

IA & EE Foundation Kit



Summary

This guide is designed to move your major IB research projects—the **Extended Essay (EE)** and **Internal Assessments (IAs)**—from vague ideas to a concrete, workable plan.

At Lanterna, we have guided over **15,000 IB students** to success for more than two decades. We know what separates a top-scoring project from a frustrating one: a solid foundation. This playbook, built on the expertise of our **500+ expert IB tutors**, is your expert resource to build that foundation and eliminate the stress of "where to start."

After using this guide, you will be able to:

Choose a viable, high-interest EE subject and supervisor using the 3-Circle Test.

Brainstorm and **validate** IA/EE ideas using the "Is It Measurable?" test.

Develop focused, researchable questions (RQs) using proven templates.

Find and assess high-quality academic sources using the 30-Minute Source Scan.

Create a simple, effective data collection and methods plan for any subject group.

Implement a "Low-and-Slow" weekly schedule to ensure consistent progress and avoid last-minute panic.

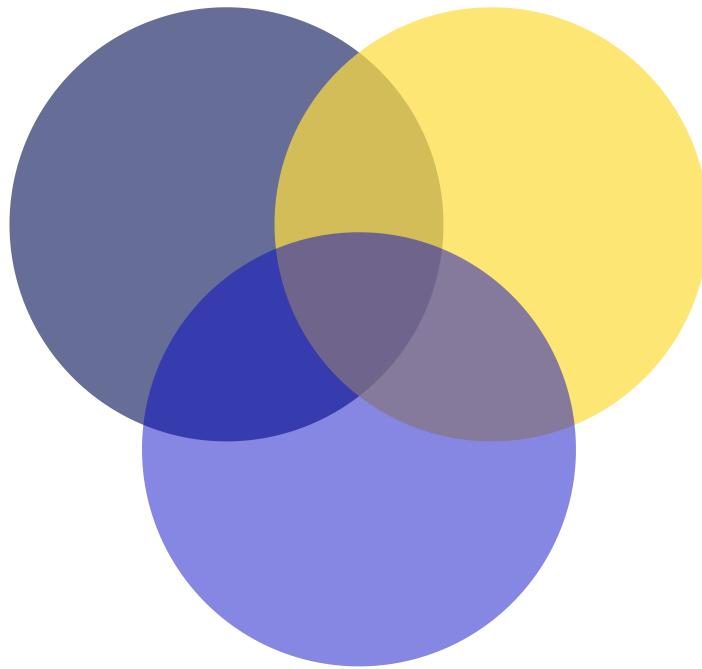


Part 1: The EE Subject Chooser

Your EE is a 4,000-word, 40+ hour commitment. Don't choose a subject you dislike. Use our 3-Circle Test to find your match.

Draw three overlapping circles. Label them:

1. **Passion:** Subjects you genuinely enjoy (even on a Saturday).
2. **Proficiency:** Subjects you score well in (your "7s" or "6s").
3. **Support:** Subjects where you have access to a great, engaged supervisor.



Your ideal EE subject is in the dead centre. If there's no overlap, your priority should be the overlap between **Passion** and **Support**. A great supervisor can help you build proficiency.



Part 2: IA Idea Checklist (By Subject Group)

A great IA is focused and personal. It's a chance to show engagement with a small part of the syllabus. Use this checklist to brainstorm.

Group 1 & 2 (Languages)

- ☐ Is there a text, speech, or set of ads I found genuinely interesting?
- ☐ Is there a cultural element (e.g., a "stereotype," "translation issue") I can analyse?
- ☐ Can I compare two texts or a text and its film adaptation?

Group 3 (Individuals & Societies):

- ☐ Can I apply a key theory (e.g., Nudge Theory in Psych, Scarcity in Econ) to a local, real-world case study?
- ☐ Is there a current event (e.g., a new policy, a local business) I can investigate?
- ☐ Can I get (ethical) primary data (surveys, interviews) or high-quality secondary data?

Group 4 (Sciences):

- ☐ Is there a syllabus experiment I can meaningfully extend? (Don't just repeat it).
- ☐ Can I change an independent variable (e.g., temperature, concentration, pH) that is not obvious?
- ☐ Do I have a genuine "How does X affect Y?" question?
- ☐ Is the equipment realistically available at my school?

