

Philosophy Summer Task 2026

Welcome to Philosophy. Please complete the following activities before starting school in September:

1. Complete the 'What kinds of knowledge are there?' exercises on pages 2-5
2. Read the 'What Is Knowledge?' section [next 5 pages – numbered 7-11]
3. Complete the 'Types of Knowledge' activities [next 3 pages]
4. Complete the 'Nature of Definitions' activities [next 3 pages]

Name: _____

What kinds of knowledge are there?

Experimenting with ideas

Consider the following uses of the word *knowledge*, or *know*, in sentences A–J, then answer the questions that follow.

- A Bees know how to make honey.
B I know kung-fu.
C Do you know the way to San José?
D Ravi knows the smell of petrol.
E I know the difference between right and wrong.
F Jaspal knows the capital of Peru.
G A baby knows how to suckle.
H I know that it rained yesterday.
I Maya knows what Vegemite tastes like.
J I know that $2 + 2 = 4$.
- 1 Do you think the word is being used in the same way each time?
2 Which examples describe an ability of some kind?
3 Which examples describe a familiarity with a person or sensation?
4 Which examples describe a fact or facts about the world that a person has learnt?

What three kinds of knowledge have you discovered?

Have a go at the activity on page 3. There is no easy answer to the last question! However, there are interesting differences between the kinds of knowledge in

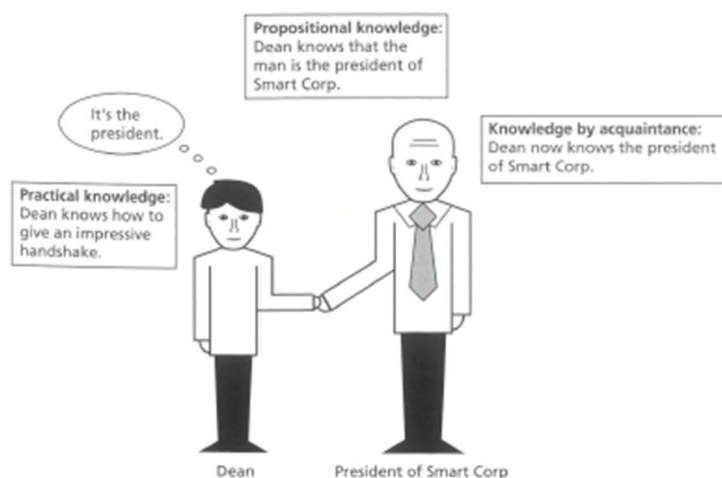


Figure 1.1 Three different kinds of knowledge. Dean is meeting the president of Smart Corp. The three forms of knowledge all come into play.

► ACTIVITY

Revisit the list of knowledge claims on page 1.

- 1 Do all of the examples fit neatly into one of the three categories of knowledge (practical, acquaintance and factual)?
- 2 How do you usually come to gain each kind of knowledge?
- 3 Which type of knowledge do you think you have the most of?

