

Nine Tips on Theory of Knowledge Presentations

By Nicholas Alchin

There is no general method or formula which is 'correct'. You can probably ignore some of this advice and still do a good presentation... but following it may well help.

- 1 Familiarise yourself with the assessment criteria;** notice, for example that whatever your topic, the focus must be on *knowledge* issues and that you should choose a contemporary issue.
- 2 Choose a concrete topic which interests you and find the TOK in it.** TOK can be found almost anywhere, so use the opportunity to do something which you will enjoy doing. Do not just choose, say, the death penalty just because you have a book on it. Your presentation will come across much better if you choose something which means something to you personally; your own school, recent events in the news, cartoons, books and films are often fertile ground for presentation topics. Some of the most effective presentations start with an everyday story and go on to draw out the TOK aspects.
- 3 You should be exploring an issue; this means that you should present different points of view - even if they contradict each other and even if you disagree with them.** You can try to reconcile different points of view or explain precisely why they are incompatible. You do not have to choose one point of view as 'correct', but you should avoid the rather vacuous 'so there are different points of view all of which are equally valid' approach. Do not be afraid of giving your own opinion; you can point out that there are problems with your opinion, but be honest and say what you really think!
- 4 Try to cover the facts quickly and get on to the TOK principles.** If you have chosen a topic where there are important facts that the audience needs to know then you should get through these quickly - there are no marks for dissemination of information. The focus of the presentation must be *analysis*, not *description*. If you can't summarise the facts in a couple of minutes then you should give a summary to read beforehand.
- 5 Once you have drawn out the abstract TOK principles you should try to see what the implications of these principles are, and perhaps use these implications to reflect on the validity of the principles.** For example, if you are considering the argument for the death penalty which states that murderers lose the right to life, the principle seems to be 'an eye for an eye'. But you could ask 'what do we do with a thief? Or a rapist?' The answers to these questions may or may not lead to a reformulation of the principle.
- 6 Consider carefully how you communicate the structure your presentation.** It may be clear in your mind, but the audience may not find it so easy. It can help to have one or two overheads with the main points in bullet form, using a large font.
- 7 Try to state explicitly the problems of knowledge that you are looking at.** This will

help you retain clarity and make it easier for an examiner to give you high marks in criterion A. If you use an overhead then this is an obvious place to list the problems.

8 If appropriate use a film clip, slides, photos, newspaper cutting or any other prop. Your presentation will probably be far more interesting if you can use something other than your voice!

9 In your conclusion try to summarise (very briefly – one or two sentences) what you have said, and try to end with a forward-looking view. This might be a summary of the main principles you have identified or some issues which have arisen and which have not been answered. Do not just reiterate your arguments. The end should 'feel' like a conclusion and not just be a 'well that's it'