

Planning your TOK presentation.

Good advice from Tim Sprod, co-author (with Antonia Melvin) of the book 'IB Prepared TOK: Approach your assessment the IB way'. The book contains a more detailed set of guidelines, along with a DVD of exemplar presentations, fully analysed in the text.

The structure of your presentation

A TOK presentation has a particular structure. Your plan should follow this. The structure is in the TOK Subject guide and also highlighted on the Presentation Planning Document (TK/PPD).

There are 3 parts to a well-structured presentation:

1. Start with a real life situation
2. Develop from this a knowledge issue (KI)
3. Explore the KI through inquiry

Parts 1 and 2 should be covered fairly quickly. Part 3 should make up the bulk of the presentation.

Detailed guidance

Part 1: The real life situation.

This should be something that you have come across in your real lives - that is, your lives outside the TOK classroom. So it can be interpreted fairly broadly. It might be something that actually happened to you, or something that you have studied in one of your other IB subjects, or on one of your CAS projects. However, it can also be a newspaper article you have read, or something in a TV program. It can be fictional - a scene in a movie, an incident in a novel. These do not limit the possibilities.

What it must NOT be is a hypothetical example devised just for the sake of TOK.

The situation should be specific - not a general topic. It should be of genuine interest to you. It needs to be fruitful - that is, it leads to a good knowledge issue, so that there can be a deep inquiry into knowledge.

Because you choose one particular example as the real life situation does not mean that you cannot introduce other real life situations during the inquiry phase of the presentation - indeed, this is a very good thing to do. But as a good KI is open and general (not too tied to the specifics of the situation), this exploration should not get bogged down too much in factual detail.

Part 2: Developing the KI

As you are no doubt aware, almost any real life situation can lead to many, many good KIs.

However, for your presentation, you only need one (to start with). The first, shorter introductory phase of your presentation has a very simple structure, as I have said - present your real life situation and then show how your KI arises from it.

I recommend that you explicitly say "Our knowledge issue is...". It may include sketching in some information so that the audience can grasp the real life situation and see how the KI comes out of it. However, if there is a need for too much information then the real life situation/topic is probably not a good one. Common, well understood real life situations are better.

Part 3: The inquiry phase – exploring the KI.

When you have outlined your real life situation, and the leading KI, then you enter the second phase of the presentation.

Here, you will be trying to answer your KI, as you stated it. While the first phase of the presentation is largely assessed by Criterion A, in this phase you should make sure that you cover the remaining three criteria.

When you are planning your presentations, develop your inquiry through discussion with your co-presenters, then transfer what you agree on to your presentation plan.

Note: you will come up with further KIs during this discussion, but remember that the main focus of the inquiry phase is to try to answer the main KI, not to raise too many other questions. The attempt to answer the KI must bring in TOK elements (such as key TOK terms, the WOKs, the AOKs, different perspectives and so on).

Important hints and tips about what to do and what to AVOID!

TOK presentations are unlike many classroom presentations in several ways:

The TOK presentation focuses on knowledge issues, whereas many other presentations focus on something different: knowledge claims.

There is another potential non-TOK sort of presentation too - the moral dilemma one.

Let's look at these two types of **non-TOK presentations** one by one:

Non-TOK Presentation 1 – The information dump.

In most non TOK presentations, you usually have a topic, and then go away and do a lot of research to find as many knowledge claims (bits of information) about it as you can. The presentation then consists of you telling the class about everything you found out.

In a TOK presentation, the focus has to shift away from finding information (the presentation should give just enough of this to motivate the TOK inquiry), and on to an evaluation of that knowledge in terms of its reliability, the efficacy of the methods used to generate it, a

consideration of the ways of knowing involved, different perspectives on the knowledge and the effect that might have and so on.

The temptation is to rush out and find as much information about your real life situation as possible. This is a dangerous temptation. Good information transmission presentations are not good TOK presentations.

For this reason, some of the best TOK presentations are about real life situations that are already pretty familiar to you and the class. There is no need to convey much information, as the class already have it. I strongly encourage you to try to find a focus in your own common life experience.

Examples: living with different cultures in the boarding house; two members of a group who didn't get on with each other; different attitudes to alternative medicine arising from parents' occupations.

Non-TOK presentation 2 – The moral dilemma.

Be careful about picking a moral issue, such as abortion. The focus can too easily be on the pros and cons of abortion, and it can turn into a debate - or, even worse, a polemic.

In a TOK examination of (say) abortion, the focus would need to be on (maybe) the claims made by either side - how reliable are they? what methods of justification were used? Or on the methods used in the debate - how is emotion (or reason, or language) used, and is that use legitimate?

Because it can be quite difficult to walk the right side of the line between moral debate and TOK inquiry, it might be best to stay away from largely ethical questions. They are popular, and they can be handled very well, but it is too easy to slip into the ethical debate and away from the underlying KIs.