

How to structure a theory of knowledge presentation

By Tim Woods¹

The following Theory of Knowledge presentation structure has been designed very carefully. (It's taken about 2 years of conversations!) It's easy for you to follow and ticks all the boxes. It tells you how many slides to have (eight), what text should go on each slide and what you should talk about while each slide is up. A clear structure like this is essential because it helps the audience follow what you're saying. It also keeps you from wasting time, both during your presentation and in your preparation phase.

There are a few things I need to go over before we get into the slides.

The Development Section

When you get into the Development section (where the knowledge question is explored and analysed with reference to the AOKs and WOKs), you'll see that we use a Claim, Counterclaim, Mini-Conclusion structure. We do this (claim, counterclaim, mini-conclusion) for each of your developments (AOKs or WOKs), so we do it 3 times in total.

Here's an example, for one of your developments:

- Your **claim** might be that all art is ethical and you show this using some theory (evidence) from the course.
- Your **counterclaim** is a problem (a limitation) with your claim, or an opposing idea in the same perspective. It might be that art can be viewed in a different way, which would show it to be unethical. You show this using (as evidence) an example from your own life experience or knowledge referenced material or material studied in some other theory from the course.

¹ <http://www.timwoods.org/2013/09/13/how-to-structure-a-theory-of-knowledge-presentation/> Accessed on 9th of September 2015

- And then, in the **mini-conclusion**, you basically have to find a way to draw together the two opposing sides. You have to somehow synthesise these two insights to arrive at a more insightful understanding or some kind of summary. So you might say that art can be both ethical and unethical at the same time, depending on the perspective taken and then explain how that might be true. So the MC is a possible conclusion to your KQ (Knowledge Question).

In the final conclusion of the presentation you will try to combine (draw together/synthesise) the insights of this mini-conclusion as well as the other ones (from the 2 other development sections) to show a really sophisticated/developed answer to your KQ.

Using Evidence

Use evidence for each of your claims and your counterclaims. It will make your talk much more compelling.

Evidence can be:

- Examples of from the course or from your research. For example, stories of real scientific experiments or how society responded to a certain piece of art.
- Personal examples. Specific and realistic examples from your own life experiences are highly valued in this course. So you might tell us about something that you did in IB Biology class, or when you suspected a classmate of cheating.

Now let's go through the structure of your presentation, slide by slide. (The suggested timings **in green** are **assuming you're in a group of two.**)

*The Structure***Slide 1: Title Page (1 minute)**

Text on this slide:

- Title of your presentation.
- Your group members' names

What to say:

- Explain what you thought about the real life situation (RLS) when you first encountered it.
- Explain why it's significant to you.

Slide 2: Decontextualization (1 minute)

Text on this slide:

- Some of the thoughts or questions you had about the real life situation. Start explaining the situation in a ToK sort of way –using some of the key terms from the course.

What to say:

- Explain a few of the things we can know about the RLS and how we know it. For example, our senses may provide some insights, while emotion provides other ones.
- Explain that there may be limits to what can be known about your RLS.

Slide 3: Knowledge Question (1 minute)

Text on this slide:

- Write down your KQ
- List the AOKs and/or WOKs you will use to explore your KQ and how they are related to your KQ

What to say:

- Mention 2 KQs that you considered and the one you are investigating.
- Explain how this KQ will help you to explain the RLS.
- For each of your AOKs/WOKs, preview how they can help to answer your KQ.
- Explain any assumptions you've made about your KQ (if any).
- Explain any key terms that need to be explained in order for us to understand your KQ.

Slide 4: Development #1 (3.5 minutes)

On the slide:

- Very briefly, state your claim for WOK/AOK #1 (see development example above). State how it is supported by evidence (i.e. a scientific theory).
- Very briefly, state your counterclaim for WOK/AOK #1 (i.e. an opposing idea in the same AOK/WOK). State how it is supported by evidence.
- State your mini-conclusion.

What to say:

- Explain the claim and how it is supported by evidence. Make it clear how it would answer the KQ.
- Explain the counterclaim and how it is supported by evidence. Make it clear how it would answer the KQ in a different way than your claim did.
- Explain your conclusion and how it ties together the claim and counterclaim.

Slide 5: Development #2 (3.5 minutes)

On your slide:

- Very briefly, state your claim for WOK/AOK #2. State how it is supported by evidence.
- Very briefly, state your counterclaim for WOK/AOK #2. State how it is supported by evidence.
- State your mini-conclusion.

What to say:

- Explain the claim and how it is supported by evidence. Make it clear how it would answer the KQ.
- Explain the counterclaim and how it is supported by evidence. Make it clear how it would answer the KQ in a different way than your claim did.
- Explain your conclusion and how it ties together the claim and counterclaim.

Slide 6: Development #3 (3.5 minutes)

On your slide:

- Very briefly, state your claim for WOK/AOK #3. State how it is supported by evidence.
- Very briefly, state your counterclaim for WOK/AOK #3. State how it is supported by evidence.
- State your mini-conclusion.

What to say:

- Explain the claim and how it is supported by evidence. Make it clear how it would answer the KQ.
- Explain the counterclaim and how it is supported by evidence. Make it clear how it would answer the KQ in a different way than your claim did.
- Explain your conclusion and how it ties together the claim and counterclaim.

Slide 7: Conclusion (3 minutes)

On your slide:

- Write down your conclusion.
- Write down a possible flaw in your conclusion.

What to say:

- Explain your conclusion.
- Explain how this conclusion is supported by the insights you've drawn along the way (in your mini-conclusions).
- Explain the possible weakness or a flaw in your conclusion.
- Explain an example of someone from a different perspective (a different gender, age, time, or culture) who might disagree with this conclusion.

Slide 8: Link back to the RLS (3.5 minutes)

On your slide:

- Write 2 interesting ways that your conclusion applies to the RLS.
- Write down two other real life situations (which are perhaps related). If possible provide pictures for these two other situations, so they can be quickly understood. One of these should be personal to you (something one of you encountered) and another which is more of a shared experience.

What to say:

- Clarify how your conclusion applies to the RLS.
- Explain how this conclusion can help to explain 2 other real life situations you have on your slide.

Of course you are not required to follow this structure (unless your teacher says otherwise), but it is recommended. Everything in this structure is there for a very good reason.

Footer

I also recommend that every slide from #3 onward should have your KQ written on the bottom of it, as a footer. This will make it easier for the audience to relate your various insights to the knowledge question.

Signposting

Finally, to help to make sure that the person marking you gives you full credit, it's useful to do what we call signposting. This means, using the exact key words the marker was trained to look for. Professionals do this all the time. Their use of specialist language signals to their colleagues that they know what they're talking about. So try to speak like a TOK teacher basically. In this case, your marker will respond favourably if you use a fair amount of terminology you learned in the course. For example, use the term perspective. So you might say, "**from the perspective of a historian..**" rather than saying, "Historians believe that..." –just to get that word in there.

That's it!

Thanks for reading and good luck with everything!