

FOR THE  
IB DIPLOMA  
PROGRAMME



# Extended Essay

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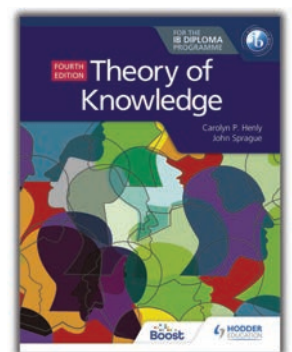
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# Introduction

## How to use this book

Welcome to the extended essay (EE) for the IB Diploma.

This book will help prepare you for your EE in an efficient and logical way. Each chapter of the book looks at a different aspect of the EE in detail, while different activities and practice exercises are also included to help you check your understanding.

To ensure you aim for your best grade in the EE, this book:

- includes an opening infographic spread in each chapter
- builds skills for success through a range of strategies and detailed expert advice, such as formulating good research questions for the EE
- covers all the IB requirements with clear and concise explanations, such as the assessment criteria and rules on academic integrity
- demonstrates what is required to get the best grade
- adds reference to the IB learner profile and ATL skills.

Key features of this guide include:

### Expert tip

These tips appear throughout the book and provide guidance on steps you can take and key things you should consider to help you boost your final grade.

### Common mistake

Potential pitfalls are highlighted for students in the form of 'Common mistake' boxes. Watch out for these!

### Tasks

A number of short tasks are included in the chapters. These tasks give you the opportunity to apply your knowledge of the chapter in example situations, reinforcing your learning and further preparing you for your EE.

### Definitions

◆ Definitions of important terms are provided in the chapters.

### Chapter summary

At the end of each chapter, key knowledge is distilled into a short checklist to help you review everything you have learned over the previous pages.

### ATL ACTIVITY

ATL skills activities get you to think critically about real-world applications of topics.

### END-OF-CHAPTER QUIZ

At the end of each chapter, a short quiz is included to test the knowledge you have learned and help you consolidate your understanding.



The IB learner profile icon indicates material that is particularly useful to help you towards developing the following attributes: to be inquirers, knowledgeable, thinkers, communicators, principled, open-minded, caring, risk-takers, balanced and reflective.

## Aims of the extended essay

The EE aims to provide students with the opportunity to:

- experience the excitement of intellectual exploration
- engage in student-led academic research on a topic of personal interest
- develop skills in research, thinking, self-management and communication
- reflect on the learning experience of doing an EE.

## Overview of the extended essay

- The EE is part of the compulsory core for all IB Diploma Programme students who must submit an academic essay of up to 4000 words.
- It requires approximately 40 hours of work by the student.
- It involves 3–5 hours of supervision with each student.
- There are three mandatory reflection sessions, including a final *viva voce*. Students are permitted to have check-in meetings in between these compulsory sessions.
- As part of the reflection process and assessment criterion E, students must submit a reflective statement of no more than 500 words as soon as possible after the *viva voce*.
- Candidates must anonymize their essay; instead of using their name or candidate number, the personal code or student code (for example, nqh510) should be used.
- The essay is marked out of 30 (criterion-based assessment), based on five grade bands:
  - Grade A = The essay is of an excellent standard
  - Grade B = The essay is of a good standard
  - Grade C = The essay is of a satisfactory standard
  - Grade D = The essay is of a mediocre standard
  - Grade E (a failing condition) = The essay is of an elementary standard.
- The EE is externally marked by an IB examiner using five assessment criteria:
  - Criterion A = Framework for the essay (6 marks)
  - Criterion B = Knowledge and understanding (6 marks)
  - Criterion C = Analysis and line of argument (6 marks)
  - Criterion D = Discussion and evaluation (8 marks)
  - Criterion E = Reflection (4 marks).

## About the authors and authors' acknowledgements

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*Dedicated to David Cottam, John Nixon and Marc Morris – thank you for opening so many doors of opportunities for me while you were the Principals of Sha Tin College.*

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*Dedicated to Lindsay Tandy and Paul Hoang for their generosity and support.*

## Definition

◆ A **double-barrelled research question** is one that tries to combine two questions into one, such as, 'To what extent does Yanagihara use structure **and** cultural references to convey the impact of trauma in the novel *A Little Life*?' In this example, dealing with both structure *and* cultural references will likely be too much to cover, and each focus could have been a separate EE research question. Keep the focus narrow.

- **Focused:** 'Scope' is something important to consider. It may seem that 4000 words is a lot to write, but you will use up this word count surprisingly fast. Your RQ needs to be narrow enough to be effectively answered in a 4000-word essay. In particular, you need to avoid vague or even **double-barrelled research questions** that require you to cover too much within the limits of the 4000-word EE.
- **Sophisticated:** As you will see from the assessment criteria used to mark the EE, higher order thinking skills are necessary for a successful essay. The RQ should not be so simple that there is an obvious self-evident answer from the outset. Deeper thinking processes can be encouraged by using sentence stems such as 'How significant ...?', 'How successful ...?', 'To what extent ...?' and 'What if ...?' to frame your RQ.

## Common mistake

It is important for you to consider a research topic and question that you can respond to comfortably within the 4000-word count limit of the extended essay. Therefore, you should avoid topics or research questions that are too broad to complete within this limit or too narrow that you are unable to reach the maximum word limit.

## Task 2

Having read the expert tips, can you explain what is wrong with the following examples of research questions? What could you change about them to make them more effective? Make sure you check the answers section of this textbook for more insight into effective research questions.

**Language A:** How have children's advertisements changed over the last 50 years?

**Biology:** How does soap kill the gut bacterium *Lactocaseibacillus casei Shirota*?

**Business management:** How have Oreo's marketing strategies helped them become successful?

## What to have in place before developing your research question

Before beginning the process of coming up with your research question, it is important to have a few things in place. Your EE coordinator will undoubtedly give you some advice and help orientate you into the process at your school, but the advice that follows will also be very useful.

