

IB Internal Assessment

Topic-Picker & Top-Band Checklist — a free guide for IB students

Most IA marks are won or lost before a word is written — in the choice of question. Use this checklist to pick a topic that can reach the top band, then to pressure-test your draft against what examiners actually reward.

1 · Choose a question that can score

- **Make it narrow and specific** — not a broad theme. "How does X affect Y (over this range)?" beats "a study of Y."
- **Make it answerable with data or evidence** you can personally generate or gather, not just describe what's already known.
- **State what changes and what you measure** — name the independent and dependent variable (with range/units or scope) in the question itself.
- **Make it doable** — feasible with the time, equipment, sources or access you actually have.
- **Pick something with a genuine question** — leaves room for real analysis and evaluation — if the answer is obvious, there's nothing to score.

2 · The five habits of every top-band IA

- **Focus** — a narrow, focused research question.
- **Argue** — analysis and evaluation, not description or storytelling.
- **Evaluate** — discuss limitations with their impact, and name a specific improvement or extension.
- **Structure** — write criterion by criterion against the published rubric; cover every strand.
- **Discipline** — stay within the word/page limit and cite every source properly.

3 · Before you submit — quick criteria check

- ☐ My research question is specific and stated up front.
- ☐ Every assessment criterion for my subject is explicitly addressed.
- ☐ I analyse and evaluate — I don't just describe.
- ☐ Limitations are weighed by impact, with an improvement or extension.
- ☐ I'm within the word/page limit.
- ☐ Every source (and any AI use) is cited correctly.

4 · Using AI honestly

The IB permits AI tools provided you acknowledge them honestly. Anything an AI produces that you use directly must be cited like any other source; using AI to do the work and passing it off as your own is academic misconduct. The IA must be your own.

Want the full, subject-specific version?

IA Studio has an examiner-written writing frame for the IA of every IB subject — with the real criteria, worked examples, a live top-band readiness check, and 24 topic ideas per subject. TOK & CAS are free.

Free to start at ibdp.ed-planner.com

