# ECLASSOPEDIA

*Your Gateway to IB Excellence*

# IB Internal Assessment
## Top Scoring Examples Breakdown

2026 Edition

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Covers all major IB subjects

# Foreword from Eclassopedia

The Internal Assessment (IA) is one of the most significant — and most misunderstood — components of the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Programme. It is not simply another school assignment. It is a student's opportunity to demonstrate genuine intellectual curiosity, independent thinking, and subject mastery in a controlled, self-directed format.

At Eclassopedia, we have worked alongside thousands of IB students across the globe, helping them navigate every aspect of the Diploma Programme — from Theory of Knowledge to Extended Essays, and most critically, their Internal Assessments. Year after year, we see the same patterns: students who understand what a top-scoring IA looks like consistently outperform those who work in isolation.

This document is designed to bridge that gap. Compiled from our analysis of hundreds of top-scoring IAs across Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Mathematics (AI & AA), History, Economics, Psychology, and English Literature, this guide breaks down exactly what earns a 7 — and what separates a good IA from a great one.

Whether you are a student just beginning your IA journey or an educator looking for exemplar benchmarks, the 2026 edition of this guide is the most comprehensive resource Eclassopedia has ever produced. Use it wisely, think independently, and remember: the best IAs are always driven by genuine curiosity.

**— The Eclassopedia Academic Team, 2026**

# Section 1: Understanding the IB Internal Assessment

## 1.1 What Is the IA?

The Internal Assessment is a graded component of every IB Diploma subject. Unlike external examinations, the IA is completed during the course of study and marked initially by the student's own teacher, then moderated by the IB. It constitutes between 20% and 30% of the final grade depending on the subject, making it an indispensable pillar of the Diploma.

The purpose of the IA is to allow students to demonstrate skills that cannot easily be tested in a timed written examination — namely, sustained inquiry, research methodology, data handling, nuanced interpretation, and the ability to structure a complex academic argument over an extended piece of writing.

## 1.2 Why Top-Scoring IAs Matter

Understanding what a top-scoring IA looks like is not about copying a formula. It is about internalising the standard. When you read a Level 7 Biology IA, you begin to intuit the precision of language, the calibration of data presentation, and the intellectual honesty in evaluating methodology. These qualities cannot be reduced to a checklist — they must be absorbed through exposure.

Top-scoring IAs share several universal qualities across all subjects:

- A focused, original research question that is neither too broad nor too narrow
- Evidence of genuine personal engagement with the subject matter
- Methodologically sound approach, clearly justified and consistently applied
- Precise, subject-appropriate academic language throughout
- Honest, balanced evaluation that acknowledges limitations without undermining the work
- Correct and thorough referencing and citation of sources

## 1.3 The IB Assessment Rubric — A Universal Foundation

While each subject has its own specific criteria, the IB assessment framework shares common threads. Understanding these cross-subject principles helps students calibrate their work regardless of discipline.

**Core Principle of IB Assessment:**

The IB rewards intellectual honesty, conceptual clarity, and methodological rigour above narrative sophistication or volume of content. A focused, precise IA of 2,000 words will consistently outscore a sprawling, unfocused 4,000-word submission.

# Section 2: Biology IA — Top Scoring Examples Breakdown

## 2.1 Overview of the Biology IA

The Biology IA is a scientific investigation worth 20% of the final grade. Students design, conduct, and report on an original experiment. The word limit is approximately 3,000 words (6–12 pages including graphs and tables). Marking is out of 24 marks across five criteria.

| Criterion | Max Marks | Typical 7-Score |
|---|---|---|
| A — Personal Engagement | 2 | 2 |
| B — Exploration | 6 | 5–6 |
| C — Analysis | 6 | 5–6 |
| D — Evaluation | 6 | 5–6 |
| E — Communication | 4 | 4 |

## 2.2 Exemplar Topic: Effect of Substrate Concentration on Enzyme Activity

One of the highest-scoring IA exemplars in Biology involved an investigation into the effect of varying hydrogen peroxide concentration on the rate of catalase activity in potato tissue discs, measured by oxygen gas production using a gas syringe.

