a piece of paper and give yourself 5 minutes to write down all the topics and lessons you enjoyed in the past year. Then take another 5 minutes to write down all the things you haven't covered but which





you wish you had. This might mean writing down books you would love to study in English, or areas of history you are interested in but haven't had the chance to study in class.

**Tip:** If you're not sure what subject to write your essay in, start with your interests outside the classroom instead. We suggest you still write these down, but don't worry too much about what subject they fit into. Afterwards, see if any of them could fit. Baking is related to chemistry, for example, while time travel (hello sci-fi) has been explored in philosophy. It's okay (and encouraged) to think outside the box!

### **Work out what you're interested in writing about**

Once you've started to work out what kinds of things attract you more than others, it's time to narrow your ideas down to a shortlist to discover what you really love. As a general rule, if you get bored thinking about it, other people will get bored reading about it. For your extended essay you should find something you can't stop thinking about.

If you have your piece of paper with all the things you're interested in written down, start sifting through them. Cross off the things you don't actually want to write about and circle the things that could have potential. Again, feel free to explore outside the areas that you would typically learn about in class.

**Tip:** A great way to do this is to combine two things you like but which don't necessarily seem like they'd go together at first. Interested in theatre but want to write a history essay? Perhaps you could look into the numerous theatre companies that entertained troops during World War II?

**Exercise 2:** Do a freestyle research binge on Google. Set a timer for an hour. Start reading about whatever catches your interest, and when something related catches your attention, follow the link or Google further, letting Google guide you in the direction of your interest. There is no agenda and there are no rules, except that we recommend you stay in your extended essay zone (i.e. don't follow a link to BuzzFeed or other obvious procrastination traps!). Make rough notes of the things that really grasp your attention as you go along.



Then, wait a week (again, giving these things time is great) and don't think about it. When the week is up, take a piece of paper and write down what you remember from that earlier research. Whatever really stuck in your head is probably what you found most interesting. Use that as a starting point.

Some tools, apps and websites that might be useful for your research:

[TedTalks](#) – provides plenty of great insights on all sorts of topics you might not have thought about.

[Diigo](#) – lets you highlight, annotate and bookmark webpages.

[Pocket](#) – lets you save articles and webpages to read or go back to later (very phone-friendly too).



## Have something original to say

If you already know exactly what you are going to say about the topic you've chosen, something isn't right. There needs to be room to explore your topic on a deeper level and discover things you haven't thought about before. Otherwise, your essay is going to be too obvious and predictable. Ultimately, you need to show that you are developing your own thoughts and ideas about your topic. This means questioning your topic as much as possible and working through the unknown elements of your topic in hand. You will discover these unknowns during your research.

**Tip:** This does not mean you should feel pressure to think of something no one has ever considered before. The extended essay is not a ground-breaking piece of research that will alter the path of the human race! It is a way for you



to explore something you are passionate about, and to express that passion in writing. The key is to feel confident that you will be able to offer your own perspective. In other words, have faith in your brain!

**Exercise 3:** Write down at least three questions that dig deeper into your chosen topic. These might question the effect of a variable in an experiment, or perhaps highlight a particular biographical detail of an author that could have affected a novel. It doesn't matter if you don't know the answers yet. The important thing at this point is to be asking the questions.

### Can you picture it as an Extended Essay?

This seems like common sense, but it's actually important to remember before you get too carried away. As you go along, keep referring back to the IBO's Extended Essay Guide (see Exercise 4 below) to make sure your topic will fit into its guidelines. Unless it is a [World Studies](#) essay, make sure it can still be categorised within a recognised IB subject. Check that you know the requirements for each subject, whether that is what language you will need to write the essay in, or whether you might need to undertake independent research.

Finally, make sure it is realistic. Although some of you might want to alter the path of the human race, the extended essay has to be done using the resources available to you and completed on time alongside the rest of your IB workload (remember my original point?). Hopefully you now know that this is perfectly doable, but there is no need to make it harder than it needs to be!

**Exercise 4:** Read the IBO's Extended Essay Guide! Your school will have it to hand, so ask your IB coordinator or librarian. You don't need to read all of it (it is loooong!), but do skim the general guidelines and read through all of the information relevant to your chosen subject.

