



Extended Essay

Study Guide 2014

1. Introduction to the Extended Essay

All we ever hear about the Extended Essay is that it's 4,000 words long. But what actually is it? The EE is a diploma requirement and should be written on a subject offered by the IB; students tend to score highly in subjects they study at HL in the diploma.

It should be:

- No more than 4,000 words long
- A formal piece of written work that takes around 40 hours to complete
- On a topic of your choice that takes you outside the IB syllabus
- Written in language and researched in methods appropriate to your subject

(What does this mean? It means in Science they might expect you to do experiments and in English they might expect you to read literary criticism!)

The most important thing you can do to get started is to **read the extended essay guidelines!!** This will tell you how to score points and what they expect from an EE in your subject. The Lanterna guide will take you through some of the other processes you'll be doing over the next few months, like researching, writing a bibliography and planning your essay...

3. You will be assessed on your ability to:

- Make a research plan and follow through
- Formulate a precise research question
- Evaluate sources
- Put forth a reasoned argument
- Use the appropriate format for your subject
- Use the appropriate language/terms for your subject

4. Some general recommendations to get started...

Be your very best

- Start early and make a plan/schedule for your work
- Think carefully about your research question, ask for input
- Have a research plan before you start and show this to your supervisor
- Record sources as you go along
- Plan the essay thoroughly before writing
- Proofread the final version extensively
- Check your essay against the mark scheme; have you included all of the relevant info?
- Read the Extended Essay guidelines
- Read past essays to get a good idea of what does/doesn't work
- Stick to deadlines
- Make good use of your supervisor
- Make sure you constantly refer back to the research question and answer it
- Don't be afraid to change your question if research affects your opinions

5. Formulating a research question...

Choose which subject to write in: think about the following questions:

- What do I want to do at university/for a career?
- What is my favourite subject?
- Is there a great teacher who really inspires me?
- Are there any other interests I could include? Eg. If you like sports, writing an essay on how your metabolism is affected by exercise in biology.

Choose a topic: think about the following:

- Narrow down to your specific area of interest (eg. For English, maybe Shakespeare?)
- Read short overviews online (eg. Wikipedia) to see what kind of questions are already being asked
- Pose 2-4 questions to yourself and get feedback from your supervisor

The question should be:

- 1-2 sentences
- Detailed (enough that the question is not too broad, can be answered in 4,000 words)
- Concise (not too narrow that you will struggle to write 4,000 words)

5. Once you have a vague research question- narrow it down!

You want to question your topic as much as possible before you start. Let's use a real EE question and see what we can do with it. What if your question is: "Should Sweden join the Euro?" What are your first reactions? What is ambiguous? What do we need to split up?

The fact that it's a yes or no question is fine, although I know that a lot of you prefer to change it to a "To what extent..." Aside from that, your gut reaction should be:

- What are the reasons for joining?
- Are we talking about economic factors?
- Which area of economic factors?
- Perhaps there are more benefits for joining the Euro in import/export compared to unemployment or inflation?

6. Research

The kinds of research you will need to do depend on your subject/research question. You will usually need to read around the subject first- find out what is already known about your topic. You may decide to do **primary research** (your own experiments, surveys etc to gain new knowledge) or **secondary research** (reading and recording other people's ideas and research). You may need to do either or both.

Primary research

If you are doing experiments, start on these as soon as you can. Gathering data takes a lot of time.

- Design and plan your data collection methods – check them with your supervisor
- Identify your sample size and control groups.
- Have a contingency plan if not everyone is willing to participate.
- Keep good records – number and store any evidence – don't throw anything out until you finish!

Secondary research

The key to effective secondary research is to keep it under control, and to take an approach which will make your reading and your notes meaningful first time round.

- Start small with one main text and build up.
- Write your notes clearly and in different colours to help distinguish them
- Once you have an overview, formulate some sub-questions which will help answer your main question.
- Look for the answers to these questions.
- Write brief summaries of your sources once you have finished reading them
- Do more reading to fill in the gaps.

Be your very best

- Keep thinking, and analysing the relevance of the information as you go along (ask does this really **answer** my question?)
- But be aware of your work schedule – you can't read everything, so be selective.

Example resources for research:

JSTOR, Google Scholar, TED Talks, Diigo, your library, newspaper archives

7. Plan your essay:

Collect Your Thoughts

Re-read your notes and underline anything you think is particularly important or relevant. Then, use a spider diagram to organise your thoughts: put your question in the middle and write all the interesting viewpoints you have gathered. Try to categorise all these ideas under subsections, according to what paragraph they might go into for your essay.

Skeleton

Sit back and look at your diagram and work out the main 'point' or conclusion you want to make in your essay. This might sound like a huge leap (er... how do I do that?!), but by this stage, you'll probably already know what that point is without too much stress- the realisation all your thoughts keep returning to.

Now work backwards, using the different areas you've drawn, and the links you've made on your spider diagram: what do you need to argue or show to set your conclusion up? Jot these 'points' down in a couple of words each. An early skeleton might look something like this:

Topic: Your Research Question or general topic

Thesis: Write out the main argument of your essay

Body Paragraphs: 5-6 points that you will discuss in the different paragraphs of the essay

Conclusion: How your findings have supported your thesis/thrown up new questions.

Slowly start to fill out your skeleton. Use your notes to find the quotations you want to use; the critics whose arguments you want to cite; and, **EXTREMELY IMPORTANT** for language students, the passages of text you're going to analyse closely.

Fill out your skeleton more and more, until it's essentially a rough draft in bullet points. Every introductory and concluding sentence for every paragraph should make it clear how this paragraph **answers your question**.

At this point, get someone else (your supervisor is best but parents and smart friends will do) to read it for you. Does everything follow? Is everything relevant to your argument?

8. Head over to our website for a guide to referencing!

Be your very best