### Researcher's reflection space (RRS)

You can think of this as your 'exercise book' or 'learning journal' where you collect and collate your notes, ideas and reflections throughout the EE process. It is good practice to share this with your supervisor during your check-in meetings and formal reflection sessions (see **Chapter 7 The importance of reflections** for more details about this).

At this stage, you can collect your initial thoughts and any responses to activities you complete from this chapter as you progress through. This will be useful later when you need to reflect on the process of developing the RQ in your initial reflection session (see **Chapter 7 The importance of reflections**).

Your school might have a suggested format for the RRS, but here is some further inspiration of approaches you may take:

## Old school

There is a certain charm to physical media, particularly in this age of widespread information technology and online content. So, if you are someone who just appreciates the tactile feel of pen and paper, you might want to consider one of the options below. However, when basing a RRS on physical media, there will inevitably be some digital notes and research that you must either print or keep track of digitally alongside your physical RRS.

- **Scrapbook:** A larger format scrapbook allows flexibility, meaning that you can paste in documents, draw diagrams, handwrite notes and generally get creative with your RRS. This may be particularly useful for EEs in the arts, including dance, music, theatre, visual arts and film.
- **Notebook:** A smaller format notebook or notepad is great for handwritten notes that document your reflection and progress yet still allows flexibility if you want to add small diagrams or doodles.

## The professional

You might be the kind of person who can already picture themselves as a CEO of a multinational corporation, wearing smart business attire and handing out formal business cards to clients. In that case, use a trusted and reliable form of notetaking.

- **Word processor:** Standard word processors are an obvious choice for the RRS. Cloud-based word processing programs are recommended as they are automatically backed up and can be accessed by multiple users (your supervisor will want to have access, for example). Some software will allow more flexibility with multimedia, so consider your likely needs given your chosen subject area, topic and research question.

## The tech-savvy

You're young, you're contemporary and you're constantly troubleshooting tech issues for your parents. Why not leverage your status as a 'digital native' and use online platforms that offer greater flexibility and versatility for the RRS?

- **Tablet apps:** More and more apps built around tablets with styluses are blending the best of both worlds: the tactility of handwritten notes with the flexibility of digital documents. Many also now allow you to embed PDF files, stickers and audio notes to accompany your written ones.
- **Digital whiteboards:** If you feel capable of keeping an endless but organized canvas, whiteboard apps are also a good option. Many allow the embedding of videos and PDF files to help collect and organize all your ideas in what is essentially a digital version of a scrapbook.

### Expert tip

Remember to have a backup of your work. The easiest way of doing so is to use a word processing platform that keeps your files live and in the cloud such as Google Docs or OneDrive. This has the added benefit of the file being accessible to your supervisor if you provide them with sharing rights.



■ **Figure 2.5** A blended RRS can give the best of all worlds

### The indecisive

Decisions are often hard to make. You are going to have to make many of them as you develop your EE, but if all the previous options sound applicable to you in their own ways, then why not combine them?

- **Blended RRS:** A blended RRS allows greater flexibility. There is no stipulation from the IB for your RRS to be in one specific document, but you need to ensure you keep things organized as it is easy to lose track of things over such an extended period. You might combine handwritten notes with digital notes, using whichever format best suits each situation, then collating all of this together.

### ● Task 3

Having read the advice above, you can now create your RRS. You can change the format later, at any time before the *viva voce* (final formal reflection session), but it is important you keep a record of the process from the outset. Any notes you have already made during the EE process can be added to your RRS.



## *Extended essay guide and Extended essay support material*

Now you have your RRS, it is worth taking a moment to be reminded of some resources you will need to read through. The IB has published two documents that are vital for you and your supervisor to refer to throughout the EE process: the *Extended essay guide* and the *Extended essay support material* (first assessment 2027). These documents are very important and will be used by EE coordinators and supervisors to understand what they are aiming for with the EE process at your school. With this latest revision of the EE, both publications are far more student-friendly and can be very helpful for understanding the process.

The *Extended essay guide* document lays out the IB's explanation of the task in extensive detail. Though it is not recommended you read it in its entirety, there are many sections that are relevant to understanding the EE development process. In particular, you should refer to the section towards the end of the *Extended essay guide* that provides subject-specific guidance for the subjects you are considering completing an EE in. This helpfully includes examples of research questions and guidance on how the assessment criteria are particularly applied to EEs in the various subject groups (language A, language B, classical languages, individuals and societies subjects, sciences, mathematics and arts). It is also worth reading the sections on cross-disciplinary subjects, as you may consider the option to write an EE in either environmental systems and societies (ESS) or literature and performance. This allows more flexibility in your RQ as these two DP subjects each combine studies in two subject groups. ESS brings together individuals and societies and the sciences, while literature and performance brings together language and literature and the arts. Note that these cross-disciplinary subjects are **not** the same as the interdisciplinary EE, which is covered separately in **Chapter 9 The interdisciplinary extended essay**.

The other main document is the *Extended essay support material*. As the name suggests, it is targeted at supporting students, not just teachers. This document was written by IB teachers experienced in supporting students and teachers through the EE process. As such, it includes ideas, background information and tools that can help students and supervisors alike in getting through the EE process successfully.

So, having set up your RRS, it is time to start generating some more notes with the following task.

### **Task 4**

Read (or skim-read!) the advice given for each of your DP subject groups in the *Extended essay guide*. Make some basic notes on what kinds of RQs are suggested, and any particular advice given. Also read the section on the interdisciplinary EE, as this may end up being the pathway you take when you develop your RQ. These notes will help you in the next stage (narrowing things down).

## Narrowing things down

### ■ Connecting with curiosity and considering topics

The freedom of the EE can be overwhelming. It is therefore important to start narrowing things down. There is no set process of coming to a suitable RQ, but the approach explained below should help you.