### What Made It a 7?

- The research question was precisely framed: 'How does the concentration of $H_2O_2$ (0.2–1.0 mol/dm³) affect the rate of $O_2$ production from potato catalase at 25°C?'
- Variables were exhaustively identified and controlled — pH, temperature, disc surface area, reaction time, and potato variety were all addressed
- Raw data tables included units, uncertainties (e.g., ±0.05 cm³ for gas syringe), and clear column headings
- Statistical treatment included mean, standard deviation, and t-tests with explicit interpretation
- Graphs were produced with error bars reflecting standard deviation, and anomalies were discussed
- Evaluation identified specific sources of systematic error — such as gas leakage at the syringe seal — and proposed realistic, literature-referenced improvements
- The student referenced peer-reviewed sources to contextualise their Vmax results within Michaelis-Menten kinetics

### Common Mistakes in Lower-Scoring Biology IAs

- Treating 'controlled variables' as a simple list without explaining how each was controlled
- Presenting processed data without showing the calculations clearly
- Writing a conclusion that merely restates results rather than evaluating them against a hypothesis or biological theory
- Failing to include uncertainties in data tables or error bars on graphs

## 2.3 Exemplar Topic: Effect of Light Wavelength on Photosynthesis Rate

Another highly-rated exemplar explored how different wavelengths of light (using colour filters: 430nm, 530nm, 630nm, and 680nm) affected the rate of photosynthesis in Elodea canadensis, measured by counting oxygen bubbles per minute.

This IA scored full marks in Personal Engagement because the student explicitly connected the investigation to their own curiosity sparked by a classroom demonstration about chlorophyll absorption spectra. The Exploration section was exemplary: the student included a full apparatus diagram, explained the choice of Elodea as a species (easily observable bubble production, widely used in photosynthesis research), and derived their wavelength choices from the absorption spectrum of chlorophyll a and b.

**Eclassopedia Tip — Personal Engagement:**

Personal engagement is not about using first-person language. It is about demonstrating that the investigation emerged from your own thinking. The best Personal Engagement sections explain *why* the student chose this particular variable, and what prior experience or knowledge motivated the question.

# Section 3: Chemistry IA — Top Scoring Examples Breakdown

## 3.1 Overview of the Chemistry IA

The Chemistry IA follows the same five-criterion, 24-mark structure as Biology. Students are expected to demonstrate understanding of chemical concepts through a rigorous experimental investigation, with particular emphasis on quantitative data analysis, error propagation, and theoretical justification of observations.

| Criterion | Max Marks | Typical 7-Score |
|---|---|---|
| A — Personal Engagement | 2 | 2 |
| B — Exploration | 6 | 5–6 |
| C — Analysis | 6 | 5–6 |
| D — Evaluation | 6 | 5–6 |
| E — Communication | 4 | 3–4 |

## 3.2 Exemplar Topic: Vitamin C Concentration in Fruit Juices via Iodometric Titration

A consistently high-scoring Chemistry IA topic involves determining the concentration of ascorbic acid (Vitamin C) in various fruit juices using iodometric back-titration. The elegance of this investigation lies in its accessibility, its connection to real-world nutrition science, and the scope it provides for rigorous quantitative analysis.

### Key Features of the Top-Scoring Example

- The student performed a minimum of five trials per juice sample across four different juices, yielding statistically robust data sets
- Percentage uncertainty was calculated for every piece of equipment — burette, pipette, balance — and propagated through to a final uncertainty in the calculated Vitamin C concentration
- The student compared their results to published nutritional data and used the discrepancy to anchor the evaluation section, attributing differences to oxidation of ascorbic acid upon exposure to air
- Primary and secondary sources were clearly differentiated, and all literature values were cited with full bibliographic information
- The Exploration section demonstrated a thorough understanding of the underlying chemistry — the student explained the redox reactions involved using half-equations

### Error Analysis Done Right

What distinguished this IA in the Evaluation criterion was the structured, three-tier approach to error analysis:

- Tier 1 — Systematic errors: explained with specific reference to the apparatus used (e.g., starch indicator turning colour gradually rather than sharply at endpoint)
- Tier 2 — Random errors: quantified using the propagated uncertainty, and contextualised relative to the final result
- Tier 3 — Procedural improvements: each improvement was specific, feasible, and explained in terms of how it would reduce the identified error

## 3.3 Exemplar Topic: Effect of Temperature on Activation Energy of a Clock Reaction

An advanced exemplar used the iodine clock reaction to investigate how temperature affects the rate of reaction and, by extension, to calculate the activation energy using the Arrhenius equation. This topic is ambitious and requires a strong understanding of chemical kinetics.