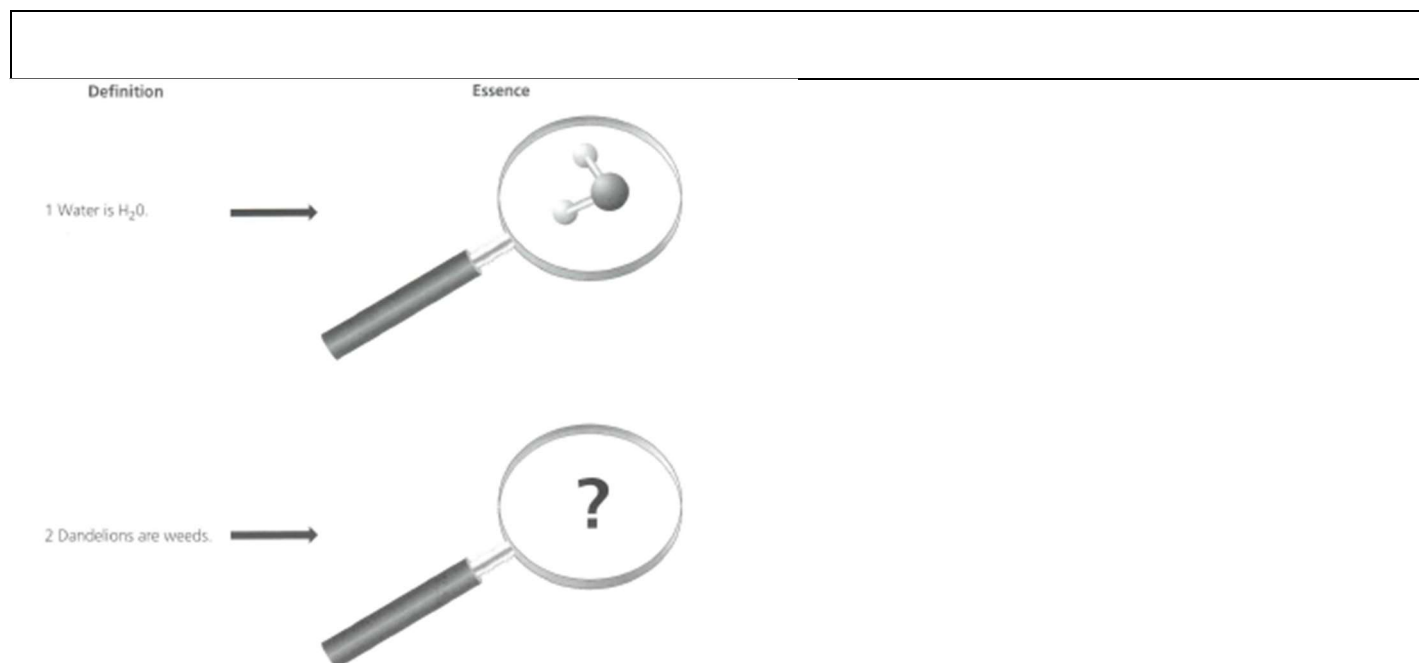


Figure 1.3 Real definitions, real essences. Some of our definitions correspond to the real essence of objects. In these cases, a *real definition* is possible. In the second set of cases, the definition does not relate to any real essence, so a *real definition* is not possible.

Think of three things that are easily defined, and three things that are harder to define.

► ACTIVITY

- 1 To get started on our search for a definition of 'knowledge', let us try to distinguish it from belief. Begin by writing a short list of things you would normally claim to *know*, and another list of things you merely *believe*. These may be things that you know or believe have happened or exist. Try not to be too influenced by sceptical arguments and simply use the terms 'know' and 'believe' as they would be used in everyday life.
- 2 Having done this, consider what has to be the case for you to claim that you know something, as opposed to simply believing it. What makes the knowledge claims different from the belief claims?
- 3 Now read on to see how your answer compares with Plato's.

Experimenting with ideas

- 1 Read the scenarios A–G. Using your common-sense intuition, decide in each case whether the person in bold knows the fact in question.
 - 2 Then check to see whether:
 - a) the person believes the fact (the belief condition)
 - b) the fact is true (the truth condition)
 - c) the person would be justified in believing it (the evidence condition).
 - 3 If all three conditions are met, then according to the JTB (justified, true belief) definition, this should be a case of knowledge. If one or more of the conditions is not met, then this is not a case of knowledge. Did using the three conditions match your own intuitions in each of the cases?
 - 4 Consider whether justified, true belief is a good analysis of the concept of knowledge. What problems could the definition run into? How good must the justification be? (Remember: we are looking to establish the criteria for the everyday concept of knowledge, and justification need not be perfect for knowledge to be claimed in everyday parlance. So avoid ruling out examples just because absolute certainty is not established.)
- A Davina** thinks that monkeys are more intelligent than humans because her mate told her so.
- B Ravi** reckons the sun will set at 19:02 on Sunday, having read as much in the paper. And it does.
- C** Having been told by his parents and having read books and watched DVDs on the subject, young **Victor** is convinced that Santa Claus exists.
- D Tamsin** learns from a textbook that *Hamlet* is Shakespeare's longest play (which it is).
- E Wanda** watches five DVDs of Shakespeare plays and concludes by their length that *Hamlet* must be Shakespeare's longest play.
- F** Colin is going out with Simone. However, at a party, he drunkenly, yet inexcusably, kisses Fiona. No one sees a thing. Back at college, Nigel is secretly in love with Simone. To try to get Simone and Colin to split up, he makes up a rumour, telling Brian that Colin and Fiona got off at the party. Later on **Chanise** hears this rumour and believes it.
- G Samma** has been dating Joel for five years now. She knows that he is faithful to her. She just knows it in her heart.

What is Knowledge?

