

About UPSC Civil Services Examination

1. Plan of Examination

Successive Stages of Examination

2. Civil Services Examination Trends Analysis

- Number of Candidates Who Applied, Appeared and Qualified at the Preliminary Examination
- Number of Candidates Appeared, Interviewed, and Recommended for Mains Examination
- Success Rate vis-à-vis Broad Stream of Disciplines-Civil Services (Main) Examination
- Subject-wise Success Analysis of Recommended Candidates
- Previous Year Prelims Question Paper Trends
- Paper-wise Mains Question Paper Trends (Subject-Wise Questions)
- Previous Year Cut-off Trends
- Previous Years Preliminary Examination Cut-off
- Previous Years Mains Cut-off
- Previous Years Final Cut-off (Mains+Interview)
- Vacancy Trends

Examination Strategy

1. General Strategy

- Why is UPSC a Crowd Puller?
- Why One Should Choose Civil Services?
- General Strategy for Preparation
- Is Coaching a Must?
- role of Coaching in Civil Services Preparation
- Common Mistakes Done By Civil Services Aspirants
- Active Learning for Civil Services Examination
- Learning from Peers
- How to do Smart Self-Study?
- Preparing NCERT's
- How to Make Notes?

- Newspaper and Notes making
- Reading between the Lines
- Approach for Integrated preparation
- Use of Internet for Civil Services Preparation
- Importance of Practicing Previous Year's Question Paper
- Civil Service Preparation along with College
- Role of Academic Background
- Time Management during Preparation
- Strategy for 2 Months before Exam

2. Prelims

- Strategy for UPSC Prelims
- How to Avoid negative Marking?
- How Much Time needed for Prelims Preparation?
- How to Prepare for CSAT?

3. Mains

- Strategy for UPSC Mains
- How to Choose Optional Subject?
- How Much Time needed for Prelims Preparation?
- Importance of Answer Writing for Mains
- Different Directives for Mains Answers writing
- Improving Answer Writing Skills
- How to Prepare for Qualifying Papers in Mains?

4. Personality Test

- How to Prepare for the Interview?
- Qualities Assessed during UPSC interview
- Topics to be covered for UPSC interview
- How to Approach the Interview panel?
- How to Handle Your DAF in Interview?
- do's and don'ts of Interview

5. Subject-Wise Strategy

- How to Study History?
- How to Study Geography?
- How to Study Polity?
- How to Prepare Science & Technology?
- How to Prepare Environment and Ecology?
- How to Study Economy?
- How to Study Current Affairs?
- How to Study Ethics Paper (Section A)?
- How to Study Case Studies for Ethics (Section B)
- How to Study Essay Paper?
- Do's and Don'ts for Essay Writing

6. Self Management

- Motivated during Civil Services Preparation
- Mental Health and Civil Services preparation
- Handling Stress During Civil Services Preparation
- How to Handle Failure?
- How to Handle Family Pressure?
- How to Tackle Insecurities?
- How to Avoid Distraction?
- Managing Through Crisis

Syllabus and Reading List

- History
- Geography
- Indian Society
- Polity
- Governance & Social Justice
- International Relations
- Economy
- Science & Technology
- Ecology & Environment
- Internal Security
- Ethics, Integrity & Aptitude

ABOUT UPSC CIVIL SERVICES EXAMINATION

The Civil Services Examination is conducted in two successive stages- Preliminary and Main (Written and Interview/Personality Test) Examination. This Section has a brief outline about the Stages of Examination, marks distribution, Scheme of Examination, and Previous year Civil Services, related data analysis (70th Annual Report of UPSC).

PLAN OF EXAMINATION

Objectives

- ✓ It will give you a brief overview of the Examination.
- ✓ This will be helpful to know the marks distribution of different subjects and stages.
- ✓ The analysis of the success rates of subjects will help candidates to select the optional subject.
- ✓ The trends analysis will also remove the apprehensions among the students related to their study backgrounds.
- ✓ The data on cut-off will help students in self-evaluation and understanding the UPS selection patterns.
- ✓ Data on Examination trends will help to understand the weightage give to the subjects.
- ✓ Availability of vacancies will help to understand the fluctuation in cut-off, etc

Plan of Examination

the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) conducts the civil Services Exam (CSE) every year to recruit for the various civil Services.

- ✓ Civil Services (Preliminary) Examination (Objective Type) for the selection of candidates for Civil Services (Main) Examination; and
- ✓ Civil Services (Main) Examination (Written and Interview/ Personality Test) for the selection of candidates for the various Services and posts.

- ✓ **Note :** For Indian Forest Services and other Civil Services a common Preliminary entrance examination is being conducted but, the Main Examination is conducted separately.

Successive Stages of Examination

- ✓ In the first stage, i.e., UPSC Prelims Exam, UPSC tests knowledge in MCQs format. The whole idea is to separate and filter serious candidates from the crowd.
- ✓ In UPSC Mains Exam, the Knowledge is tested in subjective format, where the written expression gets tested. This is made difficult by constraining the examinee to the word limit. One not only has to have knowledge but also has to acquire the skill to put that knowledge on paper in specified word limit and time. Acquiring the skill of answer writing is the tricky part as it needs time and lots of practice. This come with times and is not something that can be acquired over the weekend.
- ✓ The Personality Test, which is commonly called as Interview focuses on the Personality attributes of a candidate. The verbal expression, body language, truthfulness, courage of conviction, and other personality-related attributes are measured through personal interview.

Preliminary Examination

The Examination shall comprise of two compulsory Papers of 200 makes for each objective type (multiple choice questions).

Note:

- The General Studies Paper-11 of the Civil Services (preliminary) Examination will be a qualifying paper with minimum qualifying marks fixed at 33%

- The Marks of the Preliminary Examination are not counted for the final selection and the final ranking is based on the Main Examination (written + Interview).

Main Examination The Written Examination will consists of the following papers:

Qualifying Papers:	
Paper-A (One of the Indian languages to be selected by the candidate from the Languages included in the Eighth Schedule to the Constitution).	300 Marks
Paper-B: English	300 Marks
Papers to be counted for merit:	
Paper-I : Essay	250 Marks
Paper-II General Studies-I (Indian Heritage and Culture, History, and Geography of the World and Society)	250 Marks
Paper-III General Studies-II (Governance, Constitution, Polity, Social Justice and International relations)	250 Marks
Paper III General Studies-III (Technology, Economic Development, Biodiversity, Environment, Security and Disaster Management)	250 Marks
paper IV : General Studies-IV (Technology, Economic Development, Biodiversity, Environment, Security and Disaster Management)	250 Marks
Paper-V : Optional Subject-Paper 1	250 Marks
Paper-VII : Optional Subject-Paper 2	250 Marks
Sub Total (Written test)	1750 Marks
Personality Test	275 Marks
Grand Total	2025 Marks

- Out of the total candidates who appeared for Mains Examination, around 20% were called for the Personality Test (Interview).
- Out of the Total called students for the Interview, around 25% were women and 75% were male.

- The success rate of candidates for the final list was around more than 40%
- Around 25% of Female Candidates made into the Final

Success Rate vis-à-vis Broad Stream of Disciplines-Civil Services (Main) Examination

Education Qualification	Number of Candidates		Success Rate (Percent)
	Interviewed	Recommended	
I. Bachelor Degrees	1550	609	39.3%
(i) Humanities	189	81	42.9%
(ii) Science	68	25	36.8%
(iii) Medical Science	106	41	38.7%
(iv) Engineering	1187	462	38.9%
II. Higher Degrees	442	203	45.9%
(i) Humanities	253	118	46.6%
(ii) Science	69	31	44.6%
(iii) Medical Science	17	7	41.2%
(iv) Engineering	103	47	45.6%
Total	1992	812	10.8%

Inferences from above Table

- Out of the total selected candidates, around 75% had Bachelor's Degrees and 25% had Higher Degrees in different Streams.
- In Bachelor Degrees Category, students from Engineering backgrounds were selected the most (Around more than 50% of the total selected candidates).

Subject-wise Success Analysis of Recommended Candidates

Sl. N	Optional subject	Number of Candidates		Success Rate (Percent)
		Appeared	Recommend	

0			ed	
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
1	Agriculture	102	3	2.9%
2	Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Science	15	1	6.7%
3	Anthropology	797	65	8.2%
4	Botany	21	1	4.8%
5	Chemistry	114	12	10.5%
6	Civil Engineering	115	6	5.2%
7	Commerce and Account, 1:1L	186	27	14.5%
8	Economics	200	23	11.5%
9	Electrical Engineering	164	17	10.4%
10	Geography	1993	101	5.1%
11	Geology	41	1	2.4%
12	History	848	52	6.1%
13	Law	201	27	13.4%
14	Literature of Assamese Language	3	0	0.0%
15	Literature of Bengal Language	4	0	0.0%
16	Literature of English Language	21	3	14.3%
17	Literature of Gujarati Language	91	6	6.6%
18	Literature of Hindi Language	236	15	6.4%
19	Literature of Kannada language	79	4	5.1%
20	Literature of Maithili Language	41	1	2.4%
21	Literature of Malayalam Language	85		10.6%
22	Literature of Manipuri language	11	1	9.1%
23	Literature of Marathi language	7	0	0.0%
24	Literature of Oriya language	4	0	0.0%
25	Literature of Punjabi Language	19	3	15.8%
26	Literature of Sanskrit language		2	3.7%

27	Literature of Sindhi (Devanagari script) language	2	0	0.0%
28	Literature of Tamil Language	73	8	11.0%
29	Literature of Telugu language	57	3	5.3%
30	Literature of Urdu language	16	3	18.8%
31	Management	59	8	13.6%
32	Mathematics	344	28	8.1%
33	Mechanical Engineering	152	9	5.9%
34	Medical Science	220	24	10.9%
35	Philosophy	463	42	9.1%
36	Physics	120	13	10.8%
37	Political Science and International Relations	1317	105	8.0%
38	Psychology	128	9	7.0%
39	Public Administration	726	67	9.2%
40	Sociology	1072	07	10.0%
41	Statistics	2	0	0.0%
42	Zoology	43	6	14.0%

- Around 85.1% of optional subjects opted by the recommended candidates were related to Humanities (including the literature of languages), followed by 7.9%, 3.9%, and 3.1% related to Science, Engineering, and Medical Science respectively. This shows that most of the candidates have made a cross-domain shift from their original stream (i.e., Engineering, Science, and Medical Science) to humanities. (table 1)
- Geography was the most preferred subject among the optional subjects chosen by the candidates, followed by political Science and International Relations and Sociology. (Table 2)
- Amongst the subjects opted by 100 or more candidates, the highest percentage of successful candidates had opted for commerce and Accountancy (14.5 percent), followed by Law (13.4 percent) and Economics (11.5 percent), (Table 2)

Previous Year Prelims Questions Paper Trends

The Subject-wise weightage for the number of question in General Studies I form 2016-2021:

Years	History	Geography	Polity	Economy	Science & Technology	Environment and ecology	Current Affairs
2016	15	7	7	18	8	18	27
2017	14	9	22	16	9	15	15
2018	22	10	13	18	10	13	14
2019	17	14	15	14	7	11	22
2020	20	10	17	15	10	10	18
2021	20	10	14	10	8	11	27

Inferences from above Table (Source: UPSC Previous Year Question Papers – <https://www.upsc.gov.in/>)

- The dynamics of the subject keep changing every year.
- Current Affairs have given precedence every consecutive year.

Paper-wise Mains Question Paper Trends (Subject wise Questions)

GS Ppaper 1

Year	History				Geography		Society	
	Art and Culture	Ancient History+Medieval History	Modern History	Post-Independence	World History	Physical/World Geography		Indian Geography
2016	2		3	-	1	3	6	5
2017	1		5	-	1	7	2	4
2018	1	2	2	-	1	2	5	7
2019	1		4	-	1	5	3	6
2020	2	1+1	2	-	-	2	6	6
2021	1		3	1	1	4	4	6

Inference from above Table (Source: UPSC Previous Year Question Papers – <https://www.upsc.gov.in/>)

- Each consecutive year majority of the questions come from Modern History, Physical/Word Geography, Indian Geography and Society.

GS Paper 2

Years	Polity	Governance	IR/Diplomacy	Social Justice
2016	8	4	4	4
2017	9	2	4	5
2018	9	2	3	4
2019	11	3	4	2
2020	8	3	4	5
2021	9	3	4	4

Inferences from above table (Source; UPSC Previous year question papers- <https://www.upsc.gov.in>)

- Each Subject was given importance and every year questions are asked from every section.
- A good number of questions are asked every year from Polity.