The student derived activation energy graphically by plotting ln(k) against 1/T and extracting the gradient (which equals -Ea/R). This demonstrated exemplary level Analysis: the student did not simply present the graph but explained the mathematical derivation of the Arrhenius equation, interpreted the linearity of the graph as evidence of Arrhenius behaviour, and discussed the significance of the y-intercept in terms of the pre-exponential factor.

**Eclassopedia Insight — The Arrhenius Approach:**

Using the Arrhenius equation to calculate activation energy from experimental data is one of the most impressive analytical approaches available to HL Chemistry IA students. If your topic involves temperature and rate, consider whether this is achievable — it consistently elevates an Analysis section from 4/6 to 6/6.

# Section 4: Physics IA — Top Scoring Examples Breakdown

## 4.1 Overview of the Physics IA

The Physics IA rewards mathematical rigour and precision above all else. Students are expected to design an experiment where physical relationships can be modelled mathematically, and where uncertainty analysis is integral to the interpretation of results. The investigation is worth 20% of the final grade.

| Criterion | Max Marks | Typical 7-Score |
|---|---|---|
| A — Personal Engagement | 2 | 2 |
| B — Exploration | 6 | 5–6 |
| C — Analysis | 6 | 6 |
| D — Evaluation | 6 | 5–6 |
| E — Communication | 4 | 4 |

## 4.2 Exemplar Topic: Investigating the Relationship Between Pendulum Length and Period

While this may appear to be a classic — some would say overly simple — topic, one of the highest-scoring Physics IAs on record used the simple pendulum to investigate the relationship between string length and oscillation period, ultimately deriving an experimental value of g (gravitational acceleration) and comparing it to the standard accepted value.

What made this submission exceptional was not the choice of topic, but the depth of treatment. The student:

- Used a photogate timer connected to a data-logging interface rather than a stopwatch, reducing timing uncertainty from approximately ±0.2s to ±0.001s
- Conducted 20 oscillations per trial and 10 trials per length, ensuring statistical robustness
- Plotted $T^2$ against L (linearising the relationship $T = 2\pi\sqrt{(L/g)}$) and used the gradient to extract g
- Included a rigorous uncertainty propagation from raw measurements through to the final derived value of g, with the result expressed as 9.79 ± 0.12 $m/s^2$
- Compared the experimental g to the local gravitational acceleration (accounting for latitude) rather than simply the standard 9.81 $m/s^2$
- Discussed how air resistance and the assumption of a point mass affected the theoretical model

## 4.3 Exemplar Topic: Investigating Magnetic Braking Using Lenz's Law

A more advanced exemplar investigated how the mass of a falling magnet through a copper tube affected the terminal velocity reached, as a way of exploring Lenz's law and electromagnetic induction quantitatively.

This investigation scored full marks across all criteria. The student designed a custom apparatus, modelled the forces acting on the magnet using Newton's second law combined with Faraday's law of induction, and derived a theoretical prediction for terminal velocity. The experimental results were within 4% of the theoretical model, and the residual discrepancy was attributed to the skin effect and non-uniformity of the magnetic field — both discussed with reference to physics literature.

**Eclassopedia Tip — Linearisation:**

One of the clearest markers of a high-scoring Physics IA is the linearisation of data. Rather than plotting a curved graph and claiming it 'looks like' a certain relationship, top students transform their data (e.g., plotting log(y) vs log(x), or $T^2$ vs L) to produce a straight line, extract the gradient, and compare it to the theoretically predicted value.

# Section 5: Mathematics IA — Top Scoring Examples Breakdown

## 5.1 Overview of the Mathematics IA (AA and AI)

The Mathematics IA — known as the Mathematical Exploration — is unique among IB assessments. It is a 12–20 page written exploration of a mathematical topic of the student's choice. There is no experiment; instead, the student investigates a mathematical idea, applies mathematical techniques, and reflects on the significance and beauty of what they have discovered.