Having made notes in your RRS on your six DP subjects, you already have a better sense of what is possible and what is most likely to keep you engaged throughout the EE development process. It is time to narrow things down.

We are going to explore three of your six DP subjects in more detail and consider some potential EE topics for them. From these topics, you can develop more specific research questions. Having three is useful on an intellectual level as it provides more variety of thought and options, but it is also useful on a practical level as there is often no guarantee you will get your first-choice subject (depending on the policy of your individual school).

Before narrowing down to your three DP subjects, take the following into consideration:

- **HL vs SL:** It is worth factoring in the level of study of your subjects. Completing an EE in an SL subject is completely fine (you are technically even allowed to complete EEs in subjects you do not study, but unsurprisingly this is not advisable!). In contrast, you study your HL subjects in far more depth, and therefore develop a deeper and wider set of knowledge, concepts, theories, perspectives and methods to draw on when developing your EE.
- **Passion:** The EE is an involved and lengthy process, so a subject you are passionate about is more likely to keep you motivated and engaged as you develop your EE. You will most likely have only begun your studies in each subject, but you will have some sense of those that are engaging you intellectually and those that are more of a challenge.
- **Topics:** Consider the topics you have already studied and those that you will study. This will help provide ideas for the kinds of topics you might end up writing about. It is important that you do not reproduce any work that you have studied in class, but topics covered might serve as the inspiration or a starting point for your own research.

### ● Expert tip

Consider your choice of an HL or SL subject carefully. You need to have sufficient depth of subject knowledge and background reading to write the 4000-word essay in an analytical and critical way. Nevertheless, note that you have complete freedom in choosing your EE subject. While HL subjects are typically studied in more depth, this doesn't mean you cannot explore SL subjects or even areas you haven't formally studied but are passionate about. Many students, due to career aspirations, are required to select specific HL subjects, which sometimes forces them to exclude a subject they are deeply interested in (such as Group 6 subjects, which often fall in this category).

# The importance of reflections

## What is reflection?

- One of the key attributes of an IB learner is to be reflective, considering both the world and your own ideas and experiences, as well as supporting your learning and personal development through an understanding of your strengths and weaknesses.
- Reflection is a compulsory part of the extended essay and is formally assessed.
- All IB Diploma candidates are required to complete a research and progress form (RPF), which is sent to the examiner.
- A blank or missing RPF will score 0 marks under assessment criterion E (Reflection).
- The RPF is worth 4 marks (around 13% of the overall marks).

## How can I reflect?

The researcher's reflection space (RRS):

- is a practical tool you can use to record your thoughts as you write your extended essay
- helps to develop learning, thinking, critical analysis and evaluation skills
- can be an important part of your conversations with your supervisor during the formal reflection meetings
- is for thinking about:
  - planning
  - research methodology
  - research findings
  - decision-making processes
  - setbacks and challenges
  - areas and actions for improvement.

The research and progress form (RPF):

- Write your reflective comments on the RPF as soon as possible after each reflection session, while they are still fresh in your mind.
- There is a maximum of 500 words for all three reflection sessions combined.
- Remember: you must not go back and change or update your reflections at a later date. They are a snapshot of your thinking process throughout the project.

## Reflection sessions

### Initial reflection session:

- **When:** After your initial ideas, background reading and research plan have been considered
- **What to expect:** Questions from your supervisor will be descriptive in nature, encouraging you to explain and consider your research, reading and thinking. Ideally send your supervisor an outline of your research plan and progress before this meeting to help ensure your discussion is purposeful and productive
- **Outcome:** You have a good idea of exactly what your research question is and how you are going to deal with the remaining challenges you are likely to face.

### Interim reflection session:

- **When:** After your draft essay has been submitted
- **What to expect:** The session will help you judge how far you have progressed and how much further you will need to go to complete the extended essay successfully  
There may be more analytical questions from your supervisor, with a discussion of the strengths and limitations of your initial findings and research methods
- **Outcome:** You understand what you have achieved already, and what you must still accomplish, to write the best essay you can.

### Final reflection session – the *viva voce*:

- **When:** After you have completed the final version of your extended essay and your supervisor has read it
- **What to expect:** Questions from your supervisor will be more open-ended and evaluative in nature to encourage you to reflect on what you have learned throughout the entire extended essay process
- **Outcome:** You consider and evaluate the wider implications of your learning journey; in particular, you are more aware of your personal strengths and academic development needs.

# 7

## The importance of reflections

### Definitions

◆ **Reflection** involves looking back on your experiences to understand their impact on your learning, focusing on skills development, growth and applying lessons to future situations.

◆ **Researcher's reflection space (RRS)** is where you will document your research, reflect on progress from the three mandatory supervisor sessions and develop your ideas for the EE.

◆ **Reflection sessions** are mandatory meetings with your supervisor to discuss progress, set objectives and prepare for the reflective statement, written after the final viva voce interview.

◆ **Research and progress form (RPF)** is a document where IB Diploma Programme students record their reflective statement of no more than 500 words. This is submitted after the final mandatory reflection session with your EE supervisor.

### What is reflection?

Being reflective is one of the IB learner profile attributes and is a formal part of the assessment criteria for the EE (see Chapter 1 Understanding the assessment criteria). **Reflection** involves looking back on your experiences and considering how these have impacted you as a learner. Reflection in the extended essay (EE) focuses on your growth as a learner and experience with the EE, emphasizing skills development and skills transfer. These skills include, but are not limited to, research, problem solving, communication, self-management and critical thinking.

Reflection requires us to consider what has happened in order to move forward. This involves applying the skills and lessons you have learned to other situations, including future studies, your career or life in general. For the EE, you should consider the ideas and information collected to formulate your own understanding and interpretation of the topic and research question. For instance, you could reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of your experiences to further your own learning and personal academic growth.