GS Paper 3

year	Economy	Agriculture	Science and Technology	Disaster Management	Environment and Pollution Control	Security
2016	6	4	2	2	2	4
2017	5	4	3	1	3	4
2018	3	4	2	1	5	4
2019	4	5	3	2	2	4
2020	4	4	4	1	3	4
2021	4	4	3	2	3	4

Inferences from above Table (Source UPSC Previous Year Question papers – <https://www.upsc.gov.in>)

- Each Subject was given importance and every year questions are asked from every section.
- Agriculture and Security have given equal importance nearly every year.

Previous Year Cut-off Trends

Usually, UPSC clears aspirants 12 to 13 times of vacancy for writing Mains Exam, however, the cut-off of the prelims exam also varies as per the difficulty level of the paper. Thus, the overall cut-off is decided by the UPSC depending upon the requirement.

what do the statistics say regarding cut-off marks?

Let's first see what has been the trend of cut-off in the preliminary exam and what changes have been made.

- If we analyze the trend since 2015, the cut-off for the Preliminary Exam (based on GS Paper-1) varied from 46% to 58% of total marks.
- This highlights that securing more than 60% of marks significantly increases the chances of qualifying for the Mains Exam.

Previous Years Preliminary Examination Cut-off

The marks (or cut-off marks) of the **Preliminary Examination** for the last 5 years:

CSE Prelims	General	OBC	SC	ST	PH 1	PH 2	PH 3
2016	116	110.66	99.34	96	73.37	53.34	40.00
2017	105.34	102.66	88.66	88.66			
2018	98	96.66	84	83.34			
2019	98	95.34	82	77.34	85.34	61.34	40.00
2020	92.51	89.12	74.84	68.71	75.34	72.66	40

Inferences from above Table (Source: <https://www.upsc.gov.in>)

- The cut-off Marks have been reduced every consecutive year for every category.
- A big difference lies in the cut-off marks of the General and ST Category.
- The decreasing cut-off shows the increasing toughness of the Preliminary Examination every year.

Previous Years Mains Cut-off

The marks (or cut-off marks) of the also recommended candidate in the **Mains Examination** for the last 5 years:

Year	Mains Marks (Out of 1750) of the last candidate (General Category)	OBC	SC	ST
2016	787	745	739	730
2017	809	770	756	749
2018	774	732	719	719
2019	751	718	706	699
2020	736	698	680	682

Inferences from above Table (Source: <https://www.upsc.gov.in/>)

- The Cut-off marks have been reduced nearly every category.
- A big difference lies in the cut-off marks of the General and ST Category.
- The decreasing cut-off shows the increasing toughness, dynamic and unpredictable nature of the Preliminary Examination every year.

Previous Years Final cut-off (Mains + Interview)

Year	Total Marks (Out of 2250) of the last candidate (General Category)	OBC	SC	ST
2016	988	951	937	920
2017	1006	968	944	939
2018	982	938	912	912
2019	961	925	898	893
2020	944	907	875	876

Inferences from above Table (Source; <https://www.upsc.gov.in/>)

- The cut-off marks have been reduced nearly every consecutive year for every category, which could be due to the cumulative impact of added mains marks.
- A big difference lies in the cut-off marks of the General and ST Category.

Vacancy Trends

First of all, we bring you a table showing the number of vacancies as released by the UPSC in the notification each year.

Year	Number of Vacancies for Civil Services
2009	580

2010	965
2011	880
2012	1037
2013	1000
2014	1291
2015	1129
2016	1079
2017	980
2018	782
2019	896
2020	796
2021	712
2022	861+150=1011

Inferences from above Table (Source: <https://www.upsc.gov.in/>)

- As seen from the above table, the number of vacancies has steadily decreased from 2014 onwards till 2021 and in 2022, the number of vacancies has increased again.

EXAMINATION STRATEGY

This section is designed to facilitate and guide candidates on common doubts that aspirants carry with their preparation. Several questions related to general strategy on what to prepare for UPSC Civil Services, how to prepare, what to study, what not to study, common mistakes, ways for effective study, etc. are discussed in detail.

GENERAL STRATEGY

Why is UPSC a Crowd Puller?

Civil Services Exam (CSE) conducted by the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) is considered to be one of the toughest exams in the world. The success rate of this exam is less than 1% and only a minuscule number of aspirants are selected every year. Still, it has been observed that a large number of college graduates and young professionals after having experience in lucrative corporate, managerial, engineering or medical professions, consider joining the Civil Services. The number of applicants in the Civil Services Exam (CSE) of India has increased significantly in the last few years.

Why is Civil Services so Fascinating?

- **Service to Nation** : Opportunity to participate in nation building and make a difference in the lives of people.
- **Diversity of Work** : Civil Servants contribute to the decision-making process of the country, represent the nation at world forums, maintain the law and order, participate in developmental work, travel the lengths and breadths of the country, meet different types of people, etc.
- **Remuneration**: Since the 7th pay commission, salaries of the Civil Servants have come at par with those in the corporate sector. Apart from the pay sale, the perks and subsidies provided to civil servants are excellent.
- **Prestige** : This should be the most important term of reference for anyone working in any sector. The work profile and prestige associated with Civil

Services give people job satisfaction which sometimes drives them to leave the other lucrative job profiles.

- **Power and Authority:** the Civil Services paves way for becoming an IAS, IPS, IFS, IRS (20+jobs/services) officer. The wide variety of jobs within the ambit of the Civil Services offers a greater sphere of authority and power than any other services in India.
- **Job Security :** Civil Servants cannot be fired easily and that offers them a deep sense of job security. Once selected, civil servants work till the age of 60 and it is possible to get an extension.

Why one Should Choose civil Services?

When it comes to career choices, the **Civil Services** of India has always been considered one of the best career choices. The associated prestige, authority,, diverse work Profile, and desire to serve the nation are some of the factors that attract over a million aspirants to prepare for Civil services. There are several instances of people leaving high salaried and excellent job profiles just to appear for the UPSC Examination.

considering all the factors that drive people to UPSC, it is very important to know the motivating factors which drives millions of youth to join the services? Apart from the above attractive features of UPSC, several other interesting roles and responsibilities exist that people might find interesting and drive aspirants to join the services.

What are the Unique Roles and Responsibilities of civil Servants?

- Building Trust
- Building Strategic Relations
- Partnership and cooperation with the people

- Stakeholder Engagement
- Problem Analysis
- Providing Solutions
- Conflict Resolution
- Leadership
- Effective and Rational communication
- Awareness generation
- Influencing
- Service support
- Risk Assessment
- Organizational Tasks etc.

General Strategy for Preparation

“Well Begun is half done”

Every year, thousands of candidates work hard to clear the exam, but only a few, hardworking and smart candidates get through. The Success of those few is decided by the right motivation and correct preparation strategy. This leads to the question of how aspirants should start preparation. To have a better understanding related to the basic strategy few things can be kept in mind.

Key Highlights

- Go Through the Syllabus Multiply Times
- Practice Previous Year Questions
- Read NCERTs Books
- Daily Newspaper Reading
- Make Notes
- Do Practice
- Revise
- Take proper guidance

Key Points to Follow

- **Coverage of Syllabus.** Civil Services is known for its **unpredictability and vast syllabus.** Before starting preparation, it is imperative to have a **good understanding and hold on to the syllabus.** For this take a printout of syllabus. Read and analyze it thoroughly.
- **Analysis of previous year question papers.** An analysis of previous years' papers helps in putting the syllabus in a better perspective, by highlighting the areas from which more questions have been asked. This will help in
 - ✓ Understanding the demand of the examination
 - ✓ Trends Analysis
 - ✓ Important Topics and Subjects
 - ✓ Self-Evaluation
- **Working on Basics:** Aspirants should work on building a strong foundation. **UPSC** checks the basic understanding of aspirants about the common issues and topics. For this, aspirants should work on the clarity of concepts instead of doing research on topics
- **Beginning with Basic Books:** To get a very basic and better understanding of the subjects, aspirants should start preparing with the NCERTs (Class VI to XII) and most basic reference books (for this check the 'Reading List' under 'Section D').
- **Staying Up-to-date:** UPSC checks the day-to-day awareness of aspirants about their surroundings. For this, it is important to have

a clear understanding of events happening around Habit of Daily Newspaper Reading must be inculcated.

- **Making Notice:** It is always recommended to make notes of whatever one reads- be it newspapers or current affairs magazines. (Notes Making strategy is discussed under-‘How to make Notes’ in this book)
- **Answer Writing Practice:** It involves both practice through tests and writing practice. For writing practice pick up an editorial from a newspaper or take any topic from what you read and rewrite it in your own words. It will help in writing answers for mains Examination. (Answer writing strategy is discussed in this book.)
- **Regular & Multiple Revision:** Nobody can remember important analysis and facts from a book after its first reading. Revision is a must to clearly remember whatever one has read or understood and use it in the examination.
- **Practice MCQs and Mocks:** To Evaluate the level of preparation, it is essential to practice Multiple Choice Questions and write mock tests. Also helps in understanding the demand of the questions and retaining concepts.
- **Keeping it Simple:** One neither requires 20 different coaching institutes to pass a single exam, nor 20 different books to study a single subject. But it is important that whatever one has read or

from what sources, the candidate has understood it well and with clarity and is able to retain it.

- **Integrated Preparation:** A Prelims-cum-Mains strategy should be adopted to prepare as a lot of syllabus is common for both Prelims and Mains. A well-planned study schedule should be prepared to prepare for the examination in an integrated manner. (Planner for Integrated preparation is given under – ‘An Approach for Integrated Preparation for Prelims-cum-Main’s.)

Is Coaching a Must:

For aspirants, coaching may appear the perfect method to get an edge and keep oneself ahead in the competition. Whether they should go for coaching or not is a big question. There is a general misconception that coaching is a must to qualify for the UPSC examination. People have qualified for the examination without any coaching but yes they do need guidance which can be available from many sources. Aspirants may take guidance from online sources as well as from offline sources. Especially, in the era of technology, there is no dearth of guidance for preparation. These days students are joining several social media groups on telegram or Whatsapp or Facebook to get the direction and guidance for preparation. Though this way of taking guidance is correct or not is something to be discussed or analyzed.

Though coaching centers act as facilitators it is also possible to qualify for this examination without taking the coaching. This requires the right strategy and the right direction to complete the life cycle of preparation. Apart from following the general strategy discussed in ‘**The General Strategy for Preparation**’ section, a distinct strategy can be followed by aspirants to prepare without coaching.

Common Problems and Solutions

- **Study Material Selection:** Aspirants face difficulty in selecting good study materials which would suffice to support their preparation. Regarding this widespread information is available online including tutorials, YouTube classes, social media pages, etc. (To have a better idea on study material go through the ‘Reading list’ given in ‘Section D’)
- **Authentic Sources:** The most common problem with online information is its ‘Authenticity’. The most basic and authentic sources include NCERTs, reference books (given in ‘Reading List’) government websites eg. PIB, ministry’s websites, etc.; government publications such as Yojna and Kurukshetra, etc., and preferably only one national newspaper.

- **Strategizing Studies:** Aspirants also find it difficult in formulating the right strategy for themselves, for example, which subject should be given maximum time, which topics are important and what can be left, and many more. For this, students can go through the previous year's question papers, look up to their mentor, to get a holistic picture for strategy formation.
- **Study and Practice Mantra:** Aspirants should remember that the only mantra that they should have is to study, revise and practice. Practice will make them perfect in each segment of their preparation strategy for the civil services examination.
- **Identification of Weaknesses:** Identify weaker areas and work on them.
- **Motivation:** Find an true source of motivation to remain in the long journey of UPSC Civil Services Preparation. (Motivation Strategies are discussed under Motivation/Self-Management.)
- **Regular Schedule:** Following a regular schedule with discipline is needed to clear this examination. Avoid changing your schedule as per your mood.
- **Avoiding Too Many Advice:** There are all sorts of advices that comes your way during the preparation journey but

aspirants should be smart enough to take that advice which will help them in sailing through this examination.

Role of Coaching in Civil Services Preparation

The Question is whether preparation for UPSC can be done solely through self-study or does it require something more. Well, it depends and varies from individual to individual. Some aspirants need personalized guidance at every step of their studies, on other hand; few may do good without much external support. For those who need support for preparation, coaching may prove an effective facilitator of a thorough preparation and to get personalized guidance and reviews, at every stage of preparation. Personalized coaching helps aspirants in many ways.

Advantages of Coaching

- Provides comprehensive study material, books, and other resources such as magazines, compilations, News extracts, etc.
- Expansion and micro-detailing of Syllabus for both Prelims and Mains.
- General Guidance for Preparation.
- Time Plan for the completion of syllabus.
- Clarification of Concepts through classroom programs.
- Evaluation through test and test series.
- Valuable feedback to improve the quality of answers.
- Personalized guidance and One to One doubt clearances
- Peer Groups support.
- Specific Guidance Prelims, Mains and Interview.

- Mocks for Interview etc.