Group 5 (Maths):

- ☐ Is there a real-world problem I can model (e.g., traffic flow, disease spread, portfolio risk)?
- ☐ Is there a mathematical concept (e.g., fractals, graph theory) that I want to explore beyond the syllabus?
- ☐ Can I clearly show why I chose this topic (personal engagement)?



Part 3: The "Is This Measurable?" Test

This is the **most important** test for any research topic. An unmeasurable idea is a failed project. Ask these four questions:

Question	What to think about
Can I define my variables?	Bad: "How does social media affect happiness?" Good: "How does daily time spent (in hours) on Instagram (Variable 1) correlate with self-reported mood scores (Variable 2) in 100 teenagers (Context)?"
What data would be the answer?	Is it a number? A survey response? A quote from a book? A historical document? A lab reading?
Can I realistically get this data?	Is it ethical? Do I have access? Do I have the time?
Can I analyze this data in the word count?	A topic that requires 50 pages is not an IA. Your goal is depth, not breadth.



The Lanterna Rule

If you can't state what you're measuring in a single sentence, your topic is too vague.



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Part 4: The 30-Minute Source Scan Routine

Don't commit to a topic before you know if sources exist. Use this 30-minute routine to validate your EE or IA idea.

1. Keyword Brainstorm

Write down 5-10 academic keywords for your topic. (e.g., NOT "teen sadness" but "adolescent psychology," "mood disorders," "social media," "correlation study").

2. Database Dive

Go to **Google Scholar** and your school's library database (e.g., JSTOR, EBSCO). Use your keywords. Scan titles and abstracts only. Your goal: find **3-5 highly relevant** academic papers or books.

3. "Snowball" Tactic

Open the one best paper you found. Go to its **bibliography**. Who do they cite? This is the fastest way to find the most important sources in your field.

4. The Verdict

If you found 3-5 good sources: Proceed. This topic is viable.

If you found 500+ sources: Your topic is too broad. Narrow it down.

If you found 0 sources: Your topic is too niche or you're using the wrong keywords. Pivot or re-think.



Part 5: Research Question Templates

A good RQ is your map. It should be **FOCUSED**, **RESEARCHABLE**, and **ARGUMENTATIVE**. Steal these templates.

Sciences (IA): "What is the effect of [Independent Variable, e.g., salinity] on [Dependent Variable, e.g., the germination rate] of [Organism, e.g., *Phaseolus vulgaris*]?"

Humanities (EE/IA): "To what extent does [Theory/Model, e.g., the Human Development Index] accurately reflect [Real-world issue, e.g., quality of life in Costa Rica]?"

History (EE/IA): "Why did [Event, e.g., the 1917 February Revolution] occur at [Time/Place] rather than earlier, and what role did [Specific Factor, e.g., propaganda] play?"

Literature (EE/IA): "How does [Author] use [Literary Device, e.g., unreliable narration] to challenge [Theme/Idea, e.g., concepts of memory] in [Text]?"



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Part 6: Sample Methods & Data Plans

Your "method" is how you'll answer your RQ. Your "data plan" is what you'll collect.

Subject Area	Research Question (Example)	Method	Data Plan (What to Collect)
Biology	Effect of pH on enzyme activity.	Controlled Lab Experiment	5 trials for 6-8 different pH levels (e.g., pH 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9). Record results (e.g., time for colour change) in a pre-made table.
Economics	Impact of a new local sugar tax.	Primary & Secondary Research	Primary: 10-question survey for 50 local consumers. Secondary: News articles and official government reports on the tax.
History	Historians' debate on Historian A vs. Historian B on the causes of the Spanish Civil War.	Comparative Source Analysis (OPCVL)	2-3 key academic texts from each historian/perspective. Create a table to compare their main arguments, evidence used, and potential biases.
Literature	How does F. Scott Fitzgerald present the "American Dream" in <i>The Great Gatsby</i> ?	Textual & Critical Analysis	Primary: 10-15 key quotes from the novel. Secondary: 3-4 literary critiques on the topic to engage with.