Reflection in the EE gives students credit for the process of planning, researching and writing that they went through during their learning journey. The requirements and assessment criteria award you for the ability to reflect on your planning, research and progress. Importantly, you will need to focus on your own growth as a learner through your personal EE experience, emphasizing skills development and transfer.

### Task 1

Think about how the EE, whatever stage you are at in the process, has helped you to foster the following skills:

- research skills
- problem-solving skills
- communication skills
- self-management skills
- critical-thinking skills.

You can record these thoughts in your **researcher's reflection space (RRS)** and use this as stimulus material for your check-in sessions and **reflection sessions** with your supervisor. The RRS is a personal learning medium (containing mind maps, infographics or notes in bullet points) where IB Diploma Programme students document their research process, reflect on their progress from the three mandatory reflection sessions with their supervisor and develop their ideas and arguments for the EE.

As part of the new requirements, you will need to meet with your supervisor to carry out three mandatory (compulsory) reflection sessions. Each of these reflection sessions should last 20–30 minutes. It is strongly advised that you make a written record of both these meetings, perhaps using your RRS, as this will help you to complete the reflective statement on the **research and progress form (RPF)** following your third and final mandatory reflection session with your supervisor. The RPF is a document where IB Diploma Programme students record

## Definition

◆ **Reflective statement** is a 500-word summary of your reflective thinking, recorded at the end of the extended essay process on the RPF, using various resources such as the RRS.

## Expert tip

The RPF needs to be written in the same language as your EE. If a student submits the RPF in a different language, they will get a 0 score for assessment criterion E (Reflection).

their **reflective statement** of no more than 500 words. This is submitted after your third and final mandatory reflection session with your EE supervisor.

Under the assessment model for the EE, the RPF is worth up to 4 marks. This is a significant number of marks (over 13 per cent), which can make the difference between an A or B grade in the final assessment. Note that completion of the RPF is a mandatory requirement of the EE and must be submitted together with the completed essay for external assessment.

## Expert tip

Reflections are integral to an IB education. Reflections in the EE are similar to the reflections that you take on board in theory of knowledge (TOK) as well as creativity, activity, service (CAS). The ability to reflect is vital in the IB core (EE, TOK and CAS) but is also a highly transferable skill.

## Researcher's reflection space

Before completing the compulsory RPF, you may want to consider writing a RRS. This is a journal (using any format or platform that you prefer) that is used to record your thoughts and reflections on the process of undertaking and completing the extended essay. Use the RRS to record your thoughts, ideas, findings, quotations, arguments, progress and timelines. You should also use the RRS to record any questions that may come to mind. For the RRS, you can use a range of different communication techniques, be they handwritten (such as in a notebook) or in digital formats (such as online journals or blogs).

Using the RRS as a record or journal of your learning experiences and growth as an IB student helps to keep track of the research undertaken over an extended period of time. The most successful students will be able to show that learning is complex and will be able to consider their ideas and actions in response to any setbacks they may have experienced during the research process.



**Reflective:** You can demonstrate your ability to be reflective as an IB learner by drawing on empirical evidence, meticulous research and well-reasoned conclusions on your chosen topic and research question. One way to demonstrate this is to reflect on the transformative and academic nature of your EE experience and how you have grown as a learner. What evidence of being a reflective learner can you bring to your reflection meetings with your supervisor?

## Task 2

Producing a RRS is rather like keeping a personal diary to reflect on your day.

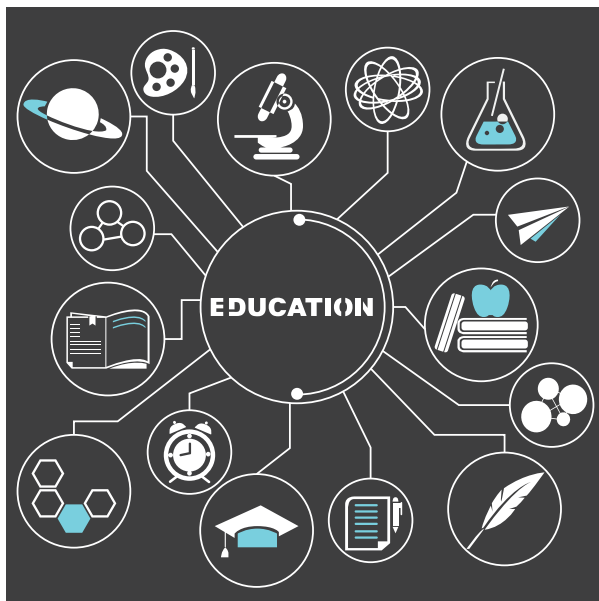
- 1 Write a diary entry about what happened in your life yesterday or last week.
- 2 Reflect on what went well and what did not go so well.
- 3 Consider how you might have managed some of these things better.

The RRS is a practical tool you can use to record your thoughts as you write your EE. The IB does not prescribe a particular format for the RRS. There are different ways to keep your RRS, as described below.

- Write about what you have read, researched and discovered – use your RRS as a research log. You should document the whole EE process from the beginning

to the end. Your supervisor might ask to see the log as evidence that your research is authentic and/or to give you further advice to support your progress.

- A process journal – this is where you complete a number of reflections on your learning experiences including obstacles, setbacks and challenges that you have faced or are currently facing. You may choose to reflect on certain IB learner profile traits to help you overcome challenges or improve your learning experiences.
- Mind mapping – this can be a helpful visual tool to organize and extend your thought processes. Mind maps help learners to show relationships between different pieces of information with the central idea (your research question) in the middle of your page. The use of a mind map can be a useful stimulus for your formal (mandatory) reflection meetings with your supervisor.