Common Mistakes Done By Civil Services Aspirants

The Civil Service Examination is conducted in different stages, which require different strategies. At every stage a specific and suitable strategy needs to be adopted. As the examination is tough and unpredictable, aspirants make some common mistakes that can be avoided to maximize the outcome.

Key Points to Avoid:

- **Not seeking help:** Some aspirants make the mistake of preparing without taking any proper strategy and guidance. They may end up being directionless and lose track. Considering the dynamic nature of the exam and the huge syllabus, it is important to have a mentor or a guide. It can be an experienced senior, mentors on the online platforms (Videos + online courses), or good coaching. Aspirants may take help from book also, which are specially written on the strategy for Civil Services Examination preparation.

- **Passive Reading and Listening:** This is a mistake that is being committed by most aspirants. As they are not trained enough to think, question and analyze the issues. Mere reading the books passively and listening videos or mentors, cannot help aspirants to qualify for examination. Instead, aspirants should opt for active learning methods. (Methods of Active learning are discussed under – ‘How to do Active learning’.)
- **Procrastination:** Procrastination is the thief of time i.e., postponing the work for tomorrow. Here procrastination means making the schedule, but not following it, or to keep things to do later or at the end. It is always advisable to plan out your study, make a timetable and go accordingly. Never leave anything to do at the last moment.
- **Not Sticking to the Syllabus:** This is also considered as one of the biggest mistakes as this leads to deviation and distraction that ultimately turns into failure. Aspirants following a blind approach towards examination end up reading too many irrelevant books and study materials that have nothing to do with the exam.

- **Lack of Practice:** Aspirants are prone to burdened themselves with loads of information without knowing the applicability. To tackle this, students may opt for topic-wise and full Mock Tests for evaluation and self-analysis of their preparation.
- **Lack of Integrated Approach:** Following a scattered approach of preparation i.e., different approaches of preparation for prelims and mains is one of the most common mistakes that should be avoided while preparing for **UPSC CSE**. The Prelims and mains exam should be prepared simultaneously considering the changing trend of the **Civil Services Examination**. (Planner for Integrated preparation is given under – ‘An Approach for integrated Preparation for Prelims-cum-Mains’.)
- **Lack of Revision:** Many aspirants tend to go on studying and reading, without taking out the time to frequently revise. Revision is important for retention, consolidation and better retrieval of knowledge in the examination hall, where the amount of pressure is huge.
- **Lack of Confidence:** The entire journey of the UPSC Civil Services Examination is full of ups and downs. Aspirants

may feel low due to multiple reasons such as low marks in the test, not being able to complete the entire syllabus, lack of revision, lack practice, social pressure, peer pressure, etc., But the key to success is confidence. Aspirants start assuming that they will not be able to qualify for the examination and leave it for the next attempt. Rather aspirants should not lose hope in any circumstance and should give hundred percent.

- **Preparing due to family/Society expectations/Pressure:**

Many candidates enter the race as a result of Pressure to make a career or prove themselves worthy in the eyes of family or society. However, such superficial reasons prove insufficient to provide the long-term motivation and commitment a move results in wastage of time energy and thus causes frustration that culminates into failure in the exam.

Active Learning for Civil Services Examination

Often, aspirants have a habit to collect a huge number of books, magazines, newspapers and start reading them; and then they directly appear for the examination. In such a scenario, the result

is negative in most cases. This is a mistake that is being committed by almost every student. Candidates are not trained enough to think, question, and analyze the issues and mere reading and listening would not help them to qualify the exam. This is the point that makes the difference between selected and not-selected candidate. The question here is what Active Learning is and what are the methods to do it?

What is Active Learning?

Active Learning is “ a method of learning in which students are actively involved in the learning process and where there are different levels of active learning, depending on student involvement.”

Active Learning	Passive Learning
Engaged in materials, activities, and learning community	Disengaged, applying little effort to participate
Exploring, questioning, problem-solving and reflecting on case studies, role plays and other methods	Passively listening or reading materials
Attention in the “here and now” with strategies to refocus when distracted	Attention wondering and easily distracted
Creating organization with	Not utilizing learning

outlines, study sheets, targeted note-taking	strategies or developing effective study habits
Using organization, repetition, critical thinking and self-reflection to categorize knowledge	Not asking yourself frequently; ‘What do I know and how do I know it?’
Connecting learning the world	Isolating learning from life outside of school
Accepting responsibility for learning	Avoiding responsibility for learning

Key Points to follow

- **Learning Groups:** Groups of aspirants study together, both to learn as well as to improve their study skills. It helps aspirants in developing higher-order thinking skills and clarity of ideas through communication.
- **Concept Maps:** A diagram that illustrates the connections between related concepts is also a part of active learning that can be very useful to help aspirants see patterns or common themes in the course material.
- **Create self-test questions:** It means aspirants design their exam questions. It can be very useful for helping students

improve their learning by thinking about the course material from the instructor's perspective.

- **Reflective Exercise:** Short assignments that can either be written in class or at home. It is useful for getting students to step back from the material to think about their understanding of it (and strategies for moving on to the next level) or patterns within it (developing a richer understanding). It is important to give students a clear vision and right direction to help them focus.
- **Problem Sets:** A Series of problems related to course concepts and materials can be solved. Repeated practice helps to build problem-solving skills, and to better understand different types of problems and the different approaches that are effective.
- **Critical Review:** A Short assignment that asks to critically evaluate a particular work (book, newspaper, or magazine article) in detail, according to specific criteria can be very useful to help build analytical skills.
- **Peer Review:** It can be done in class, outside of class, or through digital technology. Aspirants will be able to give effective feedback and learn by doing evaluation work.

- **Diagrams and Infographics:** Depending on the discipline and topic, different types of diagrams may be useful for explaining ideas or results (charts, tables, graphs, graphics, etc.,)
- **Read and Rewrite:** An in-depth writing assignment that requires students to research a particular topic and summarize and synthesize the relevant material available on any particular topic. It can be effective to go more in-depth into a topic of their choice, or to develop their analytical and critical thinking skills.

Learning from Peers

What is Peer Learning:

When you learn from the people of your level **it is known as** peer learning, for example-classmates or batchmates. They share the status of fellow learners.

Advantages

- Exchange of new ideas and methods of learning
- To understand a single thing from different perspectives.

- Learn collaboratively by evaluating things from each other and giving feedback.
- Learning becomes more effective and comfortable.
- Promote effective communication between students.
- Different from traditional learning and teaching methods.

Key Points to Follow

- Make a group of like-minded people.
- Do not make large groups, in case you are doing a group study.
- Stick to relevant topics; do not waste time taking about unnecessary issues.

How to do Smart Self-Study:

“The more you sweat in peace, the less you bleed in war” Self-study, Which involves studying without direct supervision or attendance in a classroom, is a valuable way to learn. By complementing formal education with self-study, aspirants can see a drastic improvement. Scope and importance of self-study. If done in a structured and active manner self-study may prove to be the reason for success.

Key Points to follow:

- **Follow a General Strategy:** A general strategy has been discussed that can be followed as a most basic strategy to prepare for civil services examination, along with subject specific strategies. (Discussed under ‘A General Strategy for UPSC Civil Service Examination’.)
- **Collection of Ideas:** Always develop a reading habit as it introduces you to new ideas and thoughts of authors and writers. Also, make analytical notes. It gives content to write Mains Answers and for interviews also.
- **Deconstruct the topics:** Try deconstructing the topic to its bare essentials and start with working on selected small part of it that you feel are the most troublesome for you. When you achieve your goal of improving on the parts, see how it has impacted your skills regarding the whole topic.
- **Finding Gaps:** To reinforce concepts and for self-analysis practicing questions can help find gaps in study.
- **Note-taking tools:** Tools such as digital notes making tools, highlighters, colored pens, and sticky notes are useful tools for a student studying at home. Keeping notes

while learning will enable to retain the information longer, and help to build valuable organizational and structural skills.

Digital Notes

Using a digital tool allows you to edit your notes more easily, move information around, and share content with others.

Tools

- Microsoft OneNote
- Evernote
- Apple Notes
- Google keep

- **A Proper place of study.** This is crucial for effective self-study. This might mean a home or a desk in the student's bedroom. No matter where it is, it should include a tidy workspace free of clutter and distractions – with good lighting.
- **Active Learning.** Generally, students read plenty of stuff and directly appear for the examination without making much

effort to gauge the preparation level and the result to exactly what we may expect from this form of study, failure. To get success extra efforts are needed and that is through learning methods are discussed under – How to do Active eLearning of this book.

Preparing NCERT's

NCERT books are under special focus among the teachers and aspirants of UPSC CSE. They give high priority to NCERT books. It is because each year questions having direct or indirect references to NCERT's appear in UPSC prelims. **Every year at least 35-40 prelims questions are directly asked from the NCERTs.** Reading and Preparation fro NCERS can be simplified in several ways. Apart from following, the general strategy discussed in The General strategy for preparation section distinct strategy may be fooled, especially for reading NCERTs.

Key Points to follow

- **Make a List:** Arranger NCERTs that you want study. Online availability of NCERATs is not a problem today. Always start with the most basic NECERTs, for example, while reading 9-12books class 9th NCERT can be read first.

- **Mark the important chapters:** Go through the previous year's question papers and mark the important chapters that need to be covered.
- **Give NCERT focused Mock Tests:** These tests help in conceptual clarity and revision. It is a strong way to first brush your basics and move towards a greater understanding of a topic.
- **Focus on Additional Information :** Information given in the tables and boxes in the books should be emphasized, as multiple questions have been asked directly from there.
- **Brainstorming:** Always practice the questions given in the chapters or after chapters. This is helpful to do brainstorming and developing analytical skills.
- **Writing Summary:** After completing the chapters, a summary of the topic or chapter can be helpful in revising at the last moment and retaining things for a longer duration.
- **Linking of MCQs + Topics:** To read NCERT activity, first list out the topics on which MCQs have been asked in previous years and read those topics form SCERT.

How to Make Notes?

Notes making is an art and plays a complementary role in self-study. It proves to be crucial during revision because students do not have much time to go through the entire books and syllabus again. In such a scenario, personal notes making may prove to be valuable asset.

Few individual are pat at making personal notes but some face difficulty in making and keeping them, something out of laziness or sometimes due to lack of interest. But, people who want to learn the techniques for making notes or to improve their notes-making skills, may follow the following strategy. Though the individual strategy may differ, these points if kept in mind can give you an edge.

Key Points to Follow

- **Second Reading:** Make revision notes in the second reading Don't try to make quick notes in the first reading.
- **Precise:** Make precise short notes o a comprehensive topic so that you can quickly revise it.
- **Keywords and connecting links:** It is not necessary to always make revision notes on a separate page. You can

write on the book margin. Just write keywords and connect links between them so they by reading it you can get the whole idea easily.

For Prelims

- **use Bullets:** Make notes of the topic in bullet points.
- **Flow Charts or Infographics :** This helps in making concise notes and quick revisions.
- **Separate Notes:** Segregate topics under broad subjects (like Economy, Polity, Environment, International Relations, Current issues, etc. and keep separate Notes for every subject. Otherwise, it becomes time taking to find things at the last moment.
- **Map Making:** The strategy of notes making may differ. In geography, chapter-wise maps can be prepared, for example, the Indian Monsoon can be depicted on India's Map. This will also help to revise. Similarly, maps can also be made, in history, or other subjects for marking important historical sites.
- **Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs):** Divide the whole topic into subtopics and develop MCQs on these subtopics.

This will help in conceptual clarity and retain them for a longer duration. The developed MCQs can be solved to do a quick revision.

For Mains

- **Factual Notes:** While reading any topic, write an important Fact/Quote on a separate page and make a compilation of all such topics that are relevant. It would be helpful for you while writing the main answers it must be brief but factual and objective.
- **Thematic Notes:** Make Quick revision notes theme-wise like Forest, Climate change. It would be easy to add current related topics in an appropriate theme.
- **Short Analytic Notes:** Write topical summary analysis for each topic. It will help in revising concepts at the last moment easily.

Advantages of Making Notes

- Quick Revision
- Develop conceptual Clarity
- Makes study interesting
- Helps in focusing

- Retaining things for a longer time

Newspaper and Notes making

“ A good newspaper is a nation taking to itself.”

-Arthur Miller

Among all of the sources like news channels, magazines, etc., the newspapers are important sources to prepare the current affairs. A thorough reading and understanding of the newspaper are essential for all the stages including prelims, Mains, and the Interview.

Even after years of preparation, aspirants face problems regarding newspaper reading and ultimately end up wasting precious years and attempts in trying different approaches to read different newspapers and making quality notes from them.