# THE RESEARCH





But if you're in DP1 of the IB that small thing called the extended essay will be hovering on the horizon, assuming that your school is following this timeline. You know that you should think about it over the break, but whether you do or not might depend on how much Netflix you have to catch up on. To start the research or not to start?

## 1.2. To research or not to research ...



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So, what do I mean by research? I'm talking about the intense stuff. The in-depth exploration that will inform your essay. Don't worry, you'll definitely be able to include all of this research in your bibliography (we'll get to that later). Good research is also the key to making everything a lot easier for you during the writing stage. If you've done the research properly, then regardless of whether it's a long essay, a case study, or an experiment, it will practically plan itself.



## Know WHAT you'll need

Read the IBO's Extended Essay Guide for your subject (yes I am going to recommend that in every part of this guide, so you may as well do it now!). For all subjects it will tell you whether you need primary research, secondary data, or a combination. Work out what 'research' means for you: do you need to gather data compiled by someone else or collect your own? Do you need to read other people's opinions, dig out hard facts, or a mixture of both? Depending on what your subject and topic is, your research might be the crux of your entire essay, or it might simply give you ideas to enhance your own thoughts.

Use the Extended Essay Guide to define the limits of your research. Your extended essay has to focus on your chosen subject as defined by the IBO (and World Studies has its own definition and requirements). That means you must define your subject in the same way. For example, biology is defined by the IBO as "the science that deals with living organisms and life processes". Use this to work out where your research should take you. And don't waste time doing research that takes you into another discipline; if you're meant to be focusing on a specific element of biology, don't get distracted by exciting ideas within the field of medicine. Stay focused!

Work out how recent your research needs to be. Again, this is a way to save time! Economics, for example, shouldn't be historical. Although it's important to understand the context of your topic, your information needs to be recent! Equally, scientific research goes out of date very quickly. As long as it's reliable (I'll get onto that later), stick within the last couple decades — newer is better! For literature and history, it's less important that your sources are new. However, bear in mind that it's easier than you might think to quote what sounds like a very insightful idea only to realise that it was first written in the 1920s!



**Exercise 5:** Read the guidelines for your subject and write down what kind of research you'll be doing. Is it primary or secondary? Will you conduct your own experiment or use another's data to illustrate your argument? Are you looking for factual information or speculative theories? Do you want to focus on research from a specific time period? 2013-2016, or 1980-2016? Write it down now because you can check your progress against this later on to ensure you're staying on track.

### **Know WHERE you'll find it**

For the extended essay you'll need to go beyond Google and beyond the shelves of your library. A good extended essay bibliography should be a varied 'pick and mix' selection of online and offline sources, modern and historical dates, and obscure and established publications. Remember those 40 hours the IB recommends you spend on your EE? Your bibliography is proof that you have been working hard!

But how do you access all those sources? Ask your teachers. If you don't have a supervisor yet, I can guarantee you that your librarian knows more about what you are able to access than you realise. Find out what subscriptions your school has, both online and offline. If your library doesn't have a book in stock, speak to the librarian, as they might be able to order a book in for you. Find this out.

For science, it's vital that your research is up to date. That means your material will probably come from journals, (reliable) websites, and studies conducted by other scientists. Consider approaching universities and other academics who may be able to point you in the right direction.

On the other hand, for an extended essay on an aspect of literature, your primary research should involve reading your chosen texts, whether that means reading novels, plays or poems. Consider supplementing this with other first-hand materials such as journal entries, letters or essays by the author or their contemporaries. Finally, secondary research encompasses the ideas of other academics, although the IBO Guide states that these should not replace your own analysis and ideas.



It's not too hard to work out whether a source is reliable or not. Most of the time it's common sense: can you name the author? Is this their field of expertise or might you be better informed? It's okay to use sources that may have a bias or might be ignorant of one thing or another, but the key is not only to be aware of this but to state your awareness clearly in your essay.

### **Here are some good online places to go for information:**

**Google Scholar:** It will show you only the academic resources related to your search: articles, essays and legal documents. In other words, all of the stuff here should be fine to put in a bibliography.

**Google Books:** Free books! Lots of them! And the best part is you don't have to admit you used Google; for all the examiner knows, you dug through the dusty shelves of a library yourself. Even for books which only have a preview this is a useful way to work out if a hard copy of the book would be of use.