■ **Figure 7.1** Mind maps can be a useful way to create a RRS



■ **Figure 7.2** Reflections can help with the many questions you will have during the extended essay process

### ● **Common mistake**

Many students who use a RRS forget to cite or reference the ideas, words or works of others (even though they know the importance of doing so in the actual essay). If the entry in your RRS comes from someone else, record all the bibliographical details, such as: author, title, page number(s) and, if it's a website, the URL, date of publication and the access date. This information will be helpful at a later stage as you will need to use the information to develop your essay.

### ● **Task 3**

Now that you have chosen a research question for your EE, have a go at producing a RRS for the first part of your research and thinking. You may choose to reflect on the following:

- Your research question – what is already known about this topic and why is it worthy of further academic research?
- How you intend to begin your research
- How you intend to collect and select the most relevant source materials, and whether primary research (if permitted in your subject) will add value
- Anticipated difficulties and how you intend to tackle these
- How you intend to manage your relationship with your supervisor.

Using a RRS can help to develop the learning, thinking, analysis and evaluation skills required for scoring well in the EE. In preparing for your three compulsory reflection sessions (as verified on the RPF), you could use the RRS to record your reflections throughout the process, including the check-in sessions, rather than only during the three compulsory reflection sessions. You can also use your RRS to record your responses and thoughts to different sources, such as news articles, academic journals and online social media sources.

Finally, remember that the RRS will form an important part of your conversations with your supervisor during the formal reflection meetings and completion of the RPF. To prepare for these meetings, try to use your RRS to cover your thoughts on:

- planning
- research methodology
- research findings
- decision-making processes
- progress, including setbacks and challenges
- areas and actions for improvements.

### Expert tip

Every successful EE begins with academic curiosity and a research question that you want to find the (possible) answer to and ends with reflections on the work you have done.



■ Figure 7.3 Time management is a vital skill for all students

### Definition

◆ **Approaches to learning skills** are essential learning strategies, including thinking, communication, research, self-management and social skills, fostering self-regulated learners. Essentially, they are skills that enable students to learn how to learn.

Reflection and **approaches to learning skills** are essential at various stages in the EE process. Working closely with your supervisor and using them as a sounding board when communicating your ideas and reflections will also help to develop your social skills. The self-management needed to complete an independent EE, and the ability to think critically about the research you have engaged with, are life-long skills that you will continue to use and develop in the future.

Time management is a vital skill for all IB Diploma students, encompassing several of the approaches to learning skills. You might choose to reflect on how the process of writing the EE has helped to develop skills such as your time management skills, beyond the IB Diploma Programme.

Completing the EE is a very challenging task, especially as most of this must be completed independently (with the support of your supervisor, of course). This means that all five interrelated approaches to learning skills (thinking skills, research skills, communication skills, self-management skills and social skills) become vital if you are to be successful in this component of the IB Diploma Programme.

### Expert tip

The RPF is similar to the planning and progress form (PPF) used for assessing the TOK essay and presentation. You will be aware that the TOK PPF requires completion of three interactions with your TOK teacher, allowing the examiner to see the development of your ideas through the reflections noted on the form. The purpose and process are the same for the EE.



## The reflective statement

The reflective statement must be entered on the RPF and addresses your overall extended essay experience. The official RPF must be authenticated by your EE supervisor before being submitted via electronic upload of your final EE for formal assessment.

A full copy of the RPF can be found on My IB. Speak with your supervisor to get a copy of this for your own reference. Remember that the RPF is worth a significant number of marks, especially if your total mark is on the borderline of the next grade up. Therefore, you must ensure that the contents of the RPF and your essay fit together coherently and consistently.

The focus of reflection in the EE is on the overall learning process. Consider the following areas when drafting and completing your one reflective statement:

- The challenges, setbacks and obstacles that you faced – how did you tackle these and what did you learn in the process?
- The IB learner profile – which of these traits applied to you, and how?
- Your learning experiences – what did you learn and did any new perspectives emerge during the process?

Your reflective thinking is recorded on the RPF as a reflective statement, which is written at the end of the extended essay process following your *viva voce* (the third and final mandatory reflection session with your supervisor). You should write your reflective statement as soon as possible after the *viva voce* because these thoughts will still be fresh in your mind. You can use your RRS for support in this process. There is a maximum of 500 words for the reflective statement. This must be written in your own words, in the language of submission, and relate only to your personal learning journey in this process.

Also, note that you cannot go back and change or update the reflective statement at a later date – the EE examiner wants to know what you were thinking at that particular moment when the reflection was completed.

**Open-minded:** The use of a RRS can enable you to demonstrate your skills of being open-minded (and creative) as a researcher. For example, the RRS can create stimulus for you to explore and include an appropriately wide range of points of view from your research about the chosen topic of the essay.

### Expert tip

Maintaining a record of your initial and interim mandatory reflection sessions, perhaps as part of your RRS, will help you when writing your reflective statement. Remember that the reflective statement on the RPF must be no more than 500 words. EE examiners are instructed not to read or assess anything beyond this word count limit, so exceeding it is a self-penalizing approach to the assessment of your reflection.



### Expert tip

It is permitted to change or alter your EE research question even after starting your research and meeting with your supervisor. However, your RRS should be an accurate reflection of how your essay has developed and changed and should not be altered retrospectively.

## Mandatory reflection sessions

There are three compulsory reflection sessions with your supervisor: the initial reflection, the interim reflection and the *viva voce*. The IB recommends that each of these meetings lasts 20–30 minutes, focusing on the planning, process and progress of completing the EE. Your attendance at these meetings must be recorded by your supervisor on the RPF. A blank or missing RPF will mean 0 marks under assessment criterion E (Reflection).

You may choose to use your RRS during these meetings with your supervisor. Following each of the three mandatory reflection sessions, your supervisor must date and sign the form

## Expert tip

While the IB states that you must attend three mandatory reflection sessions with your supervisor, they also recommend that you have check-in sessions so that your supervisor can support you accordingly. It is common for students to have three check-in sessions that involve input from both the student and supervisor. This means that both the student and supervisor need to be well prepared for each meeting.

