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The Ultimate Student's Guide to Acing
Your Extended Essay and Theory of
Knowledge

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ZOUEV PUBLISHING

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*Dedicated to Mom, Dad and Romka– thank
you guys for all the loving support and belief.*

Special thanks to Ken, Lynn, and Dennis. This
book would not be complete if it wasn't for you guys.

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INTRODUCTION

Congratulations on obtaining the easiest, cheapest and most efficient manual on how to maximize your chance of getting all three additional points that the IB has to offer. This guide will ultimately teach you the secrets behind obtaining an “excellent grade” in both the Theory of Knowledge (TOK) and Extended Essay (EE) components of the IB. Whether you are reading this to simply get a passing grade, aiming to get one or two bonus points, or even if you are ambitious and want to acquire that impressive A in both components – this manual is for you.

The requirements of the IB Diploma Program include following a TOK course and writing an EE of up to 4,000 words. At the core of the ‘IB hexagon’ you will be able to find these two requirements, along with CAS. The IBO describes the EE as ‘a substantial piece of writing’ that ‘enables students to investigate a topic of special interest that they have chosen themselves’. TOK is described as a course that ‘encourages students to think about the nature of knowledge’ and ‘make connections across the academic areas.’ As a result, it is understandable why both have been noted to be great in helping students make the transition from school to

university – a preparation for higher education. These two components are marked on a scale from A to E and are combined to form a joint total of zero to three points (see the matrix provided by the IB if you haven't already). These points are then added onto your final IB Diploma score. As you can see on the matrix, it is relatively difficult to obtain all three additional points. Even having “average” C grades in both components will only give you one point.

So before you dive into the mysterious world of IB additional points you may want to ask yourself: “Who am I to listen to some stranger’s advice on what to do for my TOK and EE?” Well, you are absolutely correct to question me. After all, I have never taught the TOK class or done an EE course, nor am I in any way affiliated with the IB and I do not have a teaching degree of any sort. However, there’s absolutely no need to panic. As you will discover over the next pages, my firsthand experience in the IB diploma has taught me all the tricks and tips on how to maximize your marks with minimal effort.

Having completed my IB diploma in 2007 with an overall score of 43 and obtaining all three bonus points, I may have more answers and insight than others currently working in the field. I know exactly how it feels to be an

average student struggling with the program, looking for all the correct resources and answers with minimal effort and time-wasting. What I can offer you is fool-proof advice and techniques on how to get As in both your TOK and EE without having to work your butt off too much.

So, what can you expect from this short but sweet manual to success in TOK and the EE? Well, if you follow this correctly and put in some effort and determination, you can, I firmly believe, obtain a grade A in both. If, however, you are someone less ambitious and are just struggling to get the grade in one of the components, then just flip to the relevant section. And, finally, if you are someone who is predicted to fail your EE and doesn't have a clue about how to pass TOK, then this book is definitely for you.

No matter how little natural academic ability you have, I firmly believe that, with minimal effort on your part, you surely must get some bonus points if you read this manual correctly. There is no absolutely effortless way to get good grades in TOK and EE; there are, however, ways that will save you energy, time, and effort – but ultimately give you a much higher grade than expected.

For those of you reading to find any tips on plagiarism, cheating or any unethical method to get all three bonus points - you are out of luck.

My tips and techniques are 100% in line with the rules and regulations of the IB. Nonetheless, there will undoubtedly be critics and academics who suggest that a lot of what I recommend is somewhat unethical and not in line with what the IB program is supposed to teach students. I find this idea ridiculous because there are countless students getting high grades in the EE/TOK and succeeding without actually working their socks off and becoming perfect IB students. What you need to understand is that there is “cheating” and then there is “tactical and efficient study techniques”, and there is a thick line separating the two concepts. What this book will ultimately teach you to do is become masters of manipulating the resources at your disposal efficiently and tactically, without having to resort to any unethical practices.

The IB “bonus point” system is a gift to you. They are basically asking you whether you want three more points to be added to your final total. Why would you say no? I have seen some of the smartest and hardest-working students fail to achieve all three. In fact, many teachers will tell you that very few actually get all three bonus points (statistics provided by the IBO show that only 8.69% achieved all three bonus points in May 2006 and 8.12% in May 2007). Why this is so simply amazes me.