Key Points to follow

Sections of a newspaper that one should focus on:

- The front page of a newspaper
- The national section in a newspaper
- The economy section in a newspaper
- The international section in a newspaper
- Editorial Section

- **Link the news with the syllabus:** Whenever you reading the newspaper, link it with the subject and syllabus. Locating news in your syllabus would keep you not only updated but also help to understand the demand of the question and address it effectively. For example, “NATGRID wants to link social media accounts to the central database” is related to the syllabus topic in GS-III Mains paper, “Role o media and social networking sites in internal security challenges”.
- **Be Selective:** The aspirants need not read the complete newspaper. Only those topics and concepts must be read which are relevant for the examination. A simple answer to the above questions would be reading the syllabus and previous year’s

questions multiple times, which provides a basic understanding of which articles are relevant from a newspaper for the exam.

- **Classification:** Try to classify the newspaper articles into subject categories like geography, polity, economics, environment, ecology, science, technology, etc. This will ease your note-making, easing your preparation.
- **Recall and Discuss:** Merely reading the newspaper does not work for most aspirants. To check whether you have understood properly or not, try to recall particular news or if possible, explain the news to someone. While doing this, you will face some doubts. Find answers to those doubts.
- **Write in your own words:** Due to the limited retention power of the human brain, it is not great to just read the newspaper and put it. Hence, it is also vital to make well-organized, short, and simple notes. Make notes of the news/issue in your own words. Also, add the necessary additional information that can be considered important for the exam. For example, any related treaties, institutions, facts, etc.

Format to make notes form newspaper

News: India and Canada to re-launch the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement

Making Notes

News Analysis

- India is gearing up to finalize FTAs with the UK, Australis, EU, Canada and other Major economies.
- The Economic Survey highlighted India's need for FTAs as it will help it to diversify exports and explore new shores for the promotion of its products.
- According to a survey, 40% of India's exports is limited to just seven countries.
- This indicates that India needs to do a lot more on widening its export basket and give a further push to promoting exports to new shores.
- Moreover, negotiations for FTAs are a part of India's broader strategy to sign "balanced" trade agreements with key economies.
- This move gained traction after India pulled out of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) talks in 2019.

Additional Information : (This can be added to make notes effective and comprehensive)

About India-Canada Trade

- Total bilateral trade between India and Canada including goods and services crossed \$11 billion.
- Major Indian exports to Canada include drugs and pharmaceutical products, iron & readymade garments (RMC) while key Canadian exports to India comprise pulses, fertilizers, coal and crude petroleum.

About Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)

- RECP is a regional Free Trade Agreement between ASEAN and 6 other countries, viz. India, China, Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand.

- It was finally signed in November 2020 after 8 years of negotiations.
- Last year, India walked out of the negotiations.
- Therefore, it is now an agreement between 15 countries.
- However, the members have said that the doors will be kept open for India to join the agreement at a future date of India's liking.
- RCEP members constitute nearly a third of the global population and 29% of global GDP.

- **Editorial Page.** Editorials give a perspective to news and analysis. Good newspapers believe in giving a balanced and factual view. Mahatma Gandhi said newspapers should be read for study of facts, but should never kill the habit of independent thinking. It helps in thinking beyond the general, reading between the lines, obtaining an in-depth analysis of the news, and thinking in multi-dimensional ways.
- **Analytical Summary.** After reading the articles, summarize them in your own words.

Things to be remembered

- Focus on socio-economic issues like women empowerment, education or health-related issues, issues and politics affecting vulnerable sections, etc.,
- Focus on issues of national and international importance such as climate, refugees, bilateral or multilateral issues.
- Political issues should focus on matters related to the Indian Constitution, the Legislature, and Public Administration.
- Focus on the Supreme court or High Court process.

The above process requires sheer discipline and willpower to sustainably follow till end of the preparation process.

Reading Between the Lines

There is no sacrosanct resource for Civil Services Examination which can claim their utility in the exam; however, every resource is indicative like signboards on the street which ensure you don't miss any turn. Similarly reading between the lines in the art to identify those signboards while reading a book or an article from the newspaper.

Key Points to follow

- **The 'Why' Factor!** First of all, this is important to know the relevance of the topic from the perspective of the Civil Service examination. Why did the event happen? Is it worth reading? How it can be asked in the UPSC CSE? why should I study it? Are there any constitutional provisions related to it? And similar questions can be asked before you read it.
- **Multidimensional Approach.** Always read topics from a multidimensional perspective. What are the different implications on society., environment, vulnerable sections, government, etc.? The interlinking of the topic will give a better understanding of the hidden concept of any topic or news.
- **Critical Thinking;** Read the articles or topics critically. For example, in case of any problem-oriented topic always read it

critically such as how the problem can be solved and what are the best practice already present? Both, the 'for' and 'against', perspectives should be analyzed. This would also help you to decipher news from propagands and open new perspective and vistas.

Critical Thinking

- We use critical reasoning everyday to determine whether a statement is worthy of acceptance means whether it is true. A fundamental principle of critical thinking is that we should not accept a statement as true without reason. If a statement is supported by good reasons, we are entitled to believe it. The better the reasons to support a statement, the more likely it is to be true.
- **Understanding Examination Dynamics.** While reading any topic think about how will UPSC frame a question on it in Prelims or Mains respectively? For example, rising petrol prices is a burning issue but an aspirant should focus on how the prices move, what are the taxes, what alternative can we think of to replace fossil fuel, what are the new technologies to solve pollution caused by it, are there any questions asked about it in the past?

Advantages of Reading Between the Lines

- Interconnecting the Subjects
- Developing Critical Thinking
- Holistic Approach for exam preparation

Approach for Integrated Preparation

Considering the vast Mains Syllabus, it is always advisable to adopt an integrated approach that is Prelims cum Mains Approach. As 3-4 months duration after the prelims does not prove to be sufficient for most of the students. Rather, this time should be devoted to practice answer writing and revision instead of studying new subjects.

The syllabus of Prelims and Mains overlap in many areas. The art of getting maximum marks and utilizing the best of available resources in a limited time is the only way that can ensure success in this exam. In fact preparation for civil services examination is an optimization game. What we call it – ‘minimum input and maximum output’. in this context, **the pre-cum-mains integrated approach** is considered to be the best method for the preparation of the examination. This is also important because basics are as much important as details. They cannot be separated far apart. These days in prelims objective questions are not difficult because the facts and concepts are not known but also because options given for answers are confusing due to lack of a detailed, sequential and clear understanding.

Why an Integrated Approach

- The Syllabus of the Prelims is nothing but a subset of the Mains as around 70% syllabus of Prelims overlap with the Mains syllabus
- Questions can be asked from the same topic but with different approaches.

- Every section of General Studies is interlinked, for example, the syllabus of World History has some applications in International Relations (IR), Globalization, and Economy.
- Time Constraint is also a major factor as the time gap between the Prelims and Mains exams is enough only for revision and practice.

Key Points to Follow

- **Micro-Management of the Syllabus:** Micro-management of the curriculum is most important for an integrated approach. The more we break the syllabus to the micro-level (Topics and Subtopics), the more we will be able to strengthen our understanding of the topics and the syllabus as a whole. If we have a deep understanding of the entire syllabus, we will be able to use any topic in the context of the preliminary examination and main examination while reading it.
- **Connecting the Dots:** The next step is to Interconnect the micro-dots of the syllabus and understand their inter-relation which is possible when you have grip on the syllabus. To write outstanding answers to general questions, you should have the ability to relate the topics. It is important to pay enough consideration in what way any topic is interrelated with other sections of the syllabus.
- **Integrating Prelims and Mains:** While doing an integrated study or only mains-oriented study do not work. The topics have to be covered holistically. The facts have to be learned analytically with

concepts. Always read a topic with the question of ‘why’ and ‘how’ in the mind along with ‘what’. When you prepare a topic just do not stick to the superficial and direct knowledge of it. Brainstorm and think on the topic from multiple perspectives. Previous year papers can also be referred to understand more about that how UPSC asks questions based on different dimensions of same topic.

- Example: Topic-Gross Domestic Product (GDP)

Prelims Orientation

- What is GDP?
- Concepts related to GDP?
- How is it calculated?
- What is included in GDP?

Mains Orientation

- Is GDP a right concept to measure the countries growth?
- What are the factors that have been inhibiting India from realizing its potential GDP?
- Do you agree with the view that steady GDP growth and low inflation have left the Indian economy in good shape?

Integrated Planner. Around 50-70% syllabus is common in both prelims and mains, but still some subjects are not covered in the prelims syllabus such as world history, internal security etc. Apart from

this, topics in society and International relations are asked from different perspective. So, to cover all these topics and new subjects, an integrated study planner can be made to plan out studies comprehensively.

- The planner can be for daily, weekly, monthly (1, 2, 3 or any) or yearly, based on availability of time and individual learning capacity.
- The common and uncommon topics should be segregated first, and then plan can be prepared by giving equal weightage to all the topics.
- Optional subject should also be placed, in planner, as 3 month time period may fall short for the preparation of GS + Optional subject.
- Additional Focus on Scheme.

Use of Internet for Civil Services Preparation

Internet or the digital world has made information accessible and available to everyone. Even aspirants who are sitting in the remotest area can easily access the information instantly. Available data shows that the internet has become one of the foremost choices for information gathering by aspirants. The vast amount of information available online may prove to help develop a thorough understanding of topics and subjects. Immense information is just a click away now. Though the internet is a boon, sometimes, the immense amount of knowledge and

sources can become misleading. It may prove to be helpful if used in the right way.

Key Points to Follow

- **Understanding the problem (Issue):** Aspirants may use the internet to clear the doubts related to any topic or to retrieve information on any subject. The most reliable sources such as e-books including NCERTs, reference books, News articles, research articles, government websites, reports, etc., may be referred to.
- **Important factual relevant data from reports and surveys:** To enhance the credibility of answers and provide solid arguments, data acts as the catalyst in strengthening our bond with the examiner. While reading any issue/topic, we must use the internet to keep track of relevant reports, findings, and surveys to enrich our content with the relevant data from them.
- **Online structured notes and storage:** The Internet give the facility to read anywhere even while traveling. Apps like EVERNOTE, One Notes can be used to make online notes systematically.
- **E-Sources. E-newspapers or free access to news articles, E-books, and Video lectures** if one doesn't want to or cannot afford the subscription of newspapers.

- **Online practices of test series:** Many coaching institutions provide Daily Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs), Mains Questions to practice, Free Online Test Series to practice for the examination. Students can subscribe to online test series and enhance their preparation by practicing from a remote location.
- **Peer group:** The biggest motivation and learning comes from our fellow aspirants.

Apps like Telegram have been used by UPSC aspirants to create a virtual community for sharing of resources, guidance related to exams, motivational and emotional support. Some other Social Media groups such as Facebook and Whatsapp group are also available which provide comprehensive guidance and interaction to prepare for Civil Services.

Importance of Practicing Previous Year's Question Paper

Practicing previous year's question papers is very important for preparation, as these papers are the most reliable source of information for students writing both prelims and main examinations.

Advantages

- **Real Information:** Previous Year's Paper have actual question been asked by UPSC in prelims as well as Mains. These gives the most authentic information on the types and levels of questions being asked by UPSC every year.

- **Exam-centric Approach:** Going through the previous year's papers helps in developing exam centric approach while reading any exam-related content.
- **Trends Analysis:** The previous year's question papers should be thoroughly analyzed to understand the trends of the question paper every year.
- **Self-Assessment:** Solving question papers offer the students an elaborate understanding of their skills, like self-evaluation about their speed and time management.
- **Revision:** Solving these papers also helps them in revision. It is always advisable to solve papers when students have completely done with their preparations.

Note: UPSC CSE Previous Year's Question Papers for both Prelims and Mains are available on its Official Website:
<https://www.upsc.gov.in/>

Civil Service Preparation along with College

A number of the aspirants start their **preparation for Civil Services** during college time; ;however, they find it difficult in finding the workable program of action related to **civil services preparation**. But, this is not unachievable. The first attempt successful candidates are mostly who start preparation at an early stage. UPSC CSE topper, Tina Dabi also started preparation during her college days and successfully balanced her studies with the UPSC CSE preparation. One of the

advantages with the college or school students is that they have plenty of time to understand about Civil Servants Examination and its requirements.

Key Points to follow

- **Follow a General Strategy:** A general strategy has been discussed that can be followed as a most basic strategy to prepare for civil services examination. (Discussed under A General Strategy for UPSC Civil Services Examination.)
- **Time Table Guidance:** As students will be managing the college/School syllabus with the UPSC syllabus, it is important to take out the syllabus of UPSC CSE as well as the College/School syllabus.
 - Find out and mark the common topics and subtopics. Make a common study strategy for the common topics.
 - List out the non-common topics and, make the time and study plan according to your interest and capacities.
 - Distribute equal time to static and current affairs.
- **Selection of Optional Subject:** It will be advisable for students, if they are studying in the first or second year of their college, then they should not be in a hurry to choose their optional subject. Aspirants may choose optional based on the following parameters:
 - Interest in the subject

- Background of Education
- Overlapping Coverage with the GS Syllabus
- Availability of Study material
- Length of Syllabus

Role of Academic Background

UPSC is a great game leveler in terms of not prioritizing any particular stream or background of student. Most of the selected candidates took the humanities as their optional subjects, although it is not unusual to find a small number of aspirants selecting physical and biological sciences. What matters is one's genuine interest and control of the subject. This shows that whether you have studied subjects asked in the Civil Services Examination or not, the thing which matters is your approach towards the examination. Humanities and social sciences help in GS papers as well and may take lesser time to prepare.