Part 7: The "Low-and-Slow" Weekly Schedule

The biggest mistake is leaving your IA/EE for two weekends. You'll burn out, and the quality will suffer. Instead, use the **3x30 Rule** to make consistent, low-stress progress.

Slot 1 (e.g., Tuesday
4:00-4:30 PM):
Reading &
Annotation

Goal: Read one new
academic source.

Action: Highlight key
quotes and write a 3-
sentence summary of its
main argument.

Slot 2 (e.g., Thursday
7:00-7:30 PM):
Writing & Synthesis

Goal: Produce words.

Action: "Free-write" for
30 minutes. Don't edit.
Just write about what
you've learned. How
does it connect to your
RQ? Where do you
agree/disagree?

Slot 3 (e.g., Saturday
10:00-10:30 AM):
Admin & Planning

Goal: Organise and plan.

Action: Add all new
sources to your
bibliography (perfectly
formatted!). Write down
3 bullet points for what
you need to do next
week.

This 90-minute weekly investment fits around school deadlines, builds your project brick-by-brick, and eliminates last-minute panic.

You now have a solid foundation. The next step is to build upon it.



What if I feel stuck?

Sometimes all you need is a little extra guidance to save countless hours of frustration. Lanterna's tutors are IB experts who've been exactly where you are.

More than just teaching content, they'll coach you on how to study smarter, manage your time, and build habits that lead to top marks. We've helped students go from 3s to 7s in a few months, and you can do the same with the right support.

Our 500+ IB Experts include



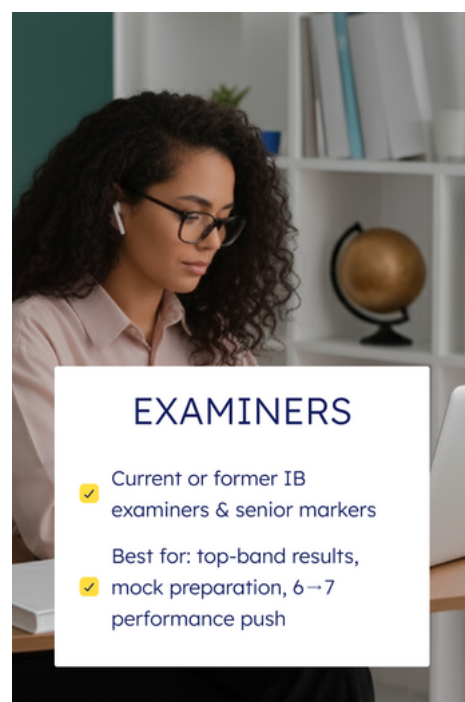
GRADUATES

- ✓ Scored 40+ in the IB and 7s in the subjects they teach
- Best for: skill-building,
- ✓ relatable mentorship, steady grade improvement



TEACHERS

- ✓ Certified educators with 10+ years' IB experience
- Best for: curriculum clarity,
- ✓ concept mastery, confidence building



EXAMINERS

- ✓ Current or former IB examiners & senior markers
- Best for: top-band results,
- ✓ mock preparation, 6→7 performance push



Who is tutoring for?

Over the course of 21+ Years, Lanterna has supported over 15,000 IB students. Our students on average get 1.5+ points on their final IB score per subject, and over 75% get into their first choice uni!

The students that benefit the most are those that:

1

If You Feel Stuck and Can't Catch Up

When you've fallen behind, it's hard to know where to start. A tutor who's recently aced your subject gives you focused guidance so you catch up fast, cut wasted time, and boost your chances of top grades.

2

If you're unsure how to study or tackle IAs

Not sure how to approach your IA, EE, or revision? Our tutors break everything down step by step so you know exactly what to do, avoid time-wasting, and get it right the first time.

3

If you struggle with motivation

Your problem might not be content, but how you work. With hundreds of top IB graduates, we coach you on smart habits, time management, and efficient study—not just the syllabus.

Get started with a [free consultation with one of student success experts](#) where they will give you genuine advice on how to best manage your journey. No strings attached