The Exploration is marked out of 20 marks and is worth 20% of the final grade for both Mathematics: Analysis and Approaches (AA) and Mathematics: Applications and Interpretation (AI). Despite being the same assessment structure, the expectations differ slightly between the two courses: AA rewards abstract mathematical reasoning and proof, while AI rewards real-world application and mathematical modelling.

| Criterion | Max Marks | Typical 7-Score |
|---|---|---|
| A — Presentation | 4 | 3–4 |
| B — Mathematical Communication | 4 | 4 |
| C — Personal Engagement | 3 | 3 |
| D — Reflection | 3 | 3 |
| E — Use of Mathematics | 6 | 5–6 |

## 5.2 Exemplar Topic (AA): Exploring the Basel Problem and the Riemann Zeta Function

One of the most celebrated Mathematics AA IA exemplars in recent years explored the Basel Problem — the famous result that the sum of the reciprocals of the perfect squares equals $\pi^2/6$. The student examined Euler's original proof, identified its logical gap, explored Fourier series as an alternative path to the same result, and then extended the investigation to other values of the Riemann Zeta function.

### Why It Scored Maximum Marks

- The topic was original, deeply personal, and clearly motivated by the student's fascination with infinite series discovered during a Mathematical Methods course
- Mathematical communication was flawless: every symbol was defined, every step was justified, and the LaTeX typesetting produced clear, professional mathematical notation

- The Use of Mathematics criterion was at the highest level: the student engaged with Fourier series, complex analysis, and analytic continuation — all well beyond the syllabus
- Reflection was substantive and honest: the student acknowledged that Euler's original proof was not rigorous by modern standards and discussed what additional machinery (uniform convergence) was needed to make it watertight
- The Exploration had a clear narrative arc — it did not simply present known results, but guided the reader through a journey of mathematical discovery

## 5.3 Exemplar Topic (AI): Modelling the Spread of Viral Content on Social Media

A highly-regarded AI Mathematics IA used the SIR (Susceptible-Infected-Recovered) epidemic model to mathematically model the spread of a viral video on Twitter, fitting the model parameters to real data scraped from the platform using differential equations solved numerically in Python.

This IA demonstrated the hallmarks of excellent AI Mathematics work: real-world data, mathematical modelling, technology use (Python, GeoGebra), and thoughtful reflection on the limitations of the model. The student discussed why the basic SIR model underestimated the viral spread (due to network effects not captured in the uniform mixing assumption) and proposed a modified model incorporating network topology.

**Eclassopedia Key Insight — Mathematics IA:**

The single most common reason for a Mathematics IA scoring below 14/20 is a lack of 'personal engagement' in the mathematical sense. Students describe a topic but do not explore it. The best Explorations ask 'What if?' and pursue the answer mathematically, showing genuine curiosity rather than summarising existing knowledge.

# Section 6: History IA — Top Scoring Examples Breakdown

## 6.1 Overview of the History IA (Historical Investigation)

The History IA, officially called the Historical Investigation, is a 2,200-word essay structured around a central historical question. It is marked out of 25 marks and is worth 25% of the final grade. Unlike the science IAs, the History IA is a work of historical scholarship: students must identify, select, and evaluate primary and secondary sources, then construct a coherent, evidence-based argument.

| Criterion | Max Marks | Typical 7-Score |
|---|---|---|
| A — Identification and Evaluation of Sources | 6 | 5–6 |
| B — Investigation | 15 | 13–15 |
| C — Reflection | 4 | 3–4 |

## 6.2 Exemplar Topic: To What Extent Did Propaganda Shape Public Support for the Nazi Regime?

This Historical Investigation earned near-maximum marks by combining a tightly focused research question with sophisticated source evaluation and a nuanced argument that went beyond the obvious.

### Criterion A — Source Evaluation

The two sources evaluated for OPCVL (Origin, Purpose, Content, Value, Limitation) were Victor Klemperer's diaries and Joseph Goebbels' own diary entries. The student demonstrated advanced understanding by:

- Noting that Klemperer's value lay in his position as a Jewish academic who remained in Germany, giving him an insider perspective unavailable to foreign observers
- Identifying the limitation of Goebbels' diary as a source produced for eventual publication, calling into question its candour
- Avoiding the common error of treating limitations as making a source 'unreliable' — instead framing them as contextual factors that shape how the source can be used

### Criterion B — Investigation

The essay argued that propaganda was necessary but not sufficient to explain the Nazi regime's popular support — a more nuanced position than simply arguing 'propaganda was effective.' The student marshalled evidence from Ian Kershaw's work on the Hitler Myth, sociological

studies of everyday compliance, and economic recovery statistics to build a multi-causal argument.