After completing this section, you should understand and be able to discuss the following:

1. The difference between acquaintance knowledge, ability knowledge and propositional knowledge
2. The nature of definition
3. The tripartite view
4. Issues with the tripartite view:
 - the conditions are not individually necessary
 - the conditions are not sufficient
5. Alternatives:
 - Infallibilism
 - 'No false lemmas'
 - Reliabilism
 - Epistemic virtue

Types of Knowledge

There are many different types of knowledge. Usually a distinction is made between three types:

1. Acquaintance knowledge / knowledge by acquaintance

This type of knowledge is knowledge we have 'of' something. We are acquainted with something because it is familiar, and we are aware of it. We become acquainted with something or someone through direct interaction.

A good example of acquaintance knowledge would be when you say you know someone because you have met them. You have shaken their hand and have spoken to them, maybe briefly. It means you have an idea about them.



Activity

Give some examples of knowledge by acquaintance.

Knowledge by acquaintance doesn't mean you need to explain what you have knowledge of. In other words, I may know the taste of pineapple without being able to describe it and without knowing any facts about it.

2. Ability knowledge / practical knowledge

This type of knowledge involves having knowledge about 'how' to do something. You may have ability knowledge of how to play the piano, for example. It involves you being able to carry out a task using a skill you may or may not have learned.



Activity

Give some examples of ability knowledge you have.

Ability knowledge does not mean you have to have an understanding of what you are doing. You know how to speak Dutch without being able to explain how you do.

Ability knowledge does not require you to be able to communicate about it or be conscious of what you are doing.

3. Propositional knowledge / factual knowledge

This third type of knowledge is what we will be concerned with in this course. It is the type of knowledge that philosophers are interested in because it deals with facts. It is factual knowledge, knowledge that can be true or false. It is knowledge 'that' something is the case. A good example would be knowing that squirrels collect nuts in the autumn. This is something you may know because you have seen it happen or you have read about it.

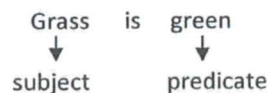


Activity

Give some examples of propositional knowledge.

Propositional knowledge is knowledge that can be explained using language. If someone claims to know that Descartes was French, then they can claim that the sentence 'Descartes was French' is true.

An important term, in this respect, is a proposition. A proposition is a statement about what someone believes is the case. It is about a situation or the world that a person believes exists or occurs. A proposition has to do with the meaning in a sentence. It contains two elements: the subject and the predicate. A proposition is a sentence that is either true or false about the subject.



Propositional knowledge is expressed in language and so it involves holding beliefs. Acquaintance knowledge and ability knowledge do not. If I have knowledge that Descartes is a philosopher, I *believe* this to be true. In other words, I *agree* with this proposition.

It is important to know the differences between these three types of knowledge and what they refer to. They will appear throughout the course. You may also be asked a 2-mark question in the AS exam (or a 3-mark question for the A Level exam).



Activity

What is acquaintance knowledge?

(2 marks for AS or 3 marks for A Level)

Propositional knowledge in-depth



Activity

Watch the clip carefully and answer the following questions.

YouTube clip: Crash Course Philosophy – The Meaning of Knowledge #7:
[zzed.uk/10313-meaning](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zzed.uk/10313-meaning)

1. What is an assertion?
2. What is a truth value?
3. What is a proposition?
4. What is the difference between a propositional attitude of belief and a propositional attitude of disbelief?
5. What is a belief?
6. What is needed for a belief to become true?
7. How might knowledge be defined?
8. What is justification?
9. How might justification come about?
10. Who argued against knowledge being defined as justified true belief?
11. What is the point that Gettier is making?
12. What is Roderick Chisholm's example of justified true belief that is not knowledge?

Before we define propositional knowledge, we need to clarify what is meant by the terms: belief, proposition, fact and truth (as they were in the video clip).

A belief is a thought about the world and the way it works. It is a mental representation which alleges that something is the case. Beliefs can be true or false. You may not know a certain belief is false but not knowing won't stop you from having the belief.

A proposition is like a belief. Propositions can also be true or false. Both beliefs and propositions are truth-apt.

A fact is something definite about the world. Facts can't be true or false. Facts just are and they are what make true sentences true.

Stretch and challenge

There are two main views to understanding what is meant by truth:



The correspondence theory of truth

Truth involves a correspondence between the proposition and what is the actual case in the world.

