

# Your knowledge apprenticeship

**John Sprague** shows how your IB Diploma can be considered as a 'knowledge apprenticeship'



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One helpful way to think of your journey as a 'knower' is to consider yourself as a sort of apprentice into various communities of knowers. In many professions and jobs, the way you become a member is through a system called 'apprenticeship'. What apprenticeships do is provide knowledge of facts and skills that help individual knowers shift from being an outsider to a community to being a 'novice' within the community, a journey that, if continued, might move them towards being an 'expert' in that community. Members of these communities then build on the overall knowledge and techniques to help the knowledge base of that community grow and develop as they find new techniques and discover new facts in their fields.

## The IB journey

The overall philosophy of the IB Diploma is similar to this process in terms of the 'academic' subjects you



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take (including TOK). While there is a lot of learning involved, the subject guides for each of your subjects encourage, and assess, the actual doing of the subject. Consider your internal assessments for instance: in each



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of them you complete a piece of genuine research in the field. You're not just writing a report on what others in the field have said, but you are asking a question and then demonstrating the subject-based skills that you've developed by researching, thinking, and presenting your response in a way that is appropriate to that subject.

This is similar to an apprentice's journey: first you watch and learn; then you begin to take up the tools on smaller projects or essays; then you shift into larger projects, taking more and more responsibility, until finally you can complete the job in the same way that the experts in the field do it. Though it might take many years before you are considered an expert.

You will not go on to become an expert in all of your subjects, and you may go on to become an expert in something else entirely, but for now you are an apprentice into the various disciplines you are studying at IB. If you are a full DP candidate, you are becoming a mathematician, and you're becoming a fluent language speaker through your language course. Through your group 1 course, you are becoming a literary critic. If you take group 6 art, you're learning the processes and

reflective processes needed to become an artist. Group 4 teaches you some of the facts, rules and methods that you will need to know if you become a scientist.

For each subject you take, there is a group of professionals in that field, and the work you do during your IB years might be the early stages of an apprenticeship in that field should you decide to continue in that direction.

## Knowing and not knowing

Thinking of yourself as an apprentice knower is helpful when exploring a certain dynamic between knowing and not knowing. TOK is largely about thinking about that dynamic:

- What are the core facts and methods needed in a community of knowers?
- How does that community accept new members?
- In what ways do these communities shape how their members think or behave in the world?

Your journey towards knowledge has just begun. Use the skills you're developing to become a better knower.

### Task

For each of your subjects, make a list of *knowledge required* and *skills required* to be a successful practitioner in that field. Think about what your teachers have asked you to do and what information they've given you, and what skills and knowledge you've developed through your own research. Show this list to your subject teachers and see what they think. Are there elements that you've missed out? Have your teachers ever considered themselves as experts teaching a trade to an apprentice before?

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