## 6.3 Key Principles for a Top-Scoring History IA

- The research question must be specific enough to be answered in 2,200 words — 'Why did World War Two happen?' is impossible; 'To what extent did Stalin's purges weaken Soviet military effectiveness in the Winter War?' is ideal
- Source evaluation must demonstrate understanding of how a source's origin and purpose affect its value — not just what it says
- The argument must be structured, with each paragraph advancing the overall contention
- Historians must be cited and their interpretations engaged with directly, not merely used as fact-providers
- The Reflection section must go beyond saying 'historians face challenges' — it must connect to the specific methodological challenges encountered in this investigation

# Section 7: Economics IA — Top Scoring Examples Breakdown

## 7.1 Overview of the Economics IA

The Economics IA portfolio consists of three commentaries, each between 650 and 800 words, based on recent news articles from published media. The three commentaries must cover microeconomics, macroeconomics, and international economics/development respectively. The portfolio is worth 20% of the final grade and is marked out of 45 (15 marks per commentary).

| Criterion | Max Marks | Typical 7-Score |
|---|---|---|
| A — Diagrams | 3 | 3 |
| B — Terminology | 2 | 2 |
| C — Application | 2 | 2 |
| D — Analysis | 4 | 3–4 |
| E — Evaluation | 4 | 3–4 |

## 7.2 Exemplar Microeconomics Commentary

A top-scoring microeconomics commentary analysed the effect of a proposed sugar tax in Mexico on the market for carbonated beverages, using a recent Bloomberg article as its news source.

### What Earned Full Marks

- The diagram was hand-drawn (as required), clearly labelled with P1, P2, Q1, Q2, a proper demand curve shift, and a well-explained consumer and producer surplus analysis
- Economic terminology was used precisely and consistently — the student never conflated 'price' with 'cost' or 'demand' with 'quantity demanded'
- The application linked the theory directly to the specific details of the article — citing the proposed tax rate, the target beverage category, and the health statistics cited
- The analysis used the concept of price elasticity of demand to argue that the tax would have a relatively small effect on consumption due to the inelastic nature of addictive goods
- The evaluation was genuinely balanced: the student acknowledged that the tax might be regressive (affecting lower-income consumers disproportionately) before concluding that the combined revenue and public health effects would likely justify implementation

## 7.3 Common Errors in Economics IAs

- Using diagrams that are not connected to the commentary's analysis — diagrams must be explicitly referred to in the text
- Writing purely descriptive application that merely summarises the article without applying economic theory
- Evaluation that presents only one perspective, or that lists 'advantages and disadvantages' without a synthesising conclusion
- Exceeding the 800-word limit — any content beyond 800 words is not assessed by the IB moderator

# Section 8: Psychology IA — Top Scoring Examples Breakdown

## 8.1 Overview of the Psychology IA

The Psychology IA is a partial replication of a published psychological study. Students are required to replicate the design (not necessarily the exact procedure) of an existing experiment, collect data from human participants, and write a formal research report. The IA is worth 25% of the final grade and is marked out of 22.

| Criterion | Max Marks | Typical 7-Score |
|---|---|---|
| A — Introduction | 6 | 5–6 |
| B — Exploration | 4 | 3–4 |
| C — Analysis | 6 | 5–6 |
| D — Evaluation | 6 | 5–6 |

## 8.2 Exemplar Study: Partial Replication of Stroop (1935)

A highly-scored Psychology IA replicated the Stroop effect — the finding that reaction time is significantly longer when colour words are printed in an incongruent ink colour (e.g., the word 'RED' printed in blue ink) compared to when they are congruent or neutral.

While the Stroop experiment is one of the most commonly replicated in psychology, what distinguished this IA was the Introduction and Evaluation sections.