Key Analysis

- **Understanding the Demand of Examination:** Aspirants who understand the demand of the examination have high chances of qualifying for the examination. What is required is smart approach and trends-oriented study style. UPSC asks questions based on basic understanding and knowledge, so anyone irrespective of educational background can answer them. If he/she has good

command over basic concepts, facts and an analytical frame of mind.

- **Challenges for Vernacular languages:** Mostly, the available study material in the market is in the English language. It becomes quite difficult to find comprehensive study material for aspirants who had studied in vernacular languages. Such aspirants also face problems in CSAT paper while solving English Comprehension. Is this threat real?
 - In reality, fear of the English language is a myth as UPSC never asks questions that are beyond the reach of students of any language.
 - The questions asked by UPSC in Prelims and Mains are of basic understanding that can be obtained by reading basic NCERTs and keeping up with the current affairs.
 - A balanced study with slightly more emphasis on English to read NCERTs can help these students to break the inertia.
 - A basic level of English and Reasoning can be learned by practicing.
 - Internet is also a good source in helping people to overcome languages and subjects related barriers.

Challenge of Humanities Subject: It can also be argued that aspirants of science background face many types of problems as

they have to opt for a subject from social science background as their optional paper (paper I & II)

- Switching to humanities subject from the original educational background of the graduation subject requires a huge effort from the aspirants.
- Even after all the hard work and dedication, some aspirants from science backgrounds are unable to develop a familiar foundation and understanding of the subject matter.
- Understanding the subject plays a crucial role in the Main examinal backgrounds here and there. But, overall we can say that this examination (CSE) provides an equal opportunity to aspirants from all educational backgrounds. Clearing the examination requires the correct temperament and right approach by candidates to understand the different dimensions for subjects. so, we can say that Educational background has very little effect to clearing UPSC Examination.

Time Management during Preparation

Time management is the most crucial part of UPSC preparation. Making wise use of it will enable you to manage your studies and counter any stress or pressure that you might encounter during this preparation.

Key points to Follow

- **Make an Honest assessment of available time:** Depending upon when you have started your preparation. Decide how many months you have at your disposal and also how many hours you can dedicate in a day. If you are a beginner and not working, giving 6-7 hours of focused time is essential. On the other hand, if you are a beginner and working try and give least 5 hours daily, ideal preparation period is 11-12 months. So plan accordingly if you have a lesser number of months available. It is suggested that the daily hours that you devote is stretched to 8 hours of study.
- **Set up Realistic but little ambitious targets:** Try and set up Monthly-Weekly-Daily targets. The target you set have to reflect your understanding and priorities. These targets must be realistic so that they are achievable while it is also important that they are ambitious so that they give you a push to utilize your time best extent.
- **Make a list and gather your sources:** try to keep them limited i.e., instead of randomly picking up books and material. Be clear of books you wish to refer to and current affairs material website or notes you wish to follow.
- **Divide large tasks into small yet achievable daily goals:** A journey of thousand miles begins with a single step. You may have a lot of subjects to cover but it starts with one single step taken at this moment. It is what management Guru Peter Drucker says

“management by objective and what the book ‘Atomic Habits’ suggests. Example: You have planned to finish your optional in the next 3 months. Chalk out a plan that gives several chapters to be completed in a week and the number of pages you can complete in a day. It is like creating ‘Base camps’ before reaching the highest peak.

- **Make smart use of technology:** The Internet and smartphones can make your life easier if you do not allow yourself to be carried away by them. If you do not have the time to make newspaper or current affairs notes. Make use of apps like Evernote to organize your notes and copy-paste pictures and screenshots from any website.
- **Manage your Stress and Anxiety levels:** UPSC preparation may come with undue stress and pressure for some. Thus it is important to adequately manage it through proper along with meditation. Take rest and loosen your wires at intervals through tea breaks and streaks of entertainment. It is refreshing and not waste of time. Approaching a trusted adult or a friend in case of need is the best thing you can do. It is always important to remember during the preparation that irrespective of the result there is ample scope for everybody to do well in life. Life is bigger than any setbacks. Have faith in your abilities and give your best and leave the rest on life’s

natural dynamics. Believe, life never betrays, if you endure and keep moving.

- **Avoid Distractions:** The importance of meaningful breaks has already been discussed. But it is important to distinguish them from distractions that eat away your productive time. Breaks are taken at your own will when required, while distractions may come in the form of social media notifications or a family gathering. Thus use your discretion and pick and choose as per your own will. Discipline is the keyword and so is a sense of proportion.

Strategy for 2 Months before Exam

‘You have to cherish things in a different way when you know the clock is ticking. You are under pressure.’

-Chandwick Boseman

Considering the length and width of the vast syllabus of UPSC it becomes quite hard to be without anxiety at the last months of preparation before the exam. Students become confused about what they should study and how to prioritize things. Don't panic, have courage and faith and be at your best as pressure mounts.

Key Points to Follow

- **Avoid new things:** Students should focus more on revision and avoid going for anything new. Do only if it is very much necessary.

- **Mock Test:** Instead of going for reading unread chapters and new books, students should focus on evaluation and gap analysis. It is important to prepare yourself for the examination hall experience. For this, Mock Test Plays a crucial role.
- **Prioritization:** Plan out what you must be doing and stick to it. Make a list of important chapters and topics, and go accordingly.
- **Be Flexible:** Time management is key. Alongside having some level of flexibility when it comes to studying; suppose you have spent some of your time out of the schedule then do not spoil your whole day. Be calm and utilize the rest of the day effectively.
- **Cut out distractions and Meditate or exercise to make your mind calm.** Don't get distracted and be calm during the last time.
- **Take good care of yourself and take proper sleep.** It's important to keep your brain at ease and relax. Around 8 hours of sleep is recommended to retain and process, whatever you read.
- **Go for outings or meet friends (outside preparation circle):** It's healthy to take out time for oneself.
- **Do your best and don't allow the fear of failure and consequences cloud your mind:** The power of all powers is 'will power'. Never shun it.

PRELIMS

‘It is the Little details that are vital. Little things make big things happen.’

-John Wooden

Strategy for UPSC Prelims

Prelims are more to check the breadth of knowledge an aspirant has. The details create the big picture and present an all side view. It broadens the fact base. The UPSC syllabus is constituted of **Static and dynamic portions**. Static portion requires **fundamentals** which are mentioned in the syllabus **The dynamic part** requires the material which includes mainly current affairs. Prelims is an **objective paper** and has negative markings. Hence it requires an aspirant to select one option out of 4. What you need is a holistic approach that covers the core areas along with the new areas from which questions are being asked. Prelims is not just a test of knowledge, It is also about problem-solving **skills and the ability to memorize facts and eliminate options when you have limited knowledge on a particular topic.**

Key Points to Follow

- **Follow a General Strategy:** A general strategy has been discussed that can be followed as a most basic strategy to prepare for civil services examination along with subject specific strategies. (Discussed under A General Strategy for UPSC Civil Services Examination.)

- **MCQs Analysis:** Spend more time **analyzing** the mock test than the actual time spent on taking tests. In this, you should focus on analyzing the tests you have given earlier. Hence revision of tests is also necessary for a sound preparation.
- **Practice MCQs:**
 - It helps to reduce negative marking.
 - It helps to increase accuracy.
 - It helps in minimizing common errors (silly mistakes).
- **Critical thinking and ‘joining the dots’:** Try to enjoy the learning process. In this case, try to observe the things soundly like their historical, political, economic, social aspects, etc. This is the process we call ‘deepening and widening’ our knowledge base. Always keep in mind that this is a ‘generalist’ exam; research should always be only to the extent the exam requires. Being more aware and clear is necessary rather than being scholastics.
- **Make a study plan:** A weekly plan can be made to complete the various aspects of the syllabus. But the plan should be followed rigorously and diligently.
- **Time Management:** Practice of questions within a timeframe is necessary. 100 questions are to be completed in 2 hours. So try to cover an entire practice paper in one-and-a-half hours. This would optimize your preparation. It will help in reducing incorrect answers as there is negative marking UPSC Prelims.

How to Avoid Negative Marking?

To Secure better marks, students often move for guesswork while attempting the paper, bringing them into the endless loop of ‘Negative Marking’. The more you guess, the more are the chances of negative marking. The situation gets even tougher when you have to choose between two very close options. Sometimes it becomes difficult for an aspirant to be confident to cross the cut-off marks even after attempting a significant number of correct questions. Vastness of syllabus and more emphasis on Paper 1 are considered two major reasons behind the students going for Negative Marking.

Why Negative Marking

- Negative marking, in multiple-choice test, helps in distinguishing between those who know the subject well and those who don't. Without Negative marking, one cannot be sure whether the candidate knows the answer or its just guesswork blurring the difference between the serious and non-serious candidates. The concept of negative marking came up to check the entry of non-

serious candidates. The scores are more reliable as it discourages random guesses.

Key Points to Follow

- **Hold your nerves:** An aspirant should not lose his/her cool in the examination hall due to the ‘mounting pressure’ syndrome which is quite natural. He /She should read the question and guidelines carefully, such as “select the correct or incorrect statement” properly.
- **Do not waste time on one question:** In case, a question is difficult and taking too much time, leave it and move on to the next question. Wasting too much time on one question may lead to
 - Lesser time even for the easiest questions
 - Aspirants may get nervous/anxious due to time constraints
- **Don’t leave anything for the last minute:** Many aspirants mark the answer with a pencil first and then at the last minute crunch, manly a time student fails to mark all the answers or amrk them incorrectly. So, the student should blacken those questions In which he / she is sure at first instance only to avoid the last-minute race. It is very risky to mark options in the question paper first and then into OMR after solving all towards the end of 2 hours.
- **Do not rush in reading the paper:** Avoid any haste in reading the questions and read all the given options carefully. It is often

observed that the candidates read the question in a hurry and do not read it or understand it completely and if they get a hint of an answer in the first or second given options, they do not pay attention to other options. In this case, the answer can be wrong because sometimes more than one or all the options are partially correct and we have to choose the best out of all the options given. In a hurry candidates often make silly errors like misreading question statements (choose incorrect instead of correct or vice versa.)

- **Three-Step Strategy:** Try to have **3 readings** of the question paper.
 - For the first reading, you should do all those questions which you are 100% sure of.
 - For the second reading try those which you can eliminate 2 options and can apply some logic linking the question with the answers
 - For the third reading, if you are still not confident of the questions you have done that would lead you to minimum cutoff, then apply various strategies like elimination, focusing on the language of the paper, and so on.
- **Effective Methods:** In case you are confused between the two options. If you have eliminated 2 options and are confused in the remaining two, then you must take a chance and mark one of them,

in case you have not attempted many questions to qualify for the examination.

- **Practice: As it is being said;** ‘The more you sweat in training the less you bleed in battle’, Aspirants should keep in mind that they need to do practice and practice to avoid getting negative marks and also to perform better in the civil services preliminary examination.

How Much Time needed for Prelims Preparation?

Any aspirant who is preparing for the Civil Services has to remember that, it’s not about how much time you are spending. It’s about how much you are extracting or gaining from the time you spent. The time needed for the examination preparation depends on multiple factors.

Key points to Follow

- **Individual Capacities:** Time to study varies from individual to individual. You will have to take into account your pace of study, and your ability to grasp the subject it also depends on the ability to remember the facts and figures, in both the papers of general studies and optional subjects. To judge individual capacities, Mock tests are the best method. This may help

students to know their level of preparation and allocation of time to prelims. During exam if a question is very tough, it is same for most of the students, Hence don't worry too much about it.

- **Preparation level:** It is advised that you must have gone through the entire study material for prelims at least once before you decide to give three to four (3-4) months' real-time preparation for the Prelims.
- **Different Strategies:** It depends upon the strategy that you have followed i.e. whether you started preparation earlier or late. This will lead you to decide how much time you should allocate for the prelims. If you have been preparing for this examination since your college days, then there will be a greater chance that you will have more time to allocate time for prelims without worrying about your Mains examination.
- **Integrated Studies:** Students who had opted for Prelims cum Mains Integrated Strategy can allocate around the last 2-3 months to balance out Prelims and Mains studies well.

How to Prepare for CSAT?