**JSTOR:** If your school has a subscription to this, use it! A database of hundreds of academic journals which make for great background research. However, be aware it doesn't include the latest research, so make sure what you find here will hold within the dates you defined earlier on.

**Public Library of Science (PLOS):** An open access online library of scientific literature. Includes science-related journals.

**www.online-literature.com:** A website full of poetry, short stories and novels of almost every 'classic' author whose work is out of copyright. When it comes to referencing later, it will probably look better to go and dig out a hard copy of the work purely for formal referencing purposes, but this is handy for initial browsing.

**Wikipedia:** Didn't think I'd put this on here, did you? This is obviously not good to cite as a source in itself. However, at the bottom of most Wikipedia pages you'll often find a pretty comprehensive list of sources that are directly relevant to the topic, which you could use as a starting point for your own research.





**Exercise 6:** Make a list of the resources you think will be useful for your essay, and which you know you'll be able to access. Remember that different search engines are useful for different subjects.

## Know HOW you'll get it

Believe it or not, research requires research. It won't happen by accident and it takes careful planning to get the most out of the sources that you use.

After you know where you might find useful sources, do some initial digging to find out what's out there that will be specifically useful for your chosen topic. As I mentioned, Wikipedia could be a good starting place. Alternatively, you might need to filter school or local library databases and place orders for books. Whatever you do, keep a list of everything you find that might be useful to you, and use it as a checklist. You won't have time to read it all at once.

Plan out your research time in blocks to make sure that it happens. Think about what work is feasible for you to do in different locations. It goes without saying that you'll be able to do your online research at home, but think about what articles you could download to read when you don't have internet. If you take a book out of a library you will be able to read that when you don't have a laptop in front of you.

Finally, think about when the research will be most useful to you. Is there information you need to know before you undertake a lab investigation? Is any of your data likely to make more sense after you've done some initial reading? Thinking about all of these things will make sure that your research is as effective as possible.

**Exercise 7:** Make a plan of attack (also known as a schedule). Make sure it includes all the details: what specifically you're going to do, in what order you're going to do it, and how long it's all going to take. For example, see the schedule the girl is holding on the next page (this one is for English A):



## Keep track of everything!

You'll need a reference for anything you use that you didn't pluck out of your own head.

This applies to:

- Quotes
- Ideas
- Summaries
- Data
- Images

# SCHEDULE





By ideas and summaries I mean any theory or idea that is not common knowledge. So, while you don't need to reference the fact the spinach is green, you might need to reference the specific constituents of green food colouring.

There is no set referencing system that you need to use for your extended essay, but you do get marked on how you use it. So make sure that whatever you choose, you use it consistently. Ask your supervisor which one they would recommend, and it's useful at this stage to have an understanding of what information you'll need to keep track of as you go along. Guides for the different referencing systems are easily accessible online on websites.

Anytime you read something that might be useful, make a note of all the relevant referencing information. You'll need to include this in your bibliography later. You will usually need to include the author's name, the title, the publisher and the year and place the work was published. It is important to record the page numbers as you go along, as you'll need to include these in your footnotes.

Keep track of your research by extracting the key material onto your own document. Whether that means copying and pasting the vital quotes, summarising the idea or saving an image you might want to use, make it as accessible for yourself as possible! Don't just keep a document of links to articles you found interesting! When you come to plan your essay I promise that you won't remember the page numbers or mental summaries!

### Exercise 8:

Decide how you will organise your research:

- Create an EE research folder on your laptop and create blank documents inside it, labelled to correspond to your different research materials, e.g. journal articles, primary research, hard copy books.
- Assign a physical EE folder for any handwritten notes that you make, whether in a library or just out and about.
- Choose your referencing system.

# THE QUESTION





So far in this guide we've covered how to choose your topic and get on with your research. Now we'll discuss how to make sure you have the perfect question.

You might have had a version of your question in mind before you even started the research phase. But I want to go into more depth now because I think the research question is something that a lot of IB students underestimate.

It's tempting to get excited at this point and to dive straight from the high, high ladder of research into the pool of planning the essay. But how do you know you're going to hit the water smoothly?

To ensure you have a smooth transition, let's take this opportunity to pause, reassess, and make sure you're absolutely, **ABSOLUTELY** certain your question will help you to sail all the way through to extended essay success.