(using their initials). The RPF includes drop-down menu options for your supervisor to record the month and DP year to indicate when the mandatory reflection sessions took place. This also helps to authenticate your work for IB assessment purposes. If you are a retake candidate, your supervisor will use 'DP year 2' to indicate reflections that took place in the academic year that you will submit your essay.

## Expert tip

You are advised to make notes of the feedback and advice in your RRS following the first two mandatory meetings with your EE supervisor. This includes noting any appropriate plan of action at that stage. This will be helpful at a later stage when your notes and actions will inform your reflective statement following the *viva voce* with your supervisor.

## First reflection session

The first of the mandatory reflection sessions focuses on deciding on a topic and research question. It should be scheduled after your initial ideas, background reading and research plan (your methodology or approach) have been considered. These can be recorded in your RRS. You should also have read the subject-specific guidance in the *Extended essay guide* before this meeting.

## Expert tip

Make sure you choose a topic that you are genuinely interested in (see **Chapter 2 Developing a suitable research question**). This will then allow you to conduct meaningful and in-depth research on your chosen topic. In turn, this makes the overall process more interesting and allows you to carry out more purposeful and effective reflections.

## Expert tip

It will help your supervisor if you send them an outline of your research plan and progress before the first mandatory reflection meeting. This will give them time to look at your thoughts and ideas so as to prepare a purposeful and productive meeting with you.

Some questions that may arise in this initial conversation, usually of a descriptive nature, are:

- What has motivated you to research this particular subject (or subjects for the interdisciplinary pathway)?
- What do you already know about the chosen topic?
- Why is the topic/research question appropriate and worthy of further academic study?
- Does your research question need to be modified in light of your initial research?
- How did you undertake the necessary research, including background reading about the topic/research question?
- Were you successful in gathering the data/information/evidence that you wanted at this stage?
- Does the data you have collected so far allow you to address your research question?
- Do you need more sources of information to answer your question? Where might you find the data required?

- What were the main problems that you faced? How did you tackle these problems?
- Are there any ethical issues in relation to the intended topic and proposed research methods that need to be considered?
- Has your approach or methodology changed in any way during the process so far?
- What investigations are you currently undertaking?
- What do you think are the next steps in conducting research to answer your research question?
- What anticipated difficulties and challenges can you foresee in the next stage of the process? How do you intend to tackle or resolve these challenges?
- Are there any issues or questions emerging from your data collection and research that you did not anticipate?
- What have been the high and the low points of the research process so far?
- What kind of issues or questions are you going to highlight in your RRS?
- What is the goal or target for the next meeting (interim reflection session)?

There are additional questions suggested for the initial reflection session on page 98 of the *Extended essay guide*.

By the end of the initial reflection session, you should have a good idea of exactly what your research question is and how you are going to deal with the remaining challenges you are likely to face.



■ **Figure 7.4** The work doesn't stop between reflection sessions, so keep your supervisor well informed

Remember that you can still see your supervisor for regular check-in sessions in between the formal reflection sessions. In fact, the IB suggests that three check-in sessions may be pragmatic. The IB also acknowledges that some students may require more check-in sessions with their supervisor, which is fine as long as this does not amount to a total of more than 5 hours of supervision. In addition, you can have informal discussions with other people who can help with your research, especially subject specialist teachers, your EE coordinator and the school librarian (see **Chapter 6 The role of the extended essay supervisor**). However, be careful you do not contravene any rules on academic integrity (see **Chapter 4 Academic integrity**). As mentioned earlier in this chapter, for academic integrity reasons, your completed RPF document must be initialled and dated by your EE supervisor. Therefore, do not give your supervisor any cause for concern regarding academic integrity.



**Knowledgeable:** The reflection sessions provide an ideal opportunity for you to demonstrate your knowledge of the chosen topic and research question. As an IB learner, consider how you can demonstrate your acquisition of in-depth knowledge of your chosen topic and RQ through exploration of relevant peer-reviewed literature and other research for the essay.

### **Expert tip**

The first mandatory reflection session should focus on questions of a *descriptive* nature. The second reflection session should focus on questions of an *analytical* nature. The final reflection session should focus on questions of an *evaluative* nature, followed by the reflective statement of no more than 500 words on the RPF.

## ■ **Interim reflection session**

The second mandatory reflection session is about reviewing and reflecting on your progress during the research and writing process. This should be scheduled after your draft essay has been submitted, although it should be noted that you are permitted to have check-in sessions with your supervisor between the initial and interim reflection sessions. Your essay will address the (clear and refined) research question that both you and your supervisor have agreed to commit to. This session will help you judge how far you have progressed and how much further you will need to go to successfully complete the EE.

One area you and your supervisor will consider is the progress you have made on citations and referencing for your EE (discussed in **Chapter 5 Citation and referencing**). By this point you should both be satisfied that your essay has a sufficient range of appropriate and credible secondary research sources (as well as any relevant primary research sources that supplement your research work).

The questions asked in the interim reflection meeting tend to be more analytical, with a discussion of the strengths and limitations of your initial findings and research methods. Some questions that may arise in this interim conversation, which are of an exploratory nature, include:

- What stage are you now at in the research process?
- Have you changed any aspect of your approach or methodology during the process? If so, why did you do this?
- What have you learned from the experience so far in terms of your understanding of the subject area?
- What have you learned about the skills needed to undertake the research successfully?
- How has your understanding of the topic and research question developed during the process so far?
- How are you conducting independent research while ensuring adherence to the academic integrity policy?
- Have you provided necessary evidence to support a well-reasoned argument?
- How have you critically evaluated the source materials used in producing the draft of your essay?
- What will you need to do to complete the final draft of your essay?
- What might you need to do in preparation for the final reflection session (the *viva voce*)?