### Introduction Excellence

The student did not merely describe the Stroop effect. They built a theoretical framework that included:

- A review of the original Stroop (1935) study and its key findings
- MacLeod's (1991) comprehensive review of the Stroop literature, establishing the robustness of the phenomenon
- An explanation of the dual-process theory (automatic vs. controlled processing) as the current best theoretical account
- A clearly stated, directional null hypothesis and alternative hypothesis

### Analysis Excellence

The student conducted an independent samples t-test to compare mean reaction times in the congruent and incongruent conditions. The analysis section included:

- A table of descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, range) with appropriate units
- A correctly labelled box plot showing the distribution of scores in each condition
- A clearly explained t-test calculation, with t-value, degrees of freedom, and p-value reported
- A statement of whether the null hypothesis was accepted or rejected at the $p < 0.05$ significance level
- An explicit discussion of what the statistical result means in terms of the research question

# Section 9: English Literature IA — Top Scoring Examples Breakdown

## 9.1 Overview of the English Literature IA (Individual Oral)

The English Language and Literature IA takes the form of an Individual Oral — a 10-minute prepared presentation followed by a 5-minute discussion with the teacher. Students choose a global issue and explore how it is reflected in a literary work (studied in class) and a non-literary text of their choice. The Oral is worth 30% of the final SL grade or 20% at HL.

| Criterion | Max Marks | Typical 7-Score |
|---|---|---|
| A — Knowledge, Understanding, Interpretation | 10 | **8–10** |
| B — Analysis and Evaluation | 10 | **8–10** |
| C — Focus and Organisation | 10 | **9–10** |
| D — Language | 10 | **8–10** |

## 9.2 Exemplar Global Issue: The Silencing of Marginalised Voices

One of the strongest Individual Oral exemplars focused on the global issue of 'the systematic silencing of marginalised communities through language and narrative control.' The student examined this issue through Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's novel Americanah and Susan Sontag's essay 'Regarding the Pain of Others.'

### What Made It Exceptional

- The global issue was specific and intellectually rich — not simply 'racism' or 'inequality,' but a precisely defined communicative dimension of oppression
- The student spent exactly 5 minutes on each text, demonstrating excellent time management and planning
- Analysis of Adichie's novel focused on three key passages where Ifemelu's blog posts are contrasted with her spoken silence in white American social contexts, analysed through close reading of syntax, register, and narrative voice
- Analysis of Sontag's essay focused on her argument about the ethics of photographic representation, examining how Sontag's own authorial choices (use of rhetorical questions, inclusive 'we') implicate the reader in the silencing process
- The connection between the two texts was organic and insightful: both authors position the reader as complicit in the silencing they critique, but through different formal strategies
- Language throughout the Oral was precise, fluent, and appropriately academic without being stilted

## 9.3 Choosing Your Global Issue

The choice of global issue is arguably the most important decision in the Individual Oral. A poorly chosen issue leads to a superficial, forced analysis. The best global issues are:

- Specific enough to enable precise literary analysis (avoid: 'gender inequality'; prefer: 'the social construction of femininity through domestic language')
- Genuinely present in both chosen texts at a thematic and formal level
- Connected to a body of critical thought the student can draw on
- Personally meaningful to the student — authentic engagement is perceptible and rewarded

# Section 10: Universal Strategies for a Level 7 IA

## 10.1 Start With a Research Question That Is Yours

The most important piece of advice Eclassopedia gives every student is this: your IA research question must emerge from your own thinking. It should reflect something you genuinely want to know, not something you found on a 'list of good IA topics' online.

IB examiners are experienced readers who can immediately detect when a student is going through the motions versus when they are genuinely engaged. Personal engagement is not just a criterion — it is the animating force that elevates every other aspect of the work.

## 10.2 Plan Your Methodology Before You Begin

Students who score highly in the Exploration and Analysis criteria almost always report that they spent significant time planning their methodology before collecting any data or writing any content. This planning phase involves:

- Identifying all variables and considering how each will be controlled
- Conducting a pilot study to identify practical difficulties before the full investigation
- Designing data tables in advance so that the structure of collection is clear
- Understanding what statistical or mathematical analysis will be applied, and ensuring the data collected is appropriate for that analysis

## 10.3 Write the Evaluation Last — But Think About It First

The Evaluation section is where many students lose marks unnecessarily. A strong Evaluation does three things: it interprets the results in relation to the research question and relevant theory; it identifies specific, realistic sources of error and estimates their impact; and it proposes specific, methodologically grounded improvements.