There is a cat under my table --> there is indeed a cat under the table (I can see her and other people can confirm this)

The coherence theory of truth

The truth of a proposition is true if it coheres with other propositions. This makes truth more flexible. If you believe you can't know the actual state of the world but the proposition you are stating is consistent with other propositions you believe to be true, then a coherence theory of truth is preferable. Propositions might cohere because they are agreed upon by people in a particular community.

Discussion

Do you think that knowledge should be defined in a strict sense or not? Why?



Nature of Definitions

The next step is to consider how we might go about defining propositional knowledge.

Key Philosopher

Linda Zagzebski (1946–) is a contemporary American philosopher who has focused on solving problems in epistemology. She wrote a piece examining the nature of definitions which is of interest to us here. She is a proponent of Aristotle, an ancient Greek philosopher, and argues in favour of virtue epistemology as an approach to knowledge.

Linda Zagzebski discussed the nature of definitions in her work 'What is knowledge?'. First, she refers to John Locke, who argued that there are two types of definitions:

- Definitions that are based on the essence of the thing you are defining.
A strawberry is a sweet oblate or conic-shaped fruit with seeds on its surface. This is a definition of a strawberry based on its essence. If you were to think of the indispensable quality of a strawberry, it would be that it is sweet, oblate or conic-shaped and has seeds on its surface. These are what distinguish it from other types of fruit.
- Definitions that are not based on the essence of the thing you are defining. They might be definitions that use an arbitrary classification. Seagulls are vermin. Seagulls are only defined as vermin in the eyes of certain human beings. This is not the essence of a seagull.

Anthology Text:
Zagzebski, 'What is knowledge?'



**Activity**

Think of an object and how you might define it according to its essence and how you might define it not referring to its essence.

Zagzebski then considers the fact that definitions that don't include the essence are artificial definitions and are not proper definitions. That doesn't mean that such definitions are pointless.

Next she looks at 'knowledge' and argues that it does not have an essence because ideas of knowledge have changed over time.

**Activity**

Can you think of how the concept of knowledge has changed in meaning over time?

This means that it is relative. It is dependent on time and place and has no fixed meaning that will always stand.

**Activity**

Can you think of any abstract concepts that don't have an essence because they change meaning over time?

A good example is beauty. Ideas of what is beautiful have changed over time. Everyone has a different idea of what they think is beautiful. In fashion, for example, voluptuous women were considered beautiful in the seventeenth century whereas thin women were considered beautiful in the 1960s.

Zagzebski then argues that we should try to find a definition of knowledge, despite the fact that it does not have an essence. A way forward might be to define knowledge based on how it can be analysed. In other words, what are the component parts of knowledge? This is a philosophical or conceptual analysis of knowledge.

**Activity**

What do you think are the component parts of beauty?

Another suggestion is to define something in terms of what causes it. This would be a causal definition of knowledge. Heartburn can be defined as a condition that is caused by acidity in the stomach.

**Activity**

What is the causal definition of climate change?

Stretch and challenge

Alvin Goldman first thought that knowledge is best defined in this way. He claims that knowing a fact is about having a belief that is caused by that fact. We know, for example, that 'the box is on the table' because we see the box on the table (fact) and that causes us to believe that 'the box is on the table'. Goldman went on to discover a problem with this theory that then led him to support an alternative theory known as reliabilism (which we look at later but you might want to explore now).



So, Zagzebski is positive about attempts at defining knowledge despite knowledge having no fixed essence. She is in favour of the philosophical analysis and lists types of definitions that should be avoided:

1. Definitions that are circular. These are definitions that define something by using the term you are trying to define. For example, knowledge is to know something.
2. Obscure definitions. These are complicated definitions that make it even more difficult to understand the concept. For example, knowledge is a state of the mind and an actual state in the world that a person can be said to have about a particular thing that corresponds to what is actually the case and they can't be wrong about it.
3. Negative definitions. These are when something is defined in terms of what it is not. For example, knowledge is not just true belief.
4. Ad hoc definitions. These are definitions that are too specific to an issue relating to a concept. For example, knowledge is justified belief from the perspective of coherence theory of truth (see later).

In the exam, you may be asked a 5-mark question on Zagzebski's argument.



Activity

What does Linda Zagzebski argue in relation to the nature of definitions?