All you need to do is get one A and one B in either your EE or TOK. So, if you aim for A's in both, then surely you will get an A in at least one of them, right? Well, I only wish it was that easy. The bad news is that you need to work extremely hard to achieve a grade A in either of the two components. The good news is that anyone, of any academic ability, no matter how clever, can achieve the three points. You need to get your priorities straight – if you know that you can afford to miss out on those three points because all you need is a pass and you're predicted about 35, then focus on getting a point, maybe two. However, if you are barely passing, and are in desperate need to squeeze some points out anywhere you can find – the “additional points” are the perfect place to start.

You need to get it through your head that these are not *bonus* points. No matter what you call it – bonus, additional, core, or extra points – your final score isn't given out of 42, it's out of 45. In fact, in recent years the IB has made an effort to remind students that the Diploma is a complete package and the points are part of the total score. Therefore you need to do all that you can to make sure you get all three.

On a final note: before you begin reading the ultimate TOK and EE survival guide you will have to pardon my grammar, spelling and probably my language for large parts of the

book. I am, after all, your typical university student, so the language I speak is more similar to yours than that of your teacher (which is probably a good thing for you!). Nonetheless, do not be surprised to find mistakes here and there and as much as I will try to keep this properly organized and well-structured, you'll have to excuse me if I sometimes jump from one point to another. Also, as hard as I will try to be a good role model, you will not find a references section or any bibliography (which in IB terms means suicide for your assignment). The reason for this is simple: most of the things I say are pretty much from my own experience and not from any source.

EXTENDED ESSAY

Those two dreaded words. Extended Essay. The EE. Satan's Essay. Whatever you want to call it, there's no denying that amongst all the responsibilities that the IB student is expected to juggle, the compulsory EE is by far the most feared and hated. This 3,500 to 4,000 word mandatory research paper raises many eyebrows when first introduced to IB students. This is usually followed by a tiny voice in your head telling you "4,000 words on ANYTHING over two years? That's easy!" Well, you would think so, wouldn't you? Why, then, do so many IB students find themselves in the beginning of their final year without a draft, without an outline, without even a title idea.

Let's do some simple mathematics. Let's say, hypothetically, that you are given exactly a one-year deadline to finish your EE (it's around that). That's 365 days. Now let's say you are an overachiever and want to write 4,000 words (the upper limit of essay length). According to my calculations, that's 4,000 divided by 365 or around 10.95 words per day. That's it. If you write 10.95 words per day for a year, then you will have completed your extended essay. I hope most of you can manage eleven words a day.

Now, don't be fooled – I'm not suggesting you spread your EE writing exactly over a one year period – I am merely trying to show you how little 4,000 words over a year really is. As part of Economics and Management degree at Oxford, I am required to write a 3000 – 4000 word essay per week. Yup, that's right, an EE per week, and after having done it for the first few weeks, it became easier and easier up until the point where 4,000 words seemed like nothing. The IB, in an attempt to prepare you for this, generously gives you well over a year to write your "masterpiece."

What your aims are will largely depend on what you want to achieve with your EE. Considering you are actually reading this book in full, I will assume you are serious about getting that A grade that you need to get all three of your bonus points and push you closer to that magic 45. Well, then this book will not disappoint you. If, on the other hand, you are someone who just needs to pass the IB diploma with the minimum requirements (which involves passing the EE), you have also come to the right place.

So what is the problem then? Why do so many students struggle to write what seems to be a simple "extended" essay in such a great amount of time? Well, there are a few traps along the way, and hopefully the following

guide over the next few pages will teach you how to avoid those traps and have your EE ready in no time.

What Subject?

Now, although there are no real restrictions on the nature of your essay, it must fall within a subject the IB has on offer (published by the IB in the *Vade Mecum*). Please don't be a wise-guy and try to write an essay on a subject that you do not take. Yes, it is actually allowed and I have seen it happen, at times with mediocre success, but usually with utter failure. A typical example: you are obsessed with WWI history, but your school does not teach history at all, yet you insist that your external reading you do in your own time will give you a great idea and basis for an essay. You spew out 4,000 words of something you believe is truly brilliant and hand it in to your middle school history teacher to mark. He thinks it's great, too. You then send it to the IB only to find out you completely missed the History EE guidelines and end up getting a generous grade D.

