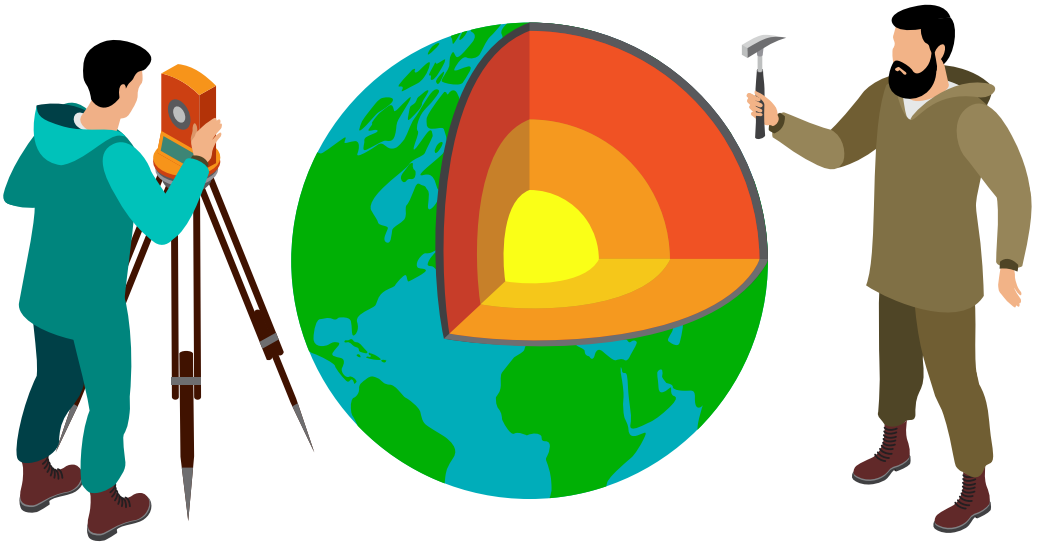


GEOGRAPHY IA GUIDE



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The Geography IA is worth 20% and 25% of your final IB grade (for HL and SL, respectively). How you perform in this piece of coursework is too often the difference between getting that points total you want and missing out on it. You have the time to do well in the IA, so why do students often fail to do themselves justice? In this guide, we will explore the common areas where students lose marks, preparing you to write a Geography IA that's out of this world!



1. What's it about?

The Geography IA is a 2500-word piece of fieldwork, investigated at a local scale and driven by primary data. It will be focused on one particular area of the syllabus. It is likely that your whole cohort will choose to investigate a similar topic which is why it is crucial you know what separates a top essay from a mediocre one. You might look into anything from river characteristics to the configuration of an urban area. For any Geography IA, however, you must write it in the same way.

2. So, how do I structure my essay?

Make sure you use the guide the IB provides us with. The document has many brief comments that tell us a lot about how to structure our reports. It's also something many IB students forget exists!

Section	Suggested Word Allocation	Marks
Fieldwork question and geographic context	300	3
Method(s) of investigation	300	3
Quality and treatment of information collected	500	6
Written analysis	850	8
Conclusion	200	2
Evaluation	300	3
Total	~2,450	25



As can be seen above, there are six parts to the IA. The first refers to the **Fieldwork question and geographic context**. This is all about locating the research within what you've learnt as well as explaining the context for the investigation (why and where). This section also requires us to present a map of the area we have decided to explore. Typically, hand-drawn, accurate maps are the most effective here. Note how the below example has a clear key, scale and orientation.

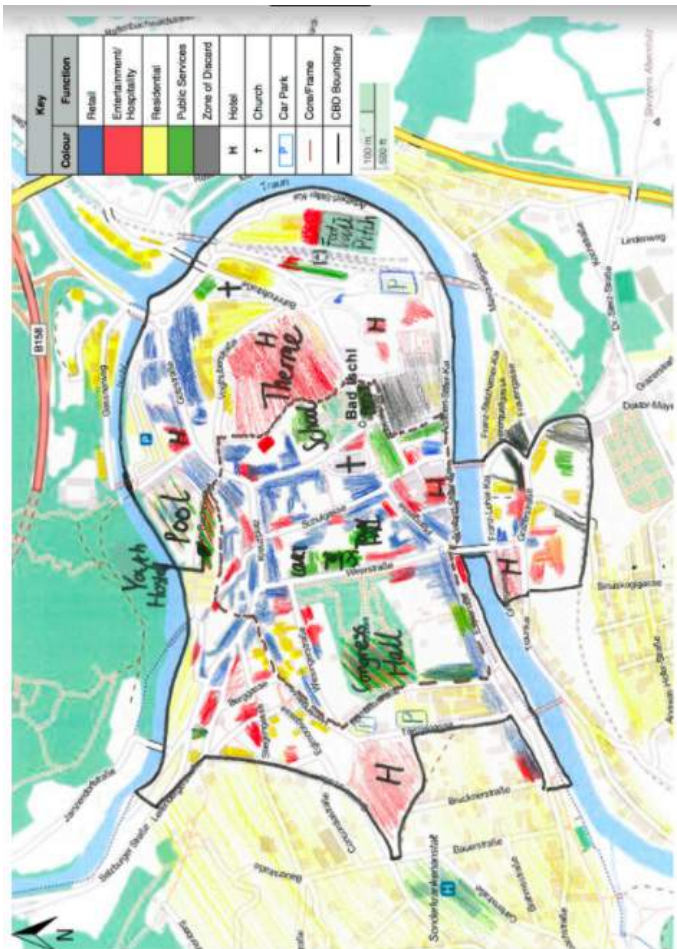


Fig. 5-Land-use map of Bad Ischl



3. What data do I need to collect?

The second criterion refers to the **Method of Investigation**. This involves essentially presenting what you did and why you chose to collect that data and in that particular way.