### **To start: draft your question**

**"The title should provide a clear indication of the focus of the essay. It should be precise and not necessarily phrased in the form of a question"**

**– IBO Extended Essay Guide**

You need to have a question in mind in order to work out if your question is good enough. So, if you haven't yet tried to formulate your topic into a research question, do this now. Don't worry about writing the perfect question down yet. Just think of it as a draft.

If you aren't sure what a research question should look like, use the IBO EE Guide and past examples of titles to help you. We can see from the way that the IBO EE Guide defines the question that the most important things to consider are:

- a) clarity
- b) precision



Examples of essay titles include:

How are the distribution and growth of lichens affected by sulfur dioxide and ozone levels in the atmosphere?

Will the recent policy of cutting bakery prices lead to increased revenue for the Safeway supermarket in Ryde, Sydney?

Themes and stylistic devices from Dante in T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* and *Four Quartets*.

All of the above are very specific, very detailed and very concise. In other words... clear and precise.

**Exercise 9:** Draft three different versions of your question. If there are different approaches that you could take and/or different words that you could use to express your topics, write each option down. Keep these three options to hand throughout the rest of the process, but for now just pick the one which you think is clearest and the most precise. We'll come back to this later.

## What is your question actually about?

**"A good research question is one that asks something worth asking"**

**– IBO Extended Essay Guide**





It can be easy, after digging through mountains of research and writing an elegantly worded question, to forget the original point of your essay. It's also easy to let the research and information take you far away from your original intention. This is absolutely fine, and even to be expected; often in-depth research and thinking takes us to a more interesting place than we envisioned at the beginning of the process. Remember that it's important to take a step back from all of that work and really question whether the place you have ended up is still in line with what you want to be writing about.

The first step is to know what your question is really about, beneath the fancy words and clever ideas.

The second step is to ask yourself whether your question is truly interesting. Does it present a possibility that intrigues you?

If you can't pin down the point of your question, or you admit to yourself that actually that point you're pursuing is rather boring, it's time to reassess. A good way to refine your question in a way that will solve this, without throwing away all the work that you have done, is to start picking the question apart. Work out the different elements being addressed in the question so that you will be able to dig as deeply as you can into the situation being examined. If this feels like effort, the thing to remember is that a good question will make it a lot easier to score points when you are answering the question in your essay.

**Exercise 10:** Take your draft question and pick out the keywords. Combined, do they make a good summary of your topic? More importantly, do they point towards just one topic? The keywords of your question should encompass all the main things you will address in your essay, so keep these on hand throughout the writing process and use them as a guide for what you should and shouldn't include in your plan.



## Is your question specific enough?

**“The Extended Essay is an in-depth study of a focused topic”**

**– IBO Extended Essay Guide**

Your question should define its own limits. In other words, it should be specific enough to answer in 4,000 words. Any IB graduate will tell you that 4,000 words is not a lot. It's okay if some aspects of your question need further explanation, and in fact the IBO Guide itself recommends that you analyse your title during the essay. However, the key is to choose which variables you leave open. There is no point wasting time explaining a phrase or word in your essay when simply changing a word would solve everything. And if every word could mean two different things, this means there are two different essays you could be writing and the essay will feel unfocused as a result. Remember...clear, and precise!

Different types of words that create ambiguities include:

**Subjective words**, such as: success, failure, influence, significant

**Words that could refer to multiple things**, such as: novels, lichens, lower-middle class

**Words that you'll need to define**, such as: themes, soul, tradition

A good extended essay question should contain just a few of these ambiguities.







**Exercise 11:** Identify all the possible variables in your question and write down all of the possible things that it could mean. Then, write down ways that you could eliminate some of the variables. For example, an analysis of reduced prices in a supermarket can be narrowed down to the reduced prices of bakery items only.

## Can you answer your question?

**“Structure a reasoned argument in response to the research question on the basis of the material gathered” – IBO Extended Essay Guide**

When writing the essay you’ll need to make sure that every idea you include links back to the question. You’ll need to show over and over again how each paragraph digs that little bit deeper into the question you laid out at the beginning. With that in mind, it’s a good idea, now you’ve done your research, to really make sure that your selected material, ideas and information are still being used to answer the question you initially set out to answer.

