

1. “ERQs are Only about Studies”

- The misconception here is that the 22-markers (laqs) require only describing and evaluating studies;
- However, the truth is-
 - While some ERQs do require evaluating individual studies, there are also those that require evaluating theories/concepts or research done in an area;
 - Even ERQs asking for evaluation of studies require some context to those studies through theories or concepts that they are related to;
 - Relying on less credible online resources often leads to this problem - those resources which provide ‘quick notes’ in the form of a few bullet points summarizing a study and naming a few evaluation points relevant to it

key takeaway - prepare THEORIES/CONCEPTS AND studies for ERQS NOT just studies

2. “Command Terms are Not Important”

- The misconception here is that command terms need not be considered - only the topic named in the question must be read and a standard answer should be written, ignoring the command term
- However, the truth is -
 - Command terms are important when taken in the context of the entire question
 - ‘evaluate’ involves bringing about strengths and weaknesses of individual studies/research/research methods/ethics;
 - ‘discuss’ involves presenting arguments and critical evaluations relating to the larger concept/theory - and using studies only to support and evaluate these arguments;
 - ‘to what extent’ involves presenting limitations of a topic area/research done on it;
 - ‘contrast’ involves point-by-point comparison of two topic areas
- You need to prepare every topic exhaustively for all possible command terms (*not all possible questions - the permutations are too many for this*).
 - Prepare the following sections for each topic-
 - description of the larger concept/theory;
 - critical thinking (strengths and weaknesses) for the concept/theory;
 - arguments to bring in relevant studies
 - summaries of the selected studies
 - critical thinking (strengths and weaknesses) for the studies

key takeaway - plan for your topics for all possible ERQs, trying to prepare all possible answers is futile

3. “Marks can be improved on ERQs and SAQs by giving highly detailed description of studies”

- The misconception here is that writing as much of the studies learnt as possible will increase marks drastically and compensate for lack of arguing and/or critical thinking
- However, the truth is-
 - Even if the question is explicitly focused on studies, you have to give relevant details only-
 - those features of the study that help evaluate it:
 - those features that further the argument being made
 - Giving explicit details like sample sizes, numerical results, names of instruments used for measurement, etc. does not increase marks - *understanding* is scored highly, not mere statement of facts
 - Marks can be improved by meeting markscheme requirements like knowledge, critical thinking, organisation, etc. not by presenting rote learnt details
(for markscheme requirements, refer to the official IB guide and/or visit ERQ/past paper solving videos on my [YouTube channel](#))

key takeaway - relevance triumphs over details; study past markschemes and the IB official guide to understand markscheme requirements and practice accordingly

4. “Breadth is more important than Depth for Critical Thinking in ERQs”

- The misconception here is that writing a large number of evaluation points briefly will show excellent critical thinking in an ERQ;
- However, the truth is-
 - Even a single evaluation point that deeply analyzes a theory/study is superior to multiple evaluation points that merely name relevant strengths and weakness:
 - You should prepare every evaluation point with context and reasoning, selecting those from all available that you will be able to expand on the best;
 - Following critical thinking structures like PEEL/PEEL-C etc. can be very useful here
(just Google search these and/or visit ERQ/past paper solving videos on my [YouTube channel](#) to understand their application)

key takeaway - practice critical thinking in depth with selected strengths and weaknesses

5. “I should have a backup approach/option for my ERQs”

- The misconception here is that knowing a little bit of multiple approaches/options is better than knowing just one in case questions are difficult to understand in the paper;
- However, the truth is-
 - Once you know *how* questions can be asked in the IB, and you don't try to anticipate all possible questions, you will not find any question 'difficult to understand' in the paper;
 - Boards purposefully provide several options to candidates to choose from, so that they can master the ones of their interest;
 - Selecting an option of interest and studying thoroughly instead of trying to compensate by learning a little bit of each makes learning of psychology more enjoyable

key takeaway - carefully choose approaches and options that you want to master and learn the chosen ones completely

A quick clarification of some broader misconceptions -

- Boards do not target individual candidates/schools/countries to deliberately fail students;
 - stay away from negative discussions around these ideas to prevent demotivation;
 - use receiving low scores as an opportunity to reflect on what *you* need to do better
- Psychology is an excellent choice for the IB/A-levels regardless of it being a requirement for further UG/PG courses in psychology;
 - Skipping psychology at this stage out of fear of scoring poorly/having to put in too much effort is not wise because-
 - any other subject in place of psychology also requires effortful preparation and does not guarantee success either;
 - taking the subject of your choice makes the journey of learning enjoyable which does increase chances of scoring better;
 - from a practical perspective, learning psychology at this stage can make your UG journey easier, sparing you time to further other interests or Mastering psychology further in your UG

All the best for your IB psychology journey!!!

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