CSAT is only a qualifying paper, but this remains relevant to your preparation. The trends analysis shows that aspirants found the CSAT paper of 2021, very difficult, even those aspirants who scored way

beyond the expected cut-off in the paper I failed in Paper II to fetch even 66 marks (the qualifying marks) for paper II. The difficulty level is likely to go up in coming years. With increasing number of applicants, securing qualifying marks in CSAT papers can be an issue for a lot of aspirants.

Key Points to Follow

- **Follow a General Strategy :** A general strategy has been discussed that can be followed as a basic strategy to prepare for civil services examination, along with subject-specific strategies. (Discussed under S General Strategy for UPSC civil Services Examination.)
- **Myths:** Aspirants should remember that specific background students can score high in Paper-2; as they have been in touch with a certain skill set for a long period. But this is not true always even students who are not from technical backgrounds or English medium have also been selected. For this aspirants need to take the right approach, attitude, and identification of weaker areas.
- **Key Weapons to Ace CSAT Paper:** The UPSC CSAT paper is of Easy to Moderate level. The questions can be solved easily with common sense, basic logic, and language skills. but what people generally lack is – Enough Practice, Accuracy, and Speed. Practice is the Key here- which brings both speed and accuracy.

- **For Comprehension:** To improve communication skills, aspirants can read daily newspapers first. Aspirants can read the editorials, magazines, articles, columns, etc., with more attentions. Do not be in a hurry to finish them – take time to understand the comprehension summary. Aspirants need to work on their vocabulary also by reading newspapers and identifying the words.
- **For Logical reasoning and analytical ability:** Practice is the key here. The more patterns and types you would have practiced, the easier it gets in the exam hall. You will be able to quickly identify the right technique for solving each pattern.
- **Basic Numeracy:** As we have already stated in the “Syllabus & Exam pattern” this section does not carry a lot of weightage (7-10% questions). For this section, aspirants can take any standard book, and then they can practice from this book and solve books to improve their accuracy and speed for this paper.

MAINS

Mains Examination is intended to assess the overall intellectual traits and depth of understanding of candidates rather than merely the range of their information and memory. The nature and standard of questions in the General Studies papers (Paper II to Paper V) are to be such that a well-educated person will be able to answer them without any specialized study.

The questions are asked to test a candidate's general awareness of a variety of subjects, which will have relevance for a career in Civil Services. The questions are likely to test the candidate's basic understanding of all relevant issues, and ability to analyze, and take a view on conflicting socio-economic goals, objectives, and demands. The candidates must give relevant, meaningful, and succinct answers.

Strategy for UPSC Mains

Mains Examination is entirely different from objective examination of Prelims. It is a subjective examination. It gives scope for analysis rather than mugging up the facts. Hence, for Mains examination one has to study keeping in mind that it needs a holistic approach, with the capacity to analyze the questions from various dimensions. It also has two parts **Static and Dynamic**. From Dynamic mainly questions from the current papers, are asked. If you go through previous years' question papers, you will find that Dynamic questions are being asked as well as static.

Key Points to Follow

- **Pre-cum-Mains Perspective:** it is important that if we mix the syllabus of the Preliminary and Mains Examination, about 60% of the total syllabus is common for both. Therefore, it is necessary to

prepare such topics with a pre-cum-mains perspective, though their approaches are different.

- **Equal Importance:** As all the papers have equal weightage, hence it is recommended that reasonable amount of focus is kept on all the GS papers, Essay as well as Optional. Thorough preparation and a daily practice plan with weekly revisions would help you to achieve good marks in the Mains examination.
- **the Dimensional Analysis:** It will require taking up a problem and then explaining the various cause and effect relationships of the problem with various dimensions as political, economic, ethical, social, etc. Firstly prepare all subjects individually and then after an optimum point of subjects individually and then after an optimum point of time try to inculcate all subject knowledge in your answer writing on need basis.
- **Answer Writing:** Aspirants generally make the mistake of reading more and more books and content. They skip answer writing practice thinking that once they have read everything, they will be able to write it in the examination. But, this does not go well in the examination hall. Answer writing practice has the following benefits.
 - Brings clarity of thoughts
 - Answers get more structured and communicate clearly
 - Time Management (3 hrs. for 20 questions)

- Self-analysis
- **Evaluation.** It is equally important to get your work evaluated.

This helps in

- Reducing mistakes
- Boost Confidence
- Improvement in quality of answers

How to Choose Optional Subject?

choosing the right optional subject decides the chances of your selection in the **Civil Services Exam**. Fortunately in the new format importance of **GS papers** has increased manifold. It is advisable to choose on optional subject without any haste or carelessness. Most of the aspirants commit the mistake to choose the wrong option and later on regret their decision when they face unexpected difficulty and failure. It is required to find out interest lies one should start preparing for and develop your interest. Because in four **GS Papers** you will be introduced to a variety of **optional subjects like History, Geography, Public Administration, Political Science, and Sociology**. This will help you to determine your inclination to a particular subject. Your early background may help in choosing your optional from familiar areas, but this is not always helpful.

Key Points to Follow

- **Overlapping Subject:** Choosing an optional subject that overlaps with **General Studies** is considered a good strategy, as the time required to study the same subject under GS paper can be saved. However, this is also not a universal phenomenon. There is no dearth of such aspirants who have cleared the examination with unconventional optional subjects such as Medical Science or Mathematics.
- **Interest and Understanding:** Sometimes aspirants might choose the subject which is in trend and gives maximum selection but this might not be the right choice as students might lose interest in the subject soon. It is also important to choose the subject of your choice that interests you and which you may find easier to understand and execute.
- **Analysis of the UPSC Syllabus and Previous Years' question papers** of the shortlisted subjects and chose the subject considering many factors.
- **Writing Style and Presentation Techniques:** Aspirants may choose subject when is suitable according to their writing style and has unique presentation techniques to fetch more marks.
- **Availability of Study Material and Guidance:** Sometimes students choose subjects on which study material is not easily available or scattered at many places. This poses a challenge as most of the time goes in searching for the matter to study. This proves to be a frustrating

task and limits the understanding of candidates for the subjects as well. The right guidance for the preparation is also equally important.

- **Graduation Background:** Choosing the optional subject that you have studied in graduation may give you an edge as you have developed a deeper understanding of the subject and can perform well in examination. But this also has some limits depending on individuals and UPSC unpredictability.
- **Syllabus Length:** Syllabus length is also an important factor which an aspirant should keep in mind while selecting an optional subject.

How Much Time Needed for Mains Preparations?

This question of how much time one should dedicate for mains is in itself as no one can differentiate between preparation of prelims and mains specifically. When you are preparing for the **Civil Services Examination** then you are preparing for the preliminary, Mains, and Interview. So, when you start preparing for the Civil services examination, you should always keep in mind that it is needed to blend factual knowledge with relevant details and analysis, an approach essential to clear this examination.

Key Points to Follow

- **Integrated Approach:** Considering the vast Mains Syllabus it is always advisable to adopt an integrated approach that is Prelims-cum-Mains Approach. 3-4 months after prelims should be devoted

to practicing answer writing and revision rather than studying new subjects.

- **Experienced Students:** Students who had already appeared for the examination or have completed the prelims syllabus once may dedicate a full-fledged 3-4 months in reading Mains Material.
- **college Students:** Aspirants who have opted to prepare for CSE along with their college studies should focus mainly on Mains preparation as it helpful in their own studies and the UPSC Mains examination.

Importance of Answer Writing for Mains

Writing is an art and it should be seen like this. The art of writing as it is said is a very human way of making life more meaningful by way of allowing your communication to be effective and your soul to grow. “To write well, express yourself like the common people, but think like a wise man, said Aristotle. UPSC mains Examination carries 1750 marks and is subjective, which means questions are being asked and students need to write detailed answers for the respective questions. Some of which may have several parts. The requirement of questions may differ like discuss, elaborate, elucidate, evaluate and examine etc. The final selection in UPSC is mainly decided by the performance of students in the Mains examination. **Data of the previous year’s results have shown that even those students who could not perform well in the**

interview were able to make it through the final selection list. This shows the importance of answer writing in Mains examination. Writing Mains Answers in an art, which can be mastered by learning the tactics of answer writing and can be gained by anyone, but this is not possible without rigorous answer writing practice. It has been sometimes observed that even those students who have a good amount of knowledge cannot clear the examination and students who have little knowledge can easily get through the final list. This reflects that irrespective of the level of knowledge, aspirants when fulfill the basic requirement of the question, may get good marks.

Advantages of Answer Writing Practice

- It helps in presenting answers in a more structured way.
- Practicing answer writing helps aspirants to give a clear-cut direction and a flow to their ideas.
- Answer writing helps in bringing the clarity of thoughts.
- It will also help the aspirants to analyze the demand of the question.
- Fail Words such as analyze, discuss, explain, elaborate, that play the key role in answer, it can be better understood by the students by practicing more answer writing
- Practicing answers before the exam can help students in giving fodder material for writing in the exam.
- Students can also analyze their level of preparation through answer writing practice.

- It can also help students with the common mistakes they tend to make in the examination.
- Practicing more and more answers increases confidence of students.
- Constant writing brings positive change in the way of writing of aspirants in a consistent manner.
- Students also learn to present their answers in the provided word or space limit.
- This also helps students to bring critical thinking and analysis to their writing with time.
- It helps students to develop time critical thinking and analysis to their writing with time.
- Handwriting can be improved.

Different Directives for Mains Answers Writing

Mains Examination questions on **General Studies** needs understanding of approach to the question, analytical demand of the question, and many turns and twist attached to most of the question in the form of common instructions. i.e. Analyze, critically analyze, discuss, evaluate, explain, etc. These are called directive of questions. These words guide you about the clear path you should follow while writing your answers and make them relevant.

So having a clear understanding of these directives is the first and foremost requirement to cater to the demand of the questions and make your answers appropriate, relevant and effective.

Key Points to Follow

Common directive are generally attached to the Questions in the Mains Paper.

- **ANALYSE.** Break up an issue / event into its parts and explain how these relate to one another.
- **ASSESS.** Consider the importance of something given in the question.
- **COMPARE.** simply examine the similarities and differences.
- **CONTRAST.** Concentrate on the differences.
- **CRITIQUE.** Point out the limitations and usefulness of the subject in the question. It must be solution oriented.
- **DESCRIBE.** Give a detailed account of a topic.
- **EVALUATE.** Weigh up the importance, success, or value of something with evidence to support your view. Compare with past evidence/outcome or International evidence.
- **EXAMINE.** Give a detailed account, questioning and exploring the relevant issue.
- **EXPLAIN.** Give a precise account, with reasons for why or how it is as it is.

- **ILLUSTRATE.** Use examples or data from a range of sources to demonstrate your understanding of the subject.
- **JUSTIFY.** Make a case for a particular perspective. Establish the truth through supporting evidence or logical reasoning.
- **REVIEWS.** Examine how a topic has been studied and comment on the value and limitations of its treatment.
- **To what extent.** Explore the case for and against a claim.

Improving Answer Writing Skills

If you have an insight about the terminologies, the term answer writing indicates that it is a skill. It means that this is something, you can acquire over a period, by practice. Thousands of aspirants write **mains exam** and mostly all of them study similar material. So, how and what do you need to do to get good marks and get a call for an interview. There is nothing such word called, a perfect answer for a specific question. The answers need to be relevant and to the point to address all the parts of a question. However, there are certain things which need to be kept in mind for every aspirant to get good marks.

Key Points to Follow

- **Work on the Structure**
- **Highlights of Answers**

- Write Analytical Answers. Just don't start writing answers, instead think from every possible required point / angle.
 - Support the answers with current examples, data to substantiate your answer.
 - bullets or Paragraphs format depends on the demand of the question.
 - Flow charts may be used to support answers. It will help in writing answers in the given word limit.
- **Linkage with Current Affairs**
 - **Develop Habit of Reading Books**
 - **Avoid using unnecessary jargons or technical terms**
 - **Daily Writing**

How to Prepare for Qualifying Papers in Mains?

The rigor and difficulty level of the Qualifying paper changes year to year and sometimes seems to be the difficult one to clear. In the last 4, 5 years it is being found that many aspirants have failed to clear UPSC Mains Examination, only due to failure in the qualifying paper. Aspirants shouldn't take qualifying papers lightly and give equal importance to them like any other main subject. If you are weak in language paper then keep on working for 2, 3

hours a week when you start your UPSC preparation.

About the Qualifying Papers in Mains

Language Paper in UPSC Mains

- Language papers also called compulsory language papers in the civil service mains exam comprise of two papers.
- English Language (300 marks)
- Any Indian Language Paper (300)

Qualifying Marks for UPSC Language paper:

- The minimum qualifying marks for both papers is 25% i.e., 75 marks in each paper. Scoring this minimum cut-off is not that difficult given that the syllabus is simple. But carelessness may cause failure to get the qualifying marks.