Another, more common, example is someone who is really passionate about religion and wants to do a paper in world religion. You will most likely end up being incredibly biased and perhaps say very controversial things. I'll probably regret saying this, but the EE and the IB don't deal directly with religion (unless it's the simple appreciation and acceptance of others' beliefs). Some schools have simply begun to ban their students from writing outside of

their own subject areas (probably because of the lack of supervisors available). Look, you do six subjects so is it really that difficult to find something that interests you ever-so-slightly within those six?

Make sure you take a look at the detailed package of documents that the IB offers for the Extended Essay, which will include information on what you should expect in writing each essay. I'm not going to outline what the IB documents say because 1) I don't want to source things you can look up yourself and 2) you can look it up yourself! Once you have chosen your subject, you should print out the relevant guide and read it carefully. Also make sure that you have a supervisor available to oversee your EE in that subject area.

So, which Group should you be looking at then? Well, as my personal advice, I would tell you to stay away from any English or language essays unless you truly have a passion for literature and have been published or somehow rewarded for truly excelling in your writing. The reason is quite simple: writing an excellent literature essay is incredibly difficult because it's simply too competitive and many students who believe they are excellent writers and have been told so by numerous teachers are, in fact, quiet average when compared to kids outside of their school. Do not become one of those students

who say, “Hah! I’ll just take one of my grade A English papers I wrote on *Doll’s House* from last year, add 2000 more words and - viola! Extended Essay complete!” It does not work like that. The EE isn’t really an extended essay – you can’t simply elongate your normal run-of-the-mill English analysis of a literary work and expect to do well. The problem with Group 1 essays is that many will fail to reveal much personal judgement and overuse historical and biographical information. A very subtle balance is required, and this is often very difficult to maintain. EE reports show that students use secondary sources in place of personal opinions and vocabulary is often a problem, along with structure and quotations. The EE is supposed to be a piece of research, which is why I would suggest you stay away from literature because there is little research to be done.

Group 3 topics seem to make very popular EEs – and perhaps with good reason, too. There are virtually no limitations on what you can write about in Geography, Economics, Business Management, History, and so on. If you take a Group 3 topic that you are truly interested in, see if there is anything you have always pondered over but never really researched in depth. Talk to your teachers and coordinators about the success rates in these topics. For subjects like Economics and Business

Management there is always great demand; however, success is varied. I remember an Economics teacher of mine told me that although it is easy to get a B or C in an Economics EE, you have to come up with pretty good material get an A. Please, don't fall into the trap of "Oh, my dad has his own company, so what better way to do research in business/economics than to write an essay about his company!" Just because you have access to thousands of documents for a firm of a friend or a relative does not mean this will help you write an excellent essay in Economics or BM.

A common trouble area with Economics essays is that there is little personal research and not enough analysis of economic theory. Also, as you would with your Economics coursework, don't forget to define all the key economic terms (either on the spot or as an index). At all cost avoid subjective "What if.." questions because this just does not fit well with the EE's Assessment Criteria. And please, for your own good, make sure to narrow the topic down to a sort of small case study.

With regards to History essays, the problem is as you would expect: reliability of secondary sources (probably would be a good idea NOT to use too many websites). Don't forget that your bibliography for a History essay will probably be twice as long as the

bibliography in any other subject – so get ready to do some serious citing. Avoid the traditional “arguments for” followed by “arguments against” approach and then a conclusion consisting of “both sides of the argument are equally valid.” Yes, it would be worse to produce a one-sided argument, but avoid being too neutral as well.

