

What you need to know before you write

- 1) Avoid writing anything that isn't going to earn you marks. You're going to need all the words you can get for your analysis and evaluation. **Avoid quotes from the article and introductions longer than 2 sentences.**
- 2) **Stick with one section of the course** (micro, macro, international, or development). Don't start off in micro (apple prices rise, supply and demand, elasticity) and then evaluate the potential macro effects (this could hurt economic growth). Even if this is true, the IA is about going deep into one part of the course, rather than showing the linkages between different parts.
- 3) **Less is (often) more.** Because of the very constraining word count (750 words) you'll want to focus on really developing just one or two (two at the most) diagrams in your IA. And only evaluate one potential solution (the one in the article or one of your choice if (and only if) there isn't one in your article.

Step 1: Definitions (150 words)

Don't waste words with a lengthy introduction (or quotations). Instead right away start explaining the case using 3 or 4 course words. And then define these words. We're not looking for a list of definitions. Rather the definitions should come in after you have just used the word in a sentence. So, as a rule, don't define a word before you've used it.

However these few definitions won't be enough to earn you full definition marks in your IA though. To do that you'll also have to:

- Define two or three additional words (after you've used them) throughout the commentary.
- And make sure to always use the economic terms rather than the common terms for things. So instead of writing "money" write "consumption" or "expenditure" or "spending." This will help to convince the reader of your familiarity with the subject.

Step 2: Draw the Diagram (0 words)

The diagram (and its titles) does not count in your word count. You need to diagram the problem explained in the article. And also diagram your solution. Sometimes both the problem and the solution can be shown on one diagram, other times this is not feasible.

Of course don't include a diagram (or any theory at all) that doesn't help you to explain the case.

Include in your diagram as much information as you can. It will need to:

- Use a full title such as, "The Market for Apples in Singapore"
- Label all of your lines
- Mark all of your intersections with a letter, so you can refer to them later in your article
- Shade in and fully label the areas of the shapes on your diagram (i.e. excess demand),

- Indicate the exact prices and quantities (or percentage changes in price or quantity if they are included in the article. If not, label them Q1, Q2, P1, P2, etc.

Show as much as you can in your diagrams. A clear picture can help you tell a lot.

Obviously you will want to fully label your X and Y axis. Let's look at a simple supply and demand curve for apples:

X Axis Labels	Y Axis Labels	How Good It Is
Q	P	Terrible
Quantity of apples	Price of apples	Better
Quantity of apples in Kgs	Price of apples in dollars (\$)	Best

Step 3: Fully explain your diagram (200 words)

A big mistake students make is that they will identify the key concepts that explain the case, but they don't explain how those concepts work. They skip steps in their explanation. It's human nature to do that. We all do that all the time. We assume the reader understands what we're saying. In this case you can't do that. You need to force yourself to explain things step by step. Let's look at an example.

"Supply shifts inward because there was a draught. This leads to a higher price and a lower quantity demanded"

Maybe you're thinking this isn't too bad. However, this description has skipped a few steps. It doesn't make it understandable to a reader who doesn't know the theory. If you have to be an expert to understand what you're talking about you aren't doing it right. You can't think of your reader as an expert. Instead the above could have been written as,

"The leftward shift of the supply curve means that for any given price, less is supplied. This creates excess demand at the original equilibrium price, which upward pressure on price. Producers receive the signal to increase their prices and they do."

Step 4: Develop Your Explanation (100 words)

Analysis is about explaining how the theory relates to the case. You have already done a lot of that by FULLY explaining your diagram. But now you need to take it a step further. Go deeper in your explanation. For example, explain how what is happening in the article is not exactly what the theory said would happen (i.e because of the external factors that exist). Explain to what extent the theory you have used explain what's actually going on in the article? And show the linkages between different aspects of theory. Basically you're trying to take it to the next level. But you aren't evaluating. You're just making sure that you have fully explained the theory and how the theory relates to the case.

Step 5: Evaluate a solution (300 words)

Every article is about a problem. In your commentary you're expected to evaluate ONE possible solution. If one is mentioned in the case it must be that one that you evaluate.

To evaluate you'll need to use at least 3 different (CLASPP) approaches. Try to include Assumptions of the theory if you can, to show the limits of the theory and that it doesn't always work out in real life.