About UPSC compulsory English Paper:

- The very purpose behind the introduction of this papers is to test a candidate's ability to read and understand serious descriptive rose and to express his ideas clearly and correctly.
- English Language paper is not too tough but, if you don't practice precise writing, solving problems of comprehension or you avoid grammar practicing then it will be difficult for you to clear this paper.

Key Points to Follow

- **Need-based strategy**
- **Don't lose connection with your Native Language**
- **Understanding the Basics**
- **Improve Vocabulary**

PERSONLITY TEST

The candidates are interviewed by a Board that will have before them a record of the candidate's career. The candidates are asked questions on matters of general interest. The interview carries 275 marks which is a very significant part of the total marks. The object of the Interview / Personality Test is to assess the personal suitability of the candidate for a career in public service by a Board of competent and unbiased observers. The technique of the Interview / Personality Test is not that of a strict cross-examination but a natural, though directed and purposive conversation that is intended to reveal the mental qualities of the candidate.

The Interview / Personality Test is not intended to be a test either of the specialized or general knowledge of the candidates which has been already tested through their written papers. Candidates are expected to have taken an intelligent interest not only in their special subjects of academic study but also in the events which are happening around them both within and outside their State or Country as well as in modern currents of thought and in discoveries which should arouse the curiosity of well-educated youth.

How to Prepare for the Interview?

The final stage in the UPSC examination is personality testing. The main purpose of the interview is to ensure the candidate's ability, to see their

personality, and to check the suitability for various posts of the civil services. By garnering good presentation skills and knowledge, an aspirant can maximize the chances of their selection.

Key Points to Follow

- **Right after Mains:** For the interview, students should start preparing after giving the Mains examination and should not wait for the result of Mains to be declared.
- **Prepare Introductions:** It's very important to prepare a good introduction about yourself and highlight all the significant achievements.
- **Clarity of Answers:** The quality and response for any answer reflect the personality of aspirants. So, a clear understanding of the question and the content of the answer becomes quite significant.
- **Balanced Approach:** An aspirant should try to develop a balanced approach and answer for every topic and answer. Aspirants should be positive and stay calm during the interview. The candidates are tested for their decision making and problem solving capabilities, awareness of their surroundings, a positive world view, sensitivity, social and national commitments and pragmatism rather than their absolute ideological positions.
- **Group Practice:** It's good practice to form groups for interview preparation. From a group of around 305 friends.

- **Mock Interviews:** Take mock interviews of each other once a day. Blatant and explicit flaws will be easily pointed out and the basic common question will be practiced. Also, you come into the flow of giving the UPSC interview.
- **Be yourself:** You should not try to modify your personality too much before the IAS interview.

Qualities Assessed during UPSC interview

Many Interview sessions follow a well-structured pattern, but the **UPSC CSE Interview** is an exception to this. Far from being conducted under a structured format, it is an exercise in which an engaging conversation takes place between the board and the candidate. Thus, contrary to the popular perception of the UPSC CES Interview being a question-answer session, it is much more than that. In a setting that is formal but undirected (undirected means a natural course is followed at the **Interview** rather than a pre-determined session). the Interview session seeks to evaluate a candidate on the give qualities.

Qualities Assessed in Interview

UPSC every time in its notification, outlines the broad qualities that will be assessed during the **Interview** session.

- **Mental Alertness:** It means being at the time and place, i.e. a wholehearted presence and engagement. In other words, it is about “presence of mind” which is the opposite of “absent-mindedness”.
- **The Critical Power of Assimilation:** This is not just about “I have read” or “I know”, but also about whether you have reflected and introspected and examined and weighed to understand the matter of the fact and drawn reasoned conclusions.
- **Clear and Logical Exposition:** You can be clear in exposition only if you understand a thing. And logical exposition also means that anything, you say should not be devoid of order, i.e., first thing first, followed by the next important one be it a simple listing of relevant facts, causes, reasons, etc. while answering.
- **Balance of Judgement.** Being judgemental about any event, thing, or person based on limited understanding, inadequate facts, prejudice, preference or bias is the greatest of all intellectual failures.
- **Ability for Social Cohesion and Leadership:** A prospective Civil Servant should have a mindset and attitude to understand the need and importance of social cohesion while fulfilling his duties and in all her / his public utterances, posturing and interactions. A leader is one who through his sincerity, honesty and integrity, and hard work becomes a role model for the public. These things must be reflected in our thought processes.

- **Intellectual and Moral Integrity:** A public servant elicits trust, credibility, and confidence among people, if his / her moral and intellectual integrity is above board and beyond doubt. This not only makes the Civil Servants' a perfect role model but also makes governance more human and worthy.

Topics to be covered for UPSC interview

As we have discussed that UPSC Interview is not about checking knowledge rather it is more to know the candidate's personality, attitude, temperament, aptitude, and many other qualities. To check out the personality traits several questions are put up in front of aspirants in several different ways and from different sources. UPSC generally asks questions that are basic and not rocket science that be beyond the reach of human understanding. Several Sources can be referred to prepare for the UPSC interview.

Key points to Follow

- **Detailed Application Form (DAF):** Details like the significance of the date of birth, the significance of your name, family background, service order, cadre order, giving other exams, etc. should be looked into.
- **Home State:** You need to be thorough with your home state's major topics: Demography, Challenges, Inter-State conflicts,

Agriculture, Industry, Culture, History, Major tourist sports, Weakness, Unique Opportunities, Resources, etc.

- **Background:** you should be thoroughly familiar with your Schools, Colleges and Employers on a broader level. Again, do not explore into detailed history but cursory knowledge over important topics like the meaning of the school name should be there. The important peripheral issues related to your background should be adequately addressed. Let us take IIT as an example of your college. Questions like Change in standards of Alumnus, Brain drain, Loss of engineer if you join IAS, Entrepreneurship culture, Why IAS after IIT, opening up of new IITs, Autonomy IITs, etc. should be prepared with diligence.
- **Achievements:** Again falls into the must-know topics. One should be thorough with these things. Peripheral questions like how it has impacted your personality, key learning for life, etc. should be prepared.
- **Current Affairs:** Continue reading a newspaper. This time of the phase demands two newspapers, one a bit right of center and the other a bit left of center. The two techniques started above will be more than helpful in this phase. The crux of preparation for this part is adequate knowledge of facts and a balanced view.
- **Optional and Graduation:** Basic topics related to your graduation subject are expected but they are less likely to be asked if you have

prior work experience. You should be thorough with your UPSC optional subject as many questions will be related to the IAS mains Optional subject directly or indirectly. If you have work experience, interview may test in this area.

- **Hobbies and games:** This is the most feared part of the UPSC interviews. It's advisable to write about one or at maximum 2 hobbies. But it is also fine if you do not have any Hobbies or favourite games.

How to Approach the Interview Panel?

Civil services personality test, also popularly known as 'interview' is the final phase in the three stages of UPSC examination and is the most important of all, as the marks in the UPSC interview decide the service of your choice. The Interview is the least prepared of all, but if rightly managed it can be a most rewarding experience.

Overall, it's **the range of interests and knowledge, honesty, truthfulness, humbleness, and calm demeanor and confidence that matters in the UPSC interview rather than stressed or burdened.**

And one should be happy during that **CSE interview.** It's a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to meet so many knowledgeable people. The interviewers are not testing merely your knowledge; rather they are testing your personality traits through your answers. And that is why it is okay not to answer a few questions and that doesn't affect your marks.

But if your answers reveal any bad personality traits you will be

awarded poor marks. Benign measured, precise and controlled in your communication is important.

Key points to Follow

- **Engagement with Board Members**
- **Be Humble**
- **Never Beat Around the Bush**
- **Develop Clarity**
- **Be prepared for Vague Questions**

How to Handle Your DAF in Interview?

DAF provides first-hand knowledge about you to the members of the interview board. You have to own everything that you have written as the description of yourself, your place of birth, place of residence, place, and company where you work/worked, your education, specializations, achievements, hobbies, preferences of services and states, choice of optional paper, etc. along with some details about your parents. That is why half or event more of your interview pertains to your DAF. Your DAF offers the interview board clues about suitable questions for you.

An Interview board starts the interview with your DAF to give you time to adjust and put yourself at ease before a grilling session picks up. It is done to normalize you. Nevertheless, you cannot be casual about your DAF because the Civil Services interview is a test of your personality and not your bookish or theoretical knowledge alone.

Key Points to Follow

- **Name:** Meaning, any other significance.
- **Place of birth/residence and work/home state:** Some knowledge about history and culture, geography, economy, mainly the most important aspects.
- **Education and Profession**
 - Why leave your professional area to join Civil Servicers?
 - How will your professional experience help in Civil Services?
 - Civil Services is the domain of generalists, why select a specialist like you?
 - Higher qualification is more useful for teaching and research and development, coming to Civil Services is a kind of internal brain drain. What is your comment?
- **Hobbies and extra-curricular activities:** The less you mention while filling out your application form, the better it is. You should be honest and focused in mentioning hobbies and areas of interest. You need to have a fairly good level of basic knowledge in the areas which you have mentioned in your application, such as yoga and pranayama, sports, music, poems, singing, playing an instrument, cooking, social work, star watching/gazing, astronomy, numerology, palmistry, vastu, painting, films or whatsoever.

- **choice of Service:** Be ready to defend your choice of services and states logically.
- **Optional:** Why it differs from your core educational subject, most basic tenets, and thinkers of your subject, contemporary issues related to that if any.
- **Opinions:** Your Personal opinion on contemporary issues related to your state, district, optional, services preferred, etc.
- **Category:** If you are a woman, if you belong to the minority, if you belong to SCs/Sts/OBCs community, you must have a good understanding of socio-economic problems related to your community.
- All glaring points of DAF/U-turns must be logically explained if needed.

Hobby & Interest are different, when we say or mention some hobby, it means we take out time to pursue that, mere interest is not enough. Hence, you need to know about the are of your hobby well. To get an Idea, have a look at some of the questions asked by the board member based on candidate's DAF in previous years.

Hobby as Music

- You have written listening to music is one of your hobbies. What kind of music do you like? Do you like classical music?
- When exactly do you listen to music – When you are sad or happy?
- how do you feel while listening to the music?

Hobby as Painting

- So, you paint, What medium do you use?
- So, what is unique about watercolors?
- What is that one thing about watercolors which attracted you?
- Is patience required to let the paint dry?

Hobby as Reading

- Have you read Bapu's "My experiments with the truth"? (Reading books was mentioned as a hobby)
- Bapu in South Africa used to travel first class but when in india he started traveling in third class. Sarojini Naidu on this said that it takes a lot to keep Bapu poor. Comment?
- Why do you think he used to do that?
- Bapu used to use charkha, why?
- Bapu used to use charakha, why?

➤ Bapu was called an effective communication; can you explain the reason for that?

Why do you want to become an IAS officer?

- You are an engineer. Then you took up marketing and have been working for long, why IAS now? What motivated you? That is fine but what will you do if you get into an allied service like the IRS, IFS, IPS, etc?
- What are the constraints in which an administrator functions today?

Do and Don'ts of Interview

Do's

- To have positive body language, your gesture and posture should reflect a confident person. Sit comfortably showing respect to board members.
- Your attire should be formal. The looks of a person do not matter rather it is how he presents himself/herself in those 30-40 minutes that is important.
- To answer questions clearly and confidently taking a little pause in between. Always have a pleasant smile.
- Try to remain calm and composed even when faced with provocative questions because it might be possible that you patience through such discussion.
- Try not to get into long-winded explanations and answer to the point.
- Be honest, no need to pretend as the board is well experienced.

Dont's

- Avoid conversational clichés, like: ‘as you know, ‘that’s correct, ‘of course, ‘indeed’, obviously’, etc.
- Avoid technical jargon. However, if a member continues to probe you in any technical field, you can use technical expressions.
- Maintain a cheerful disposition. Now and then you can appear serious, but most of the time keep smiling or look cheerful and composed. One caution here: if the board laughs, you should only smile. It is only when you maintain some amount of distance that the board begins to wonder about the depth of your personality.
- Do not give long introductions. Come straight to the heart of the matter.
- Show human concern when ever possible in your answers.
- You should be logically consistent and analyze things rationally while talking. You are supposed to defend what you say, but with due respect to the views of the board. Stop trying to defend an answer if it becomes difficult to do so logically and fairly.
- Do not make hasty or sweeping generalizations.
- If any counter idea or additional idea or information is suggested by the board members on any question, quickly measure and evaluate its worth; keep and defend your position firmly if the counter idea is not worth; if it is worth, politely agree with it and factor in your answer.

SUBJECT-WISE STRATEGY

Ho to Study History?