For example, imagine that you’d originally wanted to compare the pH levels of rainwater in London and in Spain. Perhaps during your background research phase you realised that there is very little second-hand information that could help you answer this question, but there is a ten year-old study about the pH levels of rainwater in London compared with Scotland. A possible option could be that you change your investigation to look at whether the pH levels of rainwater throughout the UK has changed in the past ten years. Alternatively, maybe you’d already started your first-hand research, but couldn’t collect any rainwater during your trip to Spain. In this scenario, a ‘plan B’ might be to compare the pH levels of rainwater in different parts of London.

**Exercise 12:** Write down a super rough plan for what you will cover in your answer to the question. This isn’t the outline (I’ll cover this later) but just a way to make sure you know how the question will work. Write one sentence, or better yet, one word, for every paragraph in your essay. Don’t worry about the order of the paragraphs yet, but do make sure that you have enough to talk about, and that everything relates directly to the question.



## Will the IB examiner approve?

Your question can score up to 2 marks out of the total 36 points. This might sound like a lot, but consider in terms of an opportunity. You have the chance to secure over 5% of your total score before you've even written a single word of your essay. With this in mind, it's important to refer back to the IBO's Extended Essay Guide to check that your question is addressing everything that is required.

**Exercise 13:** Double-check that your question is fulfilling every criteria possible. And to make this as easy as possible for you, we've made a handy checklist right here:

1. Is it specific?
2. Can you answer it?
3. Can you address any variables?
4. Can you justify any assumptions that it makes?
5. Do you have enough research to back up your investigation?
6. Is it interesting?

Once you've made certain your question is as brilliant as it can be, the next step is to start planning the essay itself!

# STRUCTURE AND PLANNING





When it comes to writing a brilliant first draft of your extended essay, or any essay for that matter, I fully believe that a solid structure is one of the surest guarantees of success. It's the skeleton of the essay that makes it into a fully formed being, instead of just being a pile of jelly! And the best way to make sure you have a skeleton instead of just gelatine (is that a kind of rhyme?) is to create a plan or outline.

We've talked about how to [choose a topic](#), [go about your research](#), and [pin down a research question](#). So now we're going to address how you can transform all of that work into a concrete plan. It's all about organising your ideas so that they are as clear as possible. After you've done this, writing the essay will just be about simply filling in the gaps!

## Preparing to construct your EE outline

### Know your destination

Although your research question should already suggest what you are aiming to achieve in the essay, your conclusion needs to take this a step further. It can't just be a re-wording of your introduction (as tempting as that option is!). Every element of your essay should take the reader on a journey, with the conclusion as its destination. It should help progress your argument so that we get closer with every paragraph.

If you're now realising that you don't know your destination, take the time to figure this out before you start writing. The results of a science experiment will make it pretty obvious, but even in more subjective subjects such as English, History and World Studies, you need to decide what conclusion your research best points towards.

My advice to you, if you simply aren't sure, is to follow your instincts. Think about how your evidence has affected what you personally think about the topic. For a reminder of different types of essay conclusions, there are some useful summaries in [this](#) article.



**Exercise 14:** Summarise your conclusion in one sentence. Even if it's not exactly right, or if it doesn't include everything you feel is important about your topic, compress it as much as you can into one core idea. If you can't do this right away then set a timer for five minutes and start drafting sentences about what you 'think' your essay might conclude. At the end of the five minutes, pick the one that you feel summarises it best.

## Define your ideas

Take a moment to free your mind from all the details, facts, quotes and data. Go back to the core essence of your essay, which is the argument you are trying to make. Without using your research to speak for itself, identify all the different ideas you want to include, and the things you want to say.

For example, you might have evidence that Virginia Woolf uses imagery of flowers frequently throughout *Mrs Dalloway*, but what does this actually mean in the context of your question? The idea behind it might relate more to her affinity with nature, or the parallels she draws between flowers and people.

**Exercise 15:** Write down all the ideas you want to include in your essay. Don't worry about an order yet. Focus instead on getting all of your 'points' written down somewhere. Not only is this likely to help you organise your thoughts, but it will also mean you can refer back to it later to make sure you haven't forgotten one of your favourite ideas! This can take the form of a mind map, a list, a Word Doc, etc. Do whatever feels easiest, because chances are this is what will most help your ideas flow naturally.