What about Group 4 then, the sciences? It seems at first that the task would be akin to a middle school science fair project or simply a longer-than-usual lab report. Don’t get your hopes up. Writing an EE in a science is very demanding, as it not only requires you to have the literary ability found in any other EE, but you also must be able to master the process of conducting experiments, taking data, and providing top-of-the line analysis. My personal advice: if you are an excellent laboratory scientist with plenty of experience writing up lab reports and doing numerous research projects and you have an idea for an EE topic that is not discussed in much detail in the syllabus, then go for it. Perhaps more so than with any other group, writing an EE in Group 4 requires that you have a clear idea what you want to research. You need to know exactly what you are doing and have a pretty good idea of what will happen. Sounds a bit demanding, but there’s no point in looking at “the effect of sunlight on

erection length” if there’s clearly no relationship between the two variables! You would be wasting your time starting to write an EE about a scientific relationship that you doubt actually exists. The flipside, however, is that you would be wasting your time doing an experiment for which the outcome is already well documented in standard textbooks. Hence, you face a dilemma.

Moreover, it is very difficult to write an essay that is distinctly a chemistry essay, not shifting over too much to biology or physics. You could end up with an essay that relates very little to your specific science subject. Again, official IB EE reports state that many science essays lack a satisfactory degree of personal input – perhaps using sophisticated lab equipment limits how much personal input one can have. You also face the risk of reaching a somewhat too general conclusion, and analysis of sources and methods used is often too weak because of the high level of sophistication.

Ah, an EE in Group 5: mathematics, computer sciences, perhaps the most overlooked EE subject area. As I have relatively little knowledge about computer sciences, I will primarily be concerned with an EE in mathematics, so any computer science students can look away now. Also, unless you are taking HL Mathematics, you can forget about writing

an EE in maths as well. Now, if you are a HL Mathematics student who is not struggling too much with the material and actually enjoys mathematics, then follow my advice and do an EE in it! Trust me, it will probably be the best decision you will make in your IB experience. Yes, it seems a daunting task – how can one write 4000 words on a subject that is primarily concerned with numbers? But once you do a little research, read several past mathematics essays and convince yourself that writing an EE in maths will be no more or less challenging than any other subject, you should begin to worry less about the whole concept. You will not be expected to make a contribution to the knowledge in the mathematical world. Don't worry, they won't expect you to find the next largest prime number or solve Fermat's Theorem.

There is an unbelievable amount of resources available for anyone interested in doing an EE in mathematics. It really does shock me how few students give it a go, let alone think about doing it. In my year, it was me and only one other student that attempted the EE in mathematics (in our school). It was perhaps the most enjoyable and, at the same time, most demanding piece of work I had to do for the IB – but at the end of the day, it was something I could honestly pick up and be proud of. You

don't need a Bachelor's degree in mathematics to be able to write an essay in maths. It might well be more demanding than an EE in other subject areas, but your willingness to challenge yourself will not go unrecognized by the EE examiners. Keep in mind that the minimum word limit is altered for EE in mathematics to around 2500 words (which is nothing really) but you do need a significant amount of actual maths in the text as well (which could be a problem).

What about Group 6? Well, I don't know many who have done an EE in visual arts, theatre arts or music, but if you feel you've got a mini art-critic living inside you, then give it a thought. If you plan on pursuing a university degree involved in the arts, then this may well be an opportunity to see what it would be like doing detailed research and analysis in that area. Remember that there is a great element of creativity involved, so if you're finding your Group 6 classes and assignments uninteresting, then perhaps it would be a good idea to stay away from an EE in that area. Don't think that for your art EE you can just analyze the history of graffiti or that for your music essay you can write 50 Cent's biography – it has to be of a quality expected in the IB program.

The bottom line is that you need to take a long and hard look at your HL classes and decide which subject will suit your essay needs

best. I know that the emphasis on EE and subjects differs from school to school, so if you are at a school that is really science-intensive and lacking on the mathematics, then it would probably be better to follow that route. You should ensure that you write your EE at HL, not at SL – simply because you will have not learnt the subject in enough detail. If you are doing HL Mathematics, I once again strongly suggest that you at least consider writing an EE in this subject. If not, my next best bet for you would be to look at your Group 3 subjects and choose something from there. If you're more of a scientist than a social scientist, then by all means go for the Group 4; however, be warned of the obstacles and traps that you may have to overcome. Unless you are a truly naturally gifted literary critic and have extraordinary analysis skills, I would strongly advise to stay away from Groups 1 and 2. Similarly, unless you are obsessed with your Group 6 subject, I would not recommend doing an EE in the arts.

