Extended Essay Suggestions

**What should you write about in your extended essay?**

You can technically write about anything, so long as the IBO approves it. However, you should choose a topic that falls into one of the IB Course Categories which shouldn’t be difficult because there are so many class subjects. Here is range of sample topics with the attached extended essay:

* **Biology**: Can one-hour-long light pulses applied during the night shift the phase of circadian rhythms in the locomotor activity of Siberian hamsters?
* **Chemistry**: Comparison of iron intake diets in Tanzania.
* **Economics**: To what extent are the school uniform providers UWSCA operating a contestable market?
* **English**: How and why Sylvia Plath in **The Bell Jar** and Charlotte Perkins in **The Yellow Wallpaper** used inanimate objects as motifs for female madness?
* **Math**: Alhazen’s billiard problem
* **Visual Arts**: To what extent has the Design of Federation Square been a success?

You can see from how varied the topics are that you have a lot of freedom when it comes to picking a topic.

**6 Tips for Writing a Grade A Extended Essay**

**Tip #1: Write about Something You Enjoy**

How do you find a topic you are passionate about. Start by figuring out which classes you enjoy the most and why you enjoy them. Do you like math because you like to problem solve? Or do you enjoy English because you like to analyze texts?

Once you have figured out a general subject area such as Physics, you should brainstorm more specific topics by putting pen to paper. What was you favorite chapter you learned in that class? Was it astrophysics or mechanics? What did you like about that chapter? Is there something you want to learn more about? I recommend spending an hour on this type of brainstorming.

**Consider the emerging questions**.

You should now begin posing open-ended questions about your topic. These questions will usually be framed “how”, “why”, or “to what extent.”

**Tip #2: Chose a topic that is not too broad or too narrow**

This is a fine line. You need to write about something specific, but not so specific that you can’t write 4,000 words on it. You can’t write about WWII because that would be a book’s worth of material. You don’t want to write about what type of soup prisoners of war received POW camps because you probably can’t come up with 4,000 words on it. However, you could possibly write about how conditions in German POW camps were directly affected by the Nazis successes and failures. This may be too obvious of a topic, but you get my point.

If you’re really stuck trying to find a not too broad or narrow topic, I recommend tying to brainstorm a topic that uses a comparison. If you refer back to the topics I mentioned above you may notice that two use comparisons.

* **Chemistry**: Comparison of iron intakes diets in Tanzania
* **English**: How and why have Sylvia Plath in The Bell Jar and Charlotte Perkins Gilman in The Yellow Wallpaper used inanimate objects as motifs for female madness?

Topics with comparisons of 2-3 plays/books/diets/etc. tend to be in the sweet spot of not too narrow or broad because you can analyze each portion and after doing in-depth analysis on each, you compare and explain the significance of the comparison. The key here is that the comparison needs to be significant.

Comparisons are not the only way to get a grade A extended essay. If after brainstorming, you pick a non-comparison based topic and you are still unsure if a topic is too broad or narrow, spend 30 minutes doing some basic research and see how much material is out there. If there are over 1,000 books/articles/documentaries out there on the exact topic, it may be too broad. If there are only 2 books that have any connection to your topic, it may be too narrow, if you are still unsure, ask you supervisor!

**Evaluate the question**. Once you have posed possible research questions you should evaluate them. This evaluation should be based on whether the question is clear, focused, and arguable.

* **Clear** – Will the reader understand the nature of my research? Will it direct the research being undertaken?
* **Focused** – Will the research question be specific enough to allow for exploration within the scope of the task (that is, the number of words and time available)?
* **Arguable** – Does the research question allow for analysis, evaluation and development of a reasoned argument?

**Consider research outcomes.** Once you have decided on a provisional research question you should start thinking about the direction your research might take. You could do this by:

* suggesting possible outcomes of your research
* outlining the kind of argument you might make and how your research might support this
* considering options if the research available is not sufficient to support a sustained argument

**Supervisor**

If you not certain of who you would like to be your advisor, I would start by creating a list of your top three choices. Next, create a list of pros and cons.

Do not just ask your favorite teacher to be your supervisor. They may be a hindrance to you if they teach another subject. I would not suggest asking your biology teacher to guide you in writing your English EE.

Exception: If you have a teacher who is passionate and knowledgeable about your topic, you can ask that instructor. Consider all of your options before you do.

**You will not be able to crank out a 4,000-word essay in a week and get an A.** You will be reading many, many articles (and depending on your topic, possibly books, plays, and watching movies.) **Start the research as soon as possible**.