## Filter your evidence

I can 99% guarantee you that you won't be able to use all the research you have done. A lot of it will be:

1. Irrelevant to the question
2. Repetition of what you already have
3. Not quite right for your line of argument

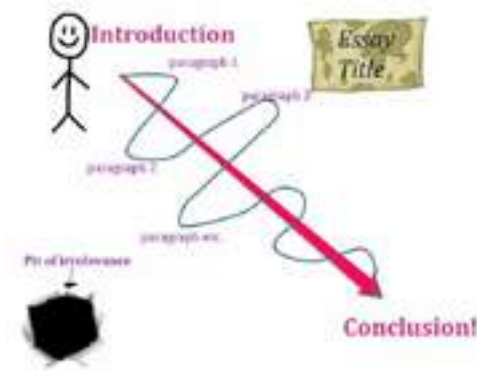


Therefore, it is important that you filter your evidence so that you only have the best examples and information.

Use your research question as your starting point and your conclusion sentence (the one you wrote earlier) as the end point. It is your job to make sure that every piece of research is part of a bridge between the two. Absolutely every quote, fact or piece of data that you include should actively answer your question. If it doesn't, don't include it.

**Exercise 16:** First, highlight the clearest, most informative research that you have gathered. Next, take all of these pieces of research, and write a short, one-sentence summary next to each one, describing how it relates to your question. Use your own words. You will hopefully start finding that they are backing up some of the points you know you want to include.

## Constructing your EE outline



There are different techniques you can use to structure an essay. The extended essay is much longer than what most of you will be used to, so I strongly recommend using a particular technique or process to do this. Below are some examples, and you should do whatever works best for you.



### The Bullet-Point Outline:

You know this one. It's the most classic example of how to structure an essay and the one most of you have probably tried before. The trick with this one is to start small and expand outwards.

- Summarise each paragraph into one line that defines the underlying idea or sub-topic.
- Expand each paragraph summary by adding two extra bullet points:
  1. Evidence, data or a quote
  2. How the example relates to the idea you are trying to convey
- Expand your paragraph bullet points by adding in other ideas or points that are directly relevant to the overriding idea.

### The Post-it Note Outline:

I'm defining this as anything that involves you breaking down your paragraphs into defined pieces. Post-it notes, cards, and scraps of paper are the most common examples. This option is brilliant if you struggle coming up with an order for your ideas straight away. It's really visual and the active process of creating this sort of outline can help to clarify your ideas. It is flexible and lets you play around with all the different parts of your essay as you go, until you have put them in the best possible order.

Write out all the things you want to include on post-it notes or cards. (If you don't want to handwrite it you can also print it out from your computer and then cut up the sheets). By 'things' I mean your ideas and your evidence (quotes, data, the things mentioned above).

Group the evidence together with the ideas, so that you know which evidence backs up which points.

Using a wall or a big sheet of paper, start organising the cards. If you aren't sure where to start, take a guess at an order that might work for the cards. Take a photo of the end result so you have that version recorded, and then reshuffle it. By the end you will have more than one option for how to structure your essay, meaning that you get to choose the one that works best.



If you like the idea of this process but can't stand the idea of lots of physical pieces of paper, there are some apps that perform a similar function such as Gingko or Evernote.

### The Spreadsheet Outline:

For the structure nuts among you! The beauty of this is that it lets you easily compare paragraphs in terms of length and content by breaking each one down into clear sections. You can choose your preferred format, but it might look like this:

	Summary	Example	Explanation	2nd example/ comparison	Explanation
Introduction					
Paragraph 1					
Paragraph 2					
Paragraph 3					
Paragraph 4					
Paragraph 5					
Paragraph 6					
Paragraph 7					
Paragraph 8					
Conclusion					

As with the post-it version it is super easy to use this method to change the order of your paragraphs. You can also tailor the columns depending on what categories are most relevant to you. If you want to go a step further you can even colour code your sheet, for example, by primary and secondary sources of data, or by close and thematic analysis.

The key is to have a view of the bigger picture of your essay. How you go about it is up to you!



# HOW TO WRITE IT





Yes, it's time to bite the bullet and write the thing. At this stage you should know what you're going to say, but the real question is how. This part isn't about how to write. I know you've written things before. It's now about how to transform your EE plan into a finished written product.