The idea behind this section is to show that you have conducted an investigation that will give rise to reliable and good quality data. An absence of good data will obviously not lend itself to a good quality analysis. You need to be a little pedantic in this section, thoroughly explaining the methodology

you used. The IB markers didn't go on the field trip with you, let them know exactly what you did and why. For instance, examine your choice in equipment. Why did you use a ruler with a millimetre scale? Why is precision important? Make sure you explain that you have collected both *quantitative* and *qualitative* data.

Quantitative Data: collected through measurement and may be processed using statistical and other techniques

Qualitative Data: collected through observation or subjective judgment and does not involve measurement

The latter of these two is frequently overlooked. In fact it is the qualitative data that provides us with the ability to both evaluate and later conclude. This is why we urge you to jot down observations when you are collecting data. Photographs and comments that you then incorporate into your analysis of the data (whether it fits your hypothesis or the geographic theory) can go a long way to separating a top essay, from an average one.

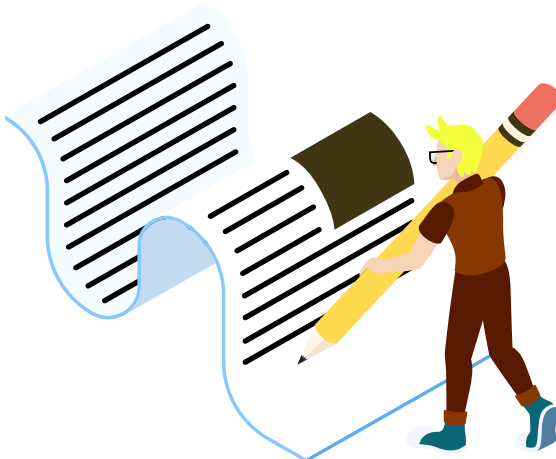


4. Which parts of my essay matter most?

The IB makes it clear that the brunt of marks for the IA will come from the quality of the data collected as well as the analysis of this data. In fact, 14 of the 25 marks for the assessment come from the two areas of **Quality and treatment of information collected** and **Written analysis**.

With regards to the former, it's not a good strategy to include absolutely everything you recorded - the appendix is a good place to put unprocessed data. The IB wants you to choose not only the most relevant data to address your hypothesis but also display it as appropriately and effectively as possible. You have graphs, tables, diagrams and pictures at your disposal - use a combination of these that can help a reader follow your investigation systematically. You can split up this part by the different sections of how you tested your hypothesis or by location. This might seem simple but we've read too many Geography IAs that aren't written logically.

The next part of your essay is all about explaining what this data shows with regards to your investigation - the **Written analysis**. Does the data fit what you expected? Does it fit with the geographical theory? In order to argue the relationship between the data and your hypothesis, you must use a combination of descriptive and statistical techniques.





Statistical Tests

Geography is a 'social science'. All too often, students neglect the second part of this phrase. Your IA should be heavily analytical. One great way of demonstrating this is through the use of statistical tests. Spearman's rank, confidence intervals and mann-whitney U tests all demonstrate a high level of analytical flair - when used accurately! Use your teachers (Geographers or Mathematicians) to ensure that you don't bite off more than you can chew!

Please also make a point to not neglect any part of the dataset. Many students obsess about conducting an investigation that doesn't fit an expected pattern. Don't! If you have an outlier - be glad about it! This is your opportunity to analyse what might be at play. How was your methodology conducted for that data point? Do your notes or comments tell you something else was impacting the results?

5. How do I finish my essay well?

The conclusion of an essay leaves the marker with a final impression. It is important then, that your conclusion is written in a way that summarises what you have found. Refer back to your introduction - the hypotheses and the context in which your investigation is situated. Ensure that you clearly illustrate what you can draw from the data and the way you have analysed it. Don't worry about being too descriptive here - that comes in a moment - but nail home your findings. It might help you to think of this part to be closer matched to a Lab Report than a humanities essay!



The final way to pick up some marks is through an effective **evaluation**. A pitfall many IB geographers fall into is just listing the problems with their



investigation. This is not enough to unlock the top tier of the marking criteria. Instead, highlight both the positives and negatives of your investigation and suggest ways you might be able to improve the quality of your results and the strength of your conclusions if you were to repeat the investigation.

6. Anything else to add?

The importance of producing a piece of work that is aesthetically pleasing can not be understated. Bearing this in mind, make sure all your diagrams and images have a figure reference and a label. As always, double check that you

- Write within the word count! (2500 words)
- Number your pages
- Reference appropriately (please avoid referencing wikipedia!)

Although the IB no longer awards marks, ensuring that you do these things properly will only positively reinforce how the examiner approaches your work!

Make sure you also lean on other resources including your teachers! In the guidance the IB gives it mentions:

'Students should be encouraged to initiate discussions with the teacher to obtain advice and information'.

This is such a crucial point that many IB Geography students are unaware of/choose to ignore. Don't be scared to approach your teacher and ask any questions you may have! They should be able to point you in the right direction, and might be able to introduce you to new sources for your IA. Which in turn, could lead to you producing a stronger IA and getting more marks in the bag!

In addition, your teachers are allowed to read and give advice on one draft of your IA. IBO rules state that the following version handed to your teacher must be the final version for submission. So, make sure your draft you hand in is as detailed as can be. Ideally, you want your teacher to give you as much



feedback as possible. So handing in a fully written draft will probably be better than just giving in a plan!

Even better than using your teachers could be using one of Lantern's very own experienced tutors! Whilst your teachers are undoubtedly spammed with questions from other people in your class, our tutors can sit down with you 1-on-1 online and help you with anything you might be struggling with! Check out our Online Private Tuition by clicking [HERE!](#)



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Questions? Email us at info@lanternaeducation.com