Topic Choice

Once you have done the easy part of choosing under which subject your EE will fall, you must begin thinking of a topic or a range of topics that you could write about. Pick something that actually interests you and is motivating. Don't get too excited if you can find a truckload of information online about your topic of interest – that's usually a bad sign. Pick a topic that has barely any research already done on it and is unique in its nature. Remember, however, that this is a research topic and not your ordinary book review – you must have a question, which you can argue and answer.

Also remember that it needs to be very specific – you don't want a topic that is too general. Please, understand just how important your topic choice really is – it will make or break your essay. Choose something that is silly and unprofessional and you will suffer incredibly. Before you decide on a topic, have a talk to your friends about it, Google it, see if there's an appropriate approach that you can take. A paper on "Economic Monopolies" is far too general, but a paper on a specific type of company monopoly, analysed at a more in-depth level, is more appropriate. It is critical to have a focused research question – talk to your supervisor and see if you can narrow your topic even further. A

good topic is one that asks something worth asking and that is answerable within 4000 words. Remember also that your topic should not be something that is taught in relatively good depth already in the syllabus (for example, if you are doing a specific English book in your A1 class, you cannot use the same book for your EE).

This is your perfect opportunity to research that little thing that you have always wondered about but that seemed too complicated to ask. Whether it be specific casino techniques to win at blackjack (mathematics) or Hitler's secret homoerotic sex life (history), find something that has great depth and actually interests you. Don't become one of those students who pick a topic that "sounds good" but has no real meaning – you will end up regretting it. If you pick a topic that actually interests you, then there is a greater chance that you will actually work on it! 4,000 words may be difficult if you are summarizing the Bible, but 4,000 words on your favourite television program seems a lot less demanding (DO NOT write about that). You may want to write outlines for several plausible topics, and then see which one would work best.

Another hidden piece of advice about choosing an EE topic is to choose something that is relatively unknown. If your examiner has no

clue as to what your topic is about, then you will be able to educate him/her; how much can the examiner criticize you if he/she knows nothing about it him/herself? And, as I said before, if you choose a topic for which you think you will find almost no information, you are in a much better situation than someone who has a multitude of sources from the go.

So how do you go about finding a final topic? Well, it will depend from subject to subject, but usually you will need something to inspire you. For this very reason, you need to start flipping through books concerned with the ideas you plan to write about. For example, if doing an EE in maths, I strongly recommend as a good starting point to look at a book about “100 greatest unsolved mathematical problems” and see if there is something there that interests you. Don’t stress out yet! Just because it has not been solved doesn’t mean that you will have to solve it! It just means that you can do a good research paper on it – find out what others have been writing and develop your own method at solving the problem. Try contacting some university-level professors and see what they have to say (this doesn’t only apply to math, but also to history, economics, the sciences and so on).

The title of your essay (your topic question) does not necessarily have to be in

question form. Nonetheless, the title is of incredible importance (see Assessment Criteria). You need to make sure it's precise, concise and clearly shows the focus of the essay. The sooner you get this done, the better – it will drive your essay in the right direction. Remember that the exact wording of your research question is not set in stone; you will be able to go back and modify it later on.

Time Management

Some schools suggest that you spend about 35 - 40 hours on your EE, the IBO suggests approximately 40 hours as well, other schools encourage 80 to 100 hours. No matter where you stand, you can see that a great deal of time will be spent on your essay, which is why you need to manage your time well. I was once amongst those who didn't understand why we had to follow a timeline for our EE and couldn't just do things in our own time. Well, I hate to admit it, but the timeline that the IB sets out ensures that you don't mess up and fall behind. This way, if there are any problems with your essay, they can be detected in the early stages, so that you don't waste your time writing an entire EE only to have it rejected.

Do yourself a favour and ignore any stories you hear from seniors who tell you how they wrote their EE in one sitting, a few days before it was due and got an A for it. Unless you have some magic ability to work productively non-stop for a good 80 hours or so, you will not be able to complete your EE in one sitting – or even in a few sittings. Take my word for it, taking small steps, one at a time, is the key to success. There are limits to this as well, however, so don't fool yourself into thinking that by

adding a sentence or two to your essay you have done enough work for the week.