## Know When You'll Write Your Essay

It should be obvious that the key to making sure you write your extended essay ahead of the deadline is to find the time to write it. But you'd be surprised how easily the time can slip away without a single word getting typed or written. Especially in summer, that pesky thing called [procrastination](#) can disguise itself as everything from the new season of Orange is the New Black to a trip to a lake to swim with pelicans.

To make sure you get the writing done when you want it done, take half an hour to get organised. Work out when, objectively, you will have the time to devote some love and care and sweat and blood to this essay. And do it in chunks. Half a day at a time is ideal. Start by scheduling a few slots near the start of your holiday so that you can see how much time this will actually take you and adjust your schedule accordingly.

To be extra efficient, don't just decide when you will work on your essay, but decide what you will work on. Set deadlines for finishing different stages of the essay throughout the summer. For a language or Group 3 essay, you might set deadlines for completing the introduction, body, conclusion, and proofreading. For a Group 4 science essay your deadlines might be more detailed; for example, you might choose to set distinct deadlines for completing the sections on background information, methods and materials, and data analysis.

**Exercise 17:** Take out your calendar, work out how you're going to work around any summer plans, and mark out your devoted EE time accordingly. Don't have a calendar? No problem! Download or order Lanterna's wall planner on our website!



## Getting the Words on the Page

Now you've organised yourself and found time to do the writing, it's time to sit down and put the words on the page. The biggest tip I can possibly give you is to remember that any words on the page at all is more important, at this stage, than getting 'the right words'. This is only a first draft, and at this point it's only a draft of a first draft. So do whatever you can to help yourself put pen to paper / hands to keyboard.

If you feel like you can launch straight into writing that essay, great! Sit down and do just that. On the other hand, if you're still unsure where you start there are a bunch of techniques you can try to help get you get going.

1. There's nothing to say you have to write the essay in chronological order! Instead, you could approach each paragraph of your essay one by one — start with the section you feel most confident, or excited about.
2. A lot of people find it easier to write things by hand before starting to type. If you're experiencing what I like to call 'keyboard fear', ditch the laptop and take a pen and a piece of paper. Write your essay as if you are answering the question in an exam.
3. If you're struggling to turn your outline into full sentences, forget about eloquence for a while and just write in whatever style you choose. No need for good words. Just write. Really long bullet points? Great! No one will see it but you.

**Exercise 18:** Pick one of the three options above and try it: write your favourite 'piece' of the essay first, write as much as you can by hand in one writing sprint, or lose the grammar and just get the ideas down in the right order.



## Perfect Your Extended Essay Language

Perfect language doesn't matter at the beginning of your writing process. But making sure that your writing is clear, well-paced and polished is essential for the final product. You'll get a chance to fix up the writing later in the process, but paying attention to your language, tone and style as you go along will save you a lot of time in the long-run. More importantly, it will help you to see what is and isn't making sense now.

A great way to get into the right frame of mind for writing a formal essay is to read other examples. Have a look at our [free resources](#) page to see how other successful IB students have written their essays in the past. Alternatively, you could remind yourself of general guidelines to academic writing: see this guide [here](#).

In general, it's better to be simple. Avoid the temptation to write as many long, complicated words as possible to quickly reach the 4000 word limit! I promise you that the most common extended essay problem IB students face is how to reduce their words to fit the word limit at the end. So take some time to relax, breathe, and only write what you need to write.





Case in point... which sentence makes more sense to you?

1. It is arguable that during the nineteenth century, and in the latter half of the century in particular, many people perceived a growth in what can be termed the mass market for novels and literature.
2. The later nineteenth century saw an increase in the literary mass market.

**Exercise 19:** Paste one of your completed paragraphs onto a new document and cut out the unnecessary words and phrases. Aim to cut words down by 10%. Do this for each one of your paragraphs either as you go along or at the end.



If I waited for  
perfection,  
I would never  
write a word

*Margaret Atwood*

The only thing left to say now is to just do it. It will be tough, but you won't have a better time to get started and really make progress than this summer. If you'd like more help from us, have a look at our [assignments package](#) for online private tuition, or our [Mid-IB Extended Essay workshop](#). (And if you hate the idea of doing it now, just imagine trying to doing it next term when you also have ten other deadlines to meet!)

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### **Summer Courses**

Whenever you are about to start your first or final year of the IB, use the summer to get ahead and on top of your IB subjects!



Questions? Email us at [info@lanternaeducation.com](mailto:info@lanternaeducation.com)