There are additional questions suggested for the interim reflection session on page 98 of the *Extended essay guide*.

Following the second mandatory reflection session, as with the initial reflection session, your supervisor is required to complete the relevant sections on the RPF to authenticate the meeting (by signing and dating the form).

### Expert tip

The *viva voce* is described by the IB as a ‘celebration’ of the completion of the EE. So, you should celebrate your achievement when the time comes! Your final reflection should therefore include details of how you have really grown and benefited from the experience. One way to do this is to focus on specific approaches to learning skills developed during the process (thinking, communication, research, self-management and social skills).

### Final reflection session – the *viva voce*

The third and final formal reflection session focuses on a summative or evaluative review, reflecting on your overall extended essay experience. This meeting should only take place after the final draft of your EE has been completed and submitted to the supervisor. Your supervisor must have already read the final version of your essay before the *viva voce* can be conducted. The meeting should also be a celebration of the completion of your essay and the outcomes of the overall process.

Reflections can also be based on aspects of your initial and interim mandatory reflection sessions with your supervisor. Therefore, you may find it useful to bring along your RRS to this meeting to show and discuss how you have grown and developed as a learner throughout this whole process. A common way to demonstrate your skills of reflection is to show how you learn from the feedback you were previously given and how you might have learned from previous mistakes or mis-judgements so as to improve the way you research and write in the future. As American actor and producer Mary Tyler Moore said, ‘Take chances, make mistakes. That’s how you grow.’

The questions asked in the final compulsory reflection session are of an evaluative nature, allowing you to reflect on what you have learned throughout the entire EE process and your supervisor to make a holistic judgement about the extent to which you have engaged in the process. It also enables your supervisor to authenticate the final version of your essay.

Hence, you need to be fully prepared for these sessions. As with the previous two reflection sessions, the *viva voce* should last around 20–30 minutes. This is included in the recommended 3–5 hours of supervision time. Some questions that may arise in the final reflection conversation, usually of an open-ended and evaluative nature, include:

- What have you learned about the topic, the research process and your own learning?
- If you were to do this research question again, what would you do differently and why?
- Were there any surprises in your learning journey? What did you learn from this?
- What examples from your researcher's reflection space show how you have grown as a learner through the EE process?
- What research skills and/or conceptual understanding have you acquired through the completion of the EE, and how could these be transferred in the future?
- What additional skills (such as time management, decision-making or thinking skills) have you learned as a student?
- What does success mean to you in the process of producing your EE?
- What was the most rewarding aspect of the entire EE process for you?
- Were the strategies you used for your research question the most appropriate for achieving success?
- If you had used alternative research methodologies and/or subject-specific theories, would this have led to a different outcome?
- Are there any new or unanswered questions that emerged as a result of your research?
- Are there any unanswered questions and/or areas in need of further research?
- How might it be possible to extend the research you have conducted to provide an even clearer answer to your research question?
- How might you be able to use your EE experience in your future studies at college or university and/or in your future employment?
- What is the most significant aspect of the work you did for the EE?
- What advice would you give to next year's students who have yet to write their EE?

The final reflection meeting (the *viva voce*) encourages you to consider and evaluate the wider implications of your learning journey. Therefore, do not just consider the outcome(s) of your research findings and conclusion(s), but also how the overall process has made you more aware of your personal strengths and academic development needs. One commonly used question framework to help you to prepare for the *viva voce* is:

- 1 What did I used to think?
- 2 What do I now think?
- 3 What happened to change that thinking?

The *viva voce* is the penultimate step in the EE process.

Upon completion of the *viva voce*, you will need to complete your reflective statement of no more than 500 words on the RPF (this is a PDF document from the IB) – an incomplete form will cost valuable marks under assessment criterion E (Reflection). It may be possible for you to arrange a final check-in session with your supervisor to check the reflective statement. After that, your supervisor or EE coordinator will need to upload the extended essay *and* RPF for formal assessment. This then concludes the whole EE process for you.



■ **Figure 7.5** 'proper preparation prevents poor performance'

### Expert tip

Be fully prepared for each reflection session to make the best use of your time and that of your supervisor. Ensure you have read any suggested materials, for example, and be prepared to answer questions based on this. Being unprepared for a formal reflection meeting can raise doubt about a candidate's level of engagement and the authenticity of the work. As James A. Baker, former Chief of Staff to US President George H.W. Bush, said, 'proper preparation prevents poor performance' in his memoir, *Work Hard, Study ... and Keep Out of Politics!*

## Check-in sessions

In addition to the three mandatory reflection sessions, you may want to arrange three check-in meetings with your supervisor. The section below outlines some suggestions for questions that can be discussed at these meetings. However, please note that the suggested questions in this book for the check-in sessions and mandatory reflection sessions are neither prescriptive nor exhaustive. It is not an expectation from the IB that any or all of these questions are asked in the meetings.

Nevertheless, the guidance provided here will support you and your supervisor alike. Making a record of these discussions in your RRS will also help you during the mandatory reflection sessions. Ideally, the first two check-in sessions should take place *before* the first mandatory reflection meeting.

### ■ Check-in session 1 – discussion of initial ideas

Questions to consider during the first check-in session include:

- What sparked your interest in this chosen subject area (or an interdisciplinary pathway)?
- What background reading have you already done – that is, what do you already know about this topic?
- How do the proposed topic and research question relate to the chosen subject(s) in the Diploma Programme?
- How are you intending to plan and organize your work?
- How do you intend to create and use the RRS?
- Have you chosen a provisional research question that is viable for the EE?
- What are the next steps in conducting your research?