(5 marks)

Alternatively, you may wish to include her argument in an essay question (15 marks for AS or 25 marks for A Level). In a question such as 'Is knowledge justified, true belief?', you may want to start your essay by explaining that knowledge doesn't have an essence and so is difficult to define but that a philosophical/conceptual analysis, as proposed by Plato, is the closest you can get to defining knowledge. This will become clearer as you carry on with the course.

The Tripartite Definition of Knowledge

'What is knowledge?' is one of the many philosophical questions that Plato asked.

Key Philosopher

Plato is a famous ancient Greek philosopher who lived in Athens in the middle of the fourth century BCE. He was a pupil of Socrates. Socrates would spend most of his time, according to Plato, discussing philosophical issues with the younger citizens of Athens. He did not write anything down and so what we know of Socrates we know through Plato and Xenophon, another of Socrates' pupils. The politicians of Athens felt that Socrates was corrupting the youth and so he was sentenced to death if he did not stop. Socrates chose not to stop as it was who he was, a philosopher. He would rather die. And so, he drank the poison hemlock and died.

Plato wrote a great many works, mainly in dialogue form, about all kinds of philosophical issues. He is a rationalist in believing that reason is the most reliable source of knowledge. You may have come across his allegory of the cave where he discusses the Forms, the perfect form of things we only see examples of here on Earth. These Forms reside in the World of Forms or the Ideal Realm. His most widely read work is *The Republic* where the idea of justice is discussed. His works are considered to form the basis of Western philosophy and, according to Alfred North Whitehead, all philosophical works since Plato are just footnotes to Plato.

Plato also had a famous pupil, Aristotle, who went on to teach Alexander the Great. Aristotle was more concerned with the world around him, instead of thinking about the Ideal Realm.

Plato proposes a philosophical/conceptual analysis of knowledge. Plato looks for the conditions or criteria that are needed in order for someone to know a proposition. He argues that these conditions will give us a good idea of what knowledge is, and whether someone has knowledge or not.

Anthology Text:
Plato, *Meno*



Types of Knowledge

A posteriori	
A priori	
Ability knowledge	
Acquaintance knowledge	
Correspondence	
Descriptive account	
Epistemology	
Explicit	
Impression	
Necessary	
Ordinary language	
Physical object	
Prescriptive account	
Proposition	
Propositional knowledge	
Reality	
Sensation	
Senses	
Tabula rasa	

Types of Knowledge (Match Up)

1	A feeling or perception resulting from an experience that involves one or more of the five senses.
2	A statement about how something is in the world, which may be true or false.
3	A statement that makes clear and direct reference to something.
4	A term used by Hume and Locke referring to the immediate mental content resulting from sense data or internal feelings called 'reflections'.
5	Actual things or experiences in the world; the way they are.
6	An explanation of what is defined as knowledge in everyday language.
7	An explanation of what should be defined as knowledge.
8	An object that is made up of material substance and that has dimensions.
9	Information about something or someone in the world that can be expressed in a statement-like form; also beliefs that are justified and true.
10	Information possessed by means of being familiar with something or someone based on previous experience.
11	Information which is possessed on being able to complete tasks.
12	Knowledge gained from experience and/or sense data.
13	Knowledge gained independently of (before or without) experience and/or sense data.
14	Refers to the five faculties used to perceive the world: sight, hearing, taste, touch, smell.
15	The match between an idea or a statement and the way something is in the world.
16	The study of the nature of knowledge and what we can know.
17	The terms, words and phrases used and understood in everyday life.
18	Translates to 'blank slate' / a clean mind; the idea that the mind contains nothing before experience, no innate knowledge.
19	Truths that cannot possibly be false and must be true under all circumstances / in all possible worlds, e.g. I must be at the scene to be a witness.

Epistemology	
Ability knowledge	
Acquaintance knowledge	
Propositional knowledge	
A priori	
A posteriori	
Proposition	
Necessary	
Reality	
Explicit	
Correspondence	
Sensation	
Tabula rasa	
Prescriptive account	
Descriptive account	
Ordinary language	
Physical object	
Senses	
Impression	