Your IB coordinator should ensure that you more or less follow the deadlines. Make sure you know all the important dates and keep them in your agenda (if you have one) or print them out and post them on your board. There will be dates for having your topic ready, finding your supervisor, getting your outline and bibliography ready and so on. Remember that if you risk falling behind on one of the dates, it could have a domino effect and some serious repercussions.

You will be writing your EE primarily outside of the classroom on your own time and, unlike with school homework, it is unlikely that there will be any check-ups to verify that you are doing the work. It is 'strongly recommended', but not 'required' that your school sets internal deadlines for the stages of completing your EE. Take some responsibility. I know that the workload in your other subjects will be heavy, but don't forget about your EE. I highly recommend finishing the bulk of it over the winter holidays. Also, I wouldn't rely too much on the dates that the coordinator "suggests" you follow – the more ambitious and independent of you should make your own agenda and stick to it. Set yourself specific goals, and if you fall behind, then make sure to catch up at the cost of

perhaps even missing some schoolwork or failing a few tests (EE points are a lot more important than your everyday school work). Also, contrary to popular belief, working on your EE over the weekend is not a crime.

Supervision

Before you start writing your EE you will need to have a member of faculty “supervise” your EE so that there is someone to make sure you follow IB guidelines. Be quick and reserve your supervisor first because usually the more popular teachers are filled up with requests within a week – especially for the social science topics such as IB History and IB Economics. I strongly advise getting your subject teacher to be your supervisor because 1) they should know most of the material that the subject encompasses inside out and 2) they will be familiar with the IB program and will know what to expect. For your own good, try not to get a supervisor who does not teach the IB or who is unfamiliar with the demands of the program.

The role of the supervisor is very clear. They are strongly recommended to spend between 3 and 5 hours with you working on your EE. They are not there to write your essay for you, and you shouldn’t protest against them for not helping you enough. There is a set of guidelines that supervisors must follow (once again, see IB documentation) in order to ensure that each student in every school gets an equal chance to maintain fairness. They are mainly

there for support and encouragement, along with making sure that you keep up with the deadlines and don't plagiarize. They will also need to give you advice and guidance on undertaking research. The words "encouragement, support and reassurance" do not mean that they will write sentences for you. They will also decide on a set amount of time that they can devote to your EE (which is a good reason to choose a supervisor who doesn't have his/her hands full all the time).

Your supervisor is your friend. Remember that it is not an obligation for a teacher to supervise an EE – so make sure you don't abuse that privilege. Treat them like trash, and you will get trash in return. Don't be too demanding, but then again, don't let them get away from their promises. Once again, have a good read of what the IB suggests the supervisor does, and if your supervisor isn't up to standards, then you make the case to your coordinator to reach a solution.

I hate to say it, and this might come as an unfortunate shock for most you, but I would say that your EE's success depends about 75% on your input, and 25% on your supervisor's. Although they don't actually write anything that goes into your essay or give you that much advice, the report that they submit to the examining board (which includes his/her

personal comments) is incredibly important. Pick a clueless and incoherent supervisor and you will not only pay the price in terms of feedback, but also you risk having all the formalities that are involved with the submission of the EE to be incomplete. This is why I strongly suggest finding a supervisor who is confident with the IB Diploma system and who has at least a year or two of EE experience. I wish I could tell you that no matter how poor your supervisor is, you can still get an A, but due to the increasingly important role they play, this is not the case.

Look, let's be realistic. The more experience the teacher has with the IB and the EE, the more they will be able to offer in terms of what to do and what to best avoid. I know this is a problem in many schools that are just starting the IB program and where almost all the teachers have zero IB experience. But, if you have the opportunity to work with a teacher who has been teaching the subject for more than a few years, then I would strongly suggest you go for that. Trust me, you don't want to end up complaining about your new A-level accredited chemistry teacher just because he has no idea what an EE is in the first place.

Remember that it is your supervisor who has the final say on whether or not your essay will even get a passing grade. So if you choose a

supervisor who is clueless about what a pass is, then you risk failing your entire IB diploma if your paper ends up not satisfying the examiners' requirements for a passing grade. Your supervisor should have you rewrite your paper if you are borderline passing (however, if you have been following this guide, this should not be the case!).