### ■ Check-in session 2 – resource-gathering and research question

Questions to consider during the second check-in session include:

- Will you be able to collect sufficient resources to effectively answer the research question within the 4000-word limit?
- Will your research provide balanced and contrasting perspectives?
- Will you need to revise the research question? (This is particularly important if the RQ does not currently require an analytical and evaluative approach.)
- Do you need a different approach and a new focus for the research question?

### ■ Check-in session 3

This should take place *after* completing your first draft and before the *viva voce*. This will give your supervisor time to provide meaningful feedback and give you an opportunity to ask questions about the first draft of your essay, before you revise and submit the final draft.

Questions to consider during the third (and possibly final) check-in session include:

- Have you reflected on your supervisor’s comments on the full draft of the essay? What evidence of this exists in your RRS?
- Does your essay have a clear introduction that sets the research question in context of the need for academic research?
- Does your essay comply with the presentation requirements? (Refer to **Chapter 3 The formal presentation of the extended essay** for further information about this.)
- Have you cited and referenced the essay correctly? (Refer to **Chapter 5 Citation and referencing** for further information about this.)
- Does your supervisor have any concerns regarding academic integrity?

■ **Table 7.1** Checklist for student reflections

Do	Don't
Ensure you attend the three compulsory reflection sessions with your supervisor.	Settle for a research question or topic without thinking carefully about what you want to actually address in the essay.
Record your reflections in the RRS as soon as possible after each reflection session with your supervisor, while the ideas and thoughts are fresh in your head.	View challenges and setbacks as a reason not to reflect well – instead, see these as learning opportunities.
Initiate the three reflection sessions with your supervisor.	Be dishonest with your supervisor, as they are there to help you and to authenticate your work.
Initiate check-in meetings with your supervisor (in addition to the three formal reflection sessions) if you have any concerns or questions or need further guidance.	Forget to keep an ongoing record of your reflective thinking (using the RRS) as this will support you when you need to write your reflective statement.
Focus your reflections on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● conceptual understandings</li> <li>● decision making</li> <li>● engagement with research</li> <li>● the research process</li> <li>● time management</li> <li>● methodology</li> <li>● appropriateness of sources</li> <li>● successes and challenges.</li> </ul>	Simply describe your experiences in the reflective statement – instead reflect in a critical and evaluative way, focusing on what you have learned about yourself as a learner and skills transfer for the future.
Reflect on any new questions that might have emerged from your research and findings.	Leave it up to your supervisor to chase and motivate you to complete your reflections (using the RRS) and the reflective statement.
Discuss setbacks and any shifts in direction.	Exceed the 500-word limit for the reflective statement on the RPF.

■ **Table 7.2** Supervisor responsibilities and the RPF

They will:	They won't:
ensure you have three compulsory reflection sessions	formulate the research question for you, as this limits your reflections in an authentic way
sign (their initials) and date the RPF after each reflection session (this helps to authenticate the work)	make any changes to the RPF once they have signed and dated the reflection sessions on the form
discuss setbacks and any shifts in thinking and direction/methodology	give their own opinions about the quality of the sources; they will help you instead to reflect on the purpose and value of the sources
use the online resources and teacher support materials from the IB to facilitate the reflection sessions	tell you what to write in the reflective statement of the RPF, but they will guide you with your reflections
keep an eye on your overall progress, including regular check-in sessions and not just the compulsory reflection sessions	correct your work and tell you what is wrong; instead, they will help you to identify and reflect on any areas of concern
have a formal meeting/check-in session with you upon receipt of the first draft.	allow you to submit multiple drafts as this is not academically honest and hinders authentic reflections.

## Chapter summary

- Reflection involves looking back on your experiences to understand their impact on your learning, focusing on skills development and growth and applying lessons to future situations.
- Being reflective is a vital attribute of the IB learner profile.
- Reflection is a compulsory part of the EE and is formally assessed.
- Reflection allows you to consider your strengths and challenges through the EE process.
- Reflection is developed through the three mandatory sessions with your supervisor, allowing you to articulate what you have learned from the overall EE experience.
- All IB Diploma candidates are required to complete a research and progress form (RPF) that is sent to the examiner for assessment of criterion E (Reflection).
- A blank or missing RPF will score 0 marks under assessment criterion E. The same applies to a RPF that is not written in the language of submission of the EE.
- The RPF is worth 4 marks (around 13 per cent of the overall marks).
- You are strongly advised to use a researcher’s reflection space (RRS) to help with the formal reflection sessions and in the completion of the reflective statement on the RPF.
- From the beginning of the process, set up a RRS and use this as a planning and reflection tool. These reflections can be in any format, such as a handwritten notebook, an online blog, a digital journal or a collection of materials placed in a folder.
- There are three mandatory reflection sessions with your supervisor:
  - Initial reflection session – focuses on descriptive questions and concentrates on your initial ideas and how you plan to undertake your research
  - Interim reflection session – focuses on analytical questions. It should only take place once a significant amount of your research has been completed
  - Final reflection session (the *viva voce*) – focuses on evaluative questions. This should only take place once you have completed and handed in your final version of the extended essay.
- The reflective statement on the RPF has a maximum limit of 500 words and must be written in the same language as your EE.
- The completion of the RPF is a mandatory requirement and it must be submitted together with the completed EE.

## END-OF-CHAPTER QUIZ

	Question	True	False
1	Being reflective is part of the IB learner profile.		
2	Reflection is a compulsory part of the EE.		
3	Your supervisor will have three compulsory reflection meetings with you.		
4	The RPF is not sent to the IB for marking.		
5	The RPF must be completed by you and your supervisor, who must also sign and date the document.		
6	Each reflection session should last for about 20–30 minutes.		
7	There is no word limit on the RPF.		
8	The RRS must be submitted to the IB for assessment.		
9	Students are encouraged to change and update their RPF after discussion with their supervisor.		
10	Completion of the reflective statement on the RPF completes the whole EE process.		





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