Types of Knowledge *(Table Fill)*

The study of the nature of knowledge and what we can know.	
Information which is possessed on being able to complete tasks.	
Information possessed by means of being familiar with something or someone based on previous experience.	
Information about something or someone in the world that can be expressed in a statement-like form; also beliefs that are justified and true.	
Knowledge gained independently of (before or without) experience and/or sense data.	
Knowledge gained from experience and/or sense data.	
A statement about how something is in the world, which may be true or false.	
Truths that cannot possibly be false and must be true under all circumstances / in all possible worlds, e.g. I must be at the scene to be a witness.	
Actual things or experiences in the world; the way they are.	
A statement that makes clear and direct reference to something.	
The match between an idea or a statement and the way something is in the world.	
A feeling or perception resulting from an experience that involves one or more of the five senses.	
Translates to 'blank slate' / a clean mind; the idea that the mind contains nothing before experience, no innate knowledge.	
An explanation of what should be defined as knowledge.	
An explanation of what is defined as knowledge in everyday language.	
The terms, words and phrases used and understood in everyday life.	
An object that is made up of material substance and that has dimensions.	
Refers to the five faculties used to perceive the world: sight, hearing, taste, touch, smell.	
A term used by Hume and Locke referring to the immediate mental content resulting from sense data or internal feelings called 'reflections'.	

Nature of Definitions

Ad hoc definition	
Cause	
Circular definition	
Cognitive contact	
Concept	
Conceptual analysis	
Conceptual understanding	
Essence	
Evidence	
Justification	
Justified true belief	
Linda Zagzebski	
Necessary	
Negative definition	
Obscure definition	
Perceptual awareness	
Plato	
Real definition	
Reasons	
Socrates	
Tethered	
Truth-conditional analysis	

Nature of Definitions (Match Up)

1	A state of affairs or an event that triggers another state of affairs or event.
2	A term is defined randomly to provide an explanation in a specific situation.
3	A term used by Zagzebski to mean gaining knowledge as the result of contact between the mind and what is in the real world.
4	An abstract idea.
5	An American philosopher who believed that knowledge comes from intellectual virtue.
6	An ancient Greek philosopher, a character in many of Plato's works and a founder of Western philosophy. Explored ideas by asking questions.
7	An Athenian philosopher and student of Socrates, who contemplated the nature of knowledge and developed the JTB theory.
8	An explanation of the meaning of something by describing something different.
9	An explanation of the meaning of something by describing something in the real world.
10	An explanation of the meaning of something by describing what it is not.
11	Being aware of something in the world as a result of experiencing it through one or more of the five senses.
12	Facts given in an argument to give weight to or prove a conclusion.
13	Plato's definition of knowledge and the foundation of modern epistemological investigation.
14	Plato's view that knowledge requires beliefs to be tied to the things they represent through justified reasons.
15	Points given in an argument to explain or justify a conclusion.
16	Reasons given to suggest a statement or thing is right or true.
17	Something that must by definition be true or must be included for an argument to be true.
18	The ability to grasp an idea about something or how it works.
19	The basic qualities that make up a thing and make it what it is.
20	To decide the conditions that must be true for a statement or belief to be accepted as true.
21	To pick apart an idea so as to understand it more fully.
22	Where two terms are used to define each other or where the definition contains the word being defined.

Concept	
Conceptual understanding	
Conceptual analysis	
Truth-conditional analysis	
Perceptual awareness	
Cognitive contact	
Essence	
Reasons	
Evidence	
Tethered	
Necessary	
Cause	
Real definition	
Obscure definition	
Negative definition	
Circular definition	
Ad hoc definition	
Linda Zagzebski	
Socrates	
Plato	
Justification	
Justified true belief	

Nature of Definitions *(Table Fill)*

An abstract idea.	
The ability to grasp an idea about something or how it works.	
To pick apart an idea so as to understand it more fully.	
To decide the conditions that must be true for a statement or belief to be accepted as true.	
Being aware of something in the world as a result of experiencing it through one or more of the five senses.	
A term used by Zagzebski to mean gaining knowledge as the result of contact between the mind and what is in the real world.	
The basic qualities that make up a thing and make it what it is.	
Points given in an argument to explain or justify a conclusion.	
Facts given in an argument to give weight to or prove a conclusion.	
Plato's view that knowledge requires beliefs to be tied to the things they represent through justified reasons.	
Something that must by definition be true or must be included for an argument to be true.	
A state of affairs or an event that triggers another state of affairs or event.	
An explanation of the meaning of something by describing something in the real world.	
An explanation of the meaning of something by describing something different.	
An explanation of the meaning of something by describing what it is not.	
Where two terms are used to define each other or where the definition contains the word being defined.	
A term is defined randomly to provide an explanation in a specific situation.	
An American philosopher who believed that knowledge comes from intellectual virtue.	
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