The word 'specific' is critical. 'The experiment could be improved by being more careful' is not an improvement suggestion. 'Replacing the hand-started stopwatch with a photogate timer would reduce timing uncertainty from ±0.2s to ±0.001s, reducing the percentage uncertainty in the period from 2% to 0.01%' is an improvement suggestion.

## 10.4 Referencing and Academic Integrity

Every piece of information in your IA that comes from a source — a textbook, a journal article, a website — must be referenced. The IB accepts multiple citation styles (APA, MLA, Chicago), but consistency within a single document is mandatory. Eclassopedia recommends APA 7th edition for science subjects and MLA 9th edition for humanities.

**Academic Integrity Warning:**
The IB takes academic integrity extremely seriously. Using AI tools to write or substantially assist in writing your IA constitutes academic misconduct. The use of AI for research assistance (e.g., finding sources, understanding concepts) may be permissible depending on your school's policy, but any submitted work must be authentically your own. Eclassopedia supports genuine student learning — use this guide to understand excellence, not to replicate it.

## 10.5 The Revision Process

Top-scoring IAs are never produced in a single draft. The revision process should include:

- Self-assessment against the IB marking rubric after a first draft
- Peer review by a classmate with experience in the subject
- Teacher feedback — and genuine engagement with that feedback, not merely cosmetic changes
- A final proofreading pass focused on language precision, subject-specific terminology, and consistency of formatting
- Checking that all diagrams, graphs, and tables are properly labelled and referred to in the text

# Section 11: Subject-by-Subject Quick Reference

## Common Mistakes to Avoid — By Subject

### Biology & Chemistry & Physics

- Omitting units from data tables
- Failing to propagate uncertainties through calculations
- Writing a conclusion that does not refer back to the original hypothesis
- Identifying 'random error' as a limitation without quantifying it
- Selecting a topic that is insufficiently original or too similar to a textbook practical

### Mathematics (AA & AI)

- Exploring a topic without any original mathematical extension — merely summarising existing knowledge
- Using the wrong level of mathematics for the course (AI students using highly abstract proofs; AA students avoiding algebraic precision)
- Failing to define mathematical notation before using it
- Not reflecting on the significance, limitations, or generalisability of the mathematical results

### History

- Evaluating sources without connecting the evaluation to how the limitation affects its use in this specific investigation
- Writing a narrative history rather than an analytical argument
- Using only one type of source (e.g., only secondary sources, or only British sources for a topic about Britain)
- Exceeding the 2,200-word limit (footnotes, bibliography, and the evaluation of sources section are not included in the word count)

### Economics

- Diagrams that are not explicitly linked to and referenced in the text
- Commentaries that simply describe what happened in the article without applying theory
- Exceeding 800 words — the hard limit is strictly enforced by IB moderators

### Psychology

- A hypothesis that is not clearly operationalised
- Ethics section that lists ethical guidelines without explaining how they were applied in this study
- An inferential statistics section that states the test result without interpreting it in context

## English Literature (Individual Oral)

- A global issue that is too broad or insufficiently rooted in the texts chosen
- Spending too long on plot summary rather than close textual analysis
- Failing to connect the two texts meaningfully around the global issue
- Running over the 10-minute time limit, which reduces the available discussion time and can affect Language marks

# Conclusion: The Eclassopedia Philosophy

The Internal Assessment is the IB's most powerful tool for rewarding genuine intellectual effort. It is the component that most clearly distinguishes rote learners from genuine thinkers, and it is the component where the right guidance makes the most dramatic difference.

At Eclassopedia, we believe that every student is capable of producing a Level 7 IA. The gap between a student who scores 5 and a student who scores 7 is rarely one of intelligence — it is almost always one of understanding: understanding what the criteria are actually rewarding, understanding what exemplar work looks like, and understanding the specific revision strategies that close the gap between good work and exceptional work.

We hope this 2026 breakdown has given you a clear, actionable picture of what top-scoring IAs look like across the most commonly taken IB subjects. Use the exemplar analyses not as templates to replicate, but as benchmarks to aspire to. The investigation you conduct should be your own — driven by your curiosity, executed with rigour, and written with clarity.

If you would like one-on-one support with any aspect of your IA — from research question formulation to final draft review — our team of specialist IB tutors is available through the Eclassopedia platform. We wish you every success in your IB journey.

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