Find a teacher who will best match your subject and perhaps give you sources (books, websites, magazines, etc.) that others cannot. They need to be able to provide you with constructive criticism and guidance. Remember that you are not tied down to your supervisor with regards to help and advice. You can consult your seniors and friends for general EE advice. If it is topic specific, then make sure you source the person in your bibliography. At the end of the day though, your supervisor is the one who needs to complete all the formalities that are described in the EE guide.

Getting Started / Research

There are few things in life that compare to looking at a blank page, struggling to come up with an eye-catching introduction. My best advice for you (and advice that is usually given to beginner writers) is simply to put the pen to paper and jot your ideas down. The introduction might not be the best place to start, so start jotting down your research in clear, coherent form, and eventually you will be able to start structuring your essay properly.

Your best bet before putting the pen to paper would be to conduct some serious research. Hopefully, your school will have given you a brief introduction into how to write a research paper, but there are a few things you need to keep in mind while researching. Depending on your topic, it could be that research is either incredibly easy or incredibly hard. The latter is probably the better situation to be in. For my EE, I wrote a paper on a 2,000-year-old mathematical riddle called "Alhazen's Problem." Googling it got me almost nowhere. Yes, I found some news articles here and there and some definitions and outlines, but in terms of raw research done, there was almost nothing. I didn't worry too much, because the internet (as great as it is) doesn't hold the answer to everything.

As an IB student, you need to learn to become very enquiring about what you are learning. There are several search engines designed specifically for research papers that you might need to consult (JSTOR, SSRN and Proquest to name a few). Yes, some are free, but some have a subscription fee. You need to figure out what it is you really want. Alternatively, you can try popping down to your local city library (because you've already gone to your school library, right?) and see if they have anything of interest. Be creative with your research. I remember having to email an Oxford professor to see if he could provide me with any information (unfortunately he totally ignored me!). Don't give up though, and keep in mind that all the other students are doing exactly what you should try and avoid. As great as Wikipedia, Bized and Dictionary.com are, you will not stand out amongst the crowd if your research does not go beyond that.

Whilst on the subject of research, make sure you take a look at as many EEs you can get your hands on in your subject area (preferably good ones). I don't mean read them through beginning to end, I'm just saying you may get some ideas about where to start once you see what a good EE is supposed to look like. The IB have now launched a collection of 50 great EE's (all of which were awarded a grade A) available

in CD/DVD format for about a hundred dollars. Hopefully your school will buy a copy of this to keep in the library. If not, then try to get your hands on it by some other means (perhaps chipping in a fiver with twenty or so friends). It's not essential you look at many past EE's, but I would highly recommend it. By reading previous essays, you can identify common pitfalls as well as strengths in various topics.

Structure

For most of you this will be the first time that you write an essay that has clear sections and a clearly defined structure. You should aim to provide a personal exploration of the topic and try your best to argue your points in a professional manner. Don't jump all over the place with arguments. Make sure at the end that you are able to make a contents page that will outline where you can find all the different sections.

I can't teach you in the space of a few paragraphs how to be able to write with good structure. That is something that comes with experience, good English teachers and a bit of luck. What I can tell you, however, is that unless you have some material to work with, structure will be even harder. If you have 4,000 words worth of material spread over 20 pages, then structuring becomes much less of a problem than if you have 400 words and no idea where you're going.

The main issue of structure will be writing the body of your essay, which should be presented in the form of a reasoned argument. You can choose to have sub-headings if this will help your readers navigate and understand your essay better.

Do yourself a favour and stick to the IB guidelines. Find out exactly what your title page needs to contain, and make sure that you have no more, no less than what is required. The abstract also has very specific requirements that you need to look up, along with the main body, bibliography and conclusion. All of this information can be found right under your nose; the difference between you and the IB candidates who score more than you is that the latter will actually consult the IBO guide and use it to their advantage! Make sure you get all the basics correct, including your name and candidate number in the correct place on every page.

Constantly keep in mind how essential organization and structure of ideas actually is to your essay. You need to be very clear-cut and, please, avoid ambiguity at all costs. Remember that if you have clear sections, then you are already doing some of the work for your examiner in the sense that he/she will not have to waste time finding where your introduction/conclusion is.