History is important for the point of view of its weightage in UPSC CSE Examination as around 18-20 questions are asked from different sections of History including Art & Culture, Ancient, Medieval and Modern History. Along with the importance the subject carries in examination the subject in attracts aspirants as they find it interesting. The subject is also chosen as optional by several aspirants. The reason might be the lucidity of the subject and its story-like nature that attracts almost every individual. but the question remains why should a civil servant be familiar with this subject? The answer is that our perspective on state, society, and life can be made better by analyzing past events in history. This is one of the main reasons why **history for UPSC** has become an important and compulsory subject in primary and higher secondary education as well as for general studies not just in India but around the world.

Key Points to Follow

- Follow a General Strategy
- Story Format
- Reason-based Approach
- Categorical Approach
- Comparative Approach
- Deciding on the Importance of Topics
- Map Coverage

- Books and Resources

Hot to Study Geography?

In the last few years, UPSC has asked around 8-10 questions from Geography every year. It has asked questions from 'Physical, Social, Economic Geography of India and the World'. The syllabus might seem quite short but it has many dimensions embedded in it. If unplanned, one can exhaust himself by referring to different books for different fields. The most suited approach here will be a consolidated and to-the-point approach that can make your preparation easier and more collaborative.

Key Points to Follow

- Follow a General Strategy
- Micro detailing of Syllabus
- Map-Based Approach
- Linking of Topics
- Current Affairs linking

How to Study Polity?

On average 15-18% of the questions come from Indian polity. Due to this significance of weightage given in the exam, polity as a subject becomes even more important in the **CIVIL SERVICES PREPARATION** process. One needs to emphasize more on conceptual understanding and use of Application and analytical skills in the questions of Democracy virtue, Cabinet form of Government, Relation between Rights and Duties. Apart from this every day newspaper is mandatory to cover the current affairs related to the polity.

Key Points to Follow

- Follow a General Strategy
- Conceptual clarity
- Newspaper
- Current Affairs + Constitution
- Judicial Pronouncements

How to Prepare Science & Technology

Science and Technology has become a scoring subject under the UPSC CSE prelims examination as the number of questions has increased fairly in the past few years. The emergence of beneficial technologies and innovations is used for the sake of the benevolence of human society. And in the age of the digital world, bureaucrats have to be aware of the basics of these technological innovations for effectiveness and a better administration.

Subject Analysis

- The first part General Science is generally static. This section includes the basic concepts and phenomena of science. While preparing, aspirants need to devote a good amount of time to the clarity of concepts as it would make their way for the further sections much easier. Basic physics and biology is asked frequently. In Physics, the most basic questions from topics such as light, electromagnetism, laws of motion, basics of space science, etc. are mostly being asked. In biology, a good number of questions from Microbiology, Biotechnology, Cell, and its organelle, Health and diseases, Basic phenomena such as respiration and photosynthesis, have been asked in the previous examination. This portion should also be linked with the dynamic

portion i.e. Current Affairs. There are many advancements and discoveries in the biotechnology field, and various new policies have been framed by the government in this field too. All these new initiatives and policies should be dealt with in detail.

- The second portion is about technology and its applications. This is quite vast and remains more unpredictable as it is more dynamic. Numerous discoveries and innovations keep on happening daily. It's not possible to consolidate them all. In this situation, it becomes quite important what should be studied and how. By looking at the Previous Year Question papers we can easily deduce the trends and form the strategy accordingly.

Key Points to Follow

- Follow a General Strategy
- Government Initiatives
- Technical Terms
- Inventions
- Comprehensive Source

How to Prepare Environment and Ecology

Environment and ecology is important topic from the perspective of both the **IAS Prelims and Mains**. Questions from this subject constitute approximately 25-30 percent of the **general studies paper 1**. In the **IAS Prelims**, a significant number of questions, precisely between 15 and 20 are asked every year. Similarly, around 4-5 questions are asked in the Mains examination.

Key Points to Follow

- Follow a General Strategy
- Map-Based Study

- Important Chapters
- More Contemporary
- Additional Sources

How to Study Economy?

In **civil Services Exam** the one subject that gives jitters to most of the aspirants is Economy. The subject is quite significant from an exam point of view. The confusion always looms about concepts, theories, and questions. The reason for this could be the lack of reliable and good resources and dynamism of the subject. Candidates are doubtful about the approach and **Study material** for the **Economy section of Prelims and Mains**. Most of the time candidates are in the dilemma regarding the right books and resources that will cover the entire **UPSC Syllabus of the economy from prelims and mains** point of view

Key Points to follow

- Follow a General Strategy
- Current Affairs
- Stepwise Preparation
 - Stage 1: Understanding the concepts –Terms like GDP, REPO, Reverse REPO, CRR, SLR, Inflation Indices, Growth, Inclusion, Development, and so on. Textbooks do exist at this stage.
 - Stage 2: Understanding the application of the concepts – Application of the fundamental concepts in day-to-day scenarios. You have to apply here what you learned in stage one.
 - Stage 3: For practicing the concepts and application of concepts solve MCQs and practice answer writing and give Mock tests.
 - Stage 4: Remember trends & round off data instead of exact number.

How to Study Current Affairs

Current Affairs is a dynamic and undefined part of the UPSC syllabus that puts aspirants in a dilemma thinking how and from where to start current affairs. There is a deluge of reading material both online and offline on current affairs which makes it difficult for the aspirants to understand what to read. A clear and well-planned strategy can be adopted to study current affairs.

Key Point to Follow

- Authentic Sources
- Don't Waste Much Time on Current Affairs
- Cover Issues and not News
- Theme Based Approach
- Always Link with the Subjects

How to Study Ethics Paper (Section A)?

The GS paper IV of the UPSC Mains exam is also known as Ethics paper. The UPSC syllabus and type of questions asked are quite subjective answers may vary for the same questions. The questions can be answered with different viewpoints in numerous ways. The syllabus and pattern of GS paper IV are different from all other papers that require and philosophical yet practical mindset to answer in the exam. The right approach and clarity of concepts and broader perspective can help you to fetch more marks in this paper. But to achieve this objective there should be a precise Strategy for Ethics and Integrity.

Key Points to Follow

- Follow a General Strategy
- Understanding the Subject
- Mapping of Topics

- Finding Relativity
- Theoretical Part
- Key Terms
- Ethics is about verbalization

How to Study Case Studies for Ethics (Section B)?

Along with the theory part, case studies in the Ethics paper bring out ethical dilemmas and logical reasoning. Aspirants should try to enhance their skills for civil services examination, as once they enter the civil service after selection; aspirants may face situation in which competing values clash. Ethics paper makes the aspirants be prepared for the real-life battle as Civil Servants confront real-life situations daily. With the help of case studies, the examiner can understand how aspirants might behave if they face real-life similar situations.

Key Points to Follow

- Framing of the Answer
- A Stepwise Process
- Approach for Writing
 - Aspirants should write briefly in a line or two the entire gamut of the case study and should capture the entire case study.
 - Before attempting the question, aspirants should list down the set of people (stakeholders) who would be directly and indirectly affected in the case.
 - Write 3-4 choices you have in the scenario, along with the pros and cons of choosing each alternative. Two choices inevitably will be the extreme options, which are generally avoided as your choice.

- Aspirants should look to choose their options in answer very carefully by balancing their all options by taking a middle path approach. You should try to choose the best options in any given situation which may not be the most original but the most practical.
- The course of action you wish to pursue must be mentioned in detail, enumerating the steps.
- Aspirants should try to write towards the end of their answer by quoting a relevant thinker's opinion as the quote gives credence to their decision.

How to Study Essay Paper?

The Strategy of Essay Writing

In the UPSC Mains examination, the essay paper plays a very vital role. This paper carries a total of 250marks. Initially, the candidates were asked to write only 1 essay in 3 hours till 2013, but after the change in the UPSC syllabus, the challenge is now of writing 2 essays in 3 hours on diverse topics. The topics may range from administration, polity and international relations, federalism or decentralization, Indian society, media and society, education, women and gender, science and technology, quote base abstract topics, etc.

Key Points to Follow

- Follow a General Strategy
- Reading
- Writing Practice
 - Practice writing short paragraphs (250-300 words).
 - Practice writing different methods of Introduction.
 - Practice the Conclusion writing methods.
 - Write the topic and put your pen down. Now just Brainstorm on the topic.

- Write an Argument about the topic and analyze it from every possible aspect.
- Learn how to use examples.

Do's and Don'ts for Essay Writing

Certain things need to be taken care of before writing an essay in UPSC Mains Exam. People often commit silly mistakes while writing an essay in Mains Exam. So one needs to follow a certain cautious approach before writing any piece of work, we ensure to give a basic framework to writing for making it effective and coherent. For this purpose, it is necessary to understand what should be included and what to leave while writing. In the case of Essay writing, the common do's and don'ts help to write in a comprehensive and structured manner.

Do's	Don'ts
Structure	Avoid long backgrounds
Focus and Relevance	Avoid beginning paragraphs with borrowed opinions or quotes
Original	Avoid long backgrounds
Selection	Avoid grammatical mistakes
Brainstorming	Avoid political and ideological biases
Analytical Framework	Don't lose emotional control
Organic Connection	Don't be unbalanced and biased
Organic Connection	Moderate views
Signposting	Avoid bombastic words
Consistency and Coherence	Avoid irrelevant contents and reference
Effective Communication	out of the box thinking should not be out of the context

About Various Service

The Indian Civil Services are organized into two main sections. These are the All India Services and the Central Services. Officers of the All India Services, on appointment by the Government of India, are placed at the disposal of the different State Governments. These services include:

- The Indian Administrative Service (IAS)
- The Indian Police Service (IPS)
- The Indian Forest Service (IFS)

Officers of the Central Services, on the other hand, wherever they might be posted, serve the Government of India only. central Services are of two types-Groups A & B

GROUP 'A' SERVICES

Central Services comprise various different services / posts. These include:

- The Indian Foreign Service (IFS)
- The Indian Railway Service
- Indian Post Service
- Accounts and Auditing Services (including The Indian Audit and Accounts Service, The Indian Civil Accounts Service, The Indian Civil Accounts Service, The Indian Defence Account Service, The Indian Revenue Service)
- Indian Customs and Central Excise
- The Indian Defence Estates Service
- The Indian information Service
- The Central Trade Service

The Indian Administrative Service (IAS)

The IAS was formally constituted in 1947. The IAS handles affairs of the government. At the central level, this involves the framing and implementation of policy. At the district level, it is concerned with district affairs, including developmental functions. At the divisional level, the IAS officers look after law and order, general administration and development work.

In the Government of India (i.e. in the ministries), IAS officers deal with the formulation of policies and supervise their implementation. In each Ministry they supervise the allotment and utilization of funds by the field officers in the Ministry. They may also be asked to furnish information to the parliament in response to queries relating to the States. Depending on the rank, entail visits to the States. Depending on the rank, an IAS officer might even be the government nominee on the Board of Directors of some public Sector Corporation. They may also at time be nominated to independently represent India at international forums or accompany the Minister for such meetings. From the rank of Deputy Secretary to the Government of India, they can sign international agreements on behalf of the Government of India.

Indian Foreign Service (IFS)

The Indian Foreign Service deals with the country's external affairs, including diplomacy, trade and cultural relations. It is responsible for the administration and activities of Indian missions abroad, and for the framing and implementation of the Government's foreign policy.

After the training at Mussoorie, the IFS probationers are attached to the Ministry of External Affairs and have to become conversant in a major foreign language. During the second year they are appointed as Third Secretaries in Indian Embassy/High Commission

where that language is spoken. They spend another two years in the same Embassy as Second Secretaries. After two postings abroad, the IFS Officers are posted in India in the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA). In the MEA, they will look after India's political, economic and commercial work. In the Senior Scale and the Junior Administrative Grade the IFS Officers are appointed as First Secretaries. In the Selection Grade, IFS Officers serve as Counsellors. In very small countries the Indian Ambassador would be in that grade.

Indian Police Service (IPS)

The IPS is responsible for public safety and security. The IPS mainly takes care of law and order, which, at the district level, is a responsibility shared with the IAS; crime prevention and detection; and; traffic control and accident prevention and management. In order to fulfill these functions with greater efficiency, this service is divided into various functional departments, including.

- a) Crime Branch
- b) Criminal Investigation Department (CID)
- c) Home Guards
- d) Traffic Bureau

A number of Central policing Agencies are also headed by the IPS. These include: the intelligence Bureau (IB), Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), Cabinet Secretariat Security, the Border Security Force (BSF), and the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF).

Indian Customs and Central Excise Service

It is basically concerned with two main aspects, mainly Customs and Excise. While Customs is concerned with the checking and levy of

duty on taxable goods brought into the country, the Excise department is involved with the taxation of goods manufactured within the country.

Customs

Customs officers could be dealing with customs, excise or narcotics related matters. They are not only posted in important coastal and border towns or in towns with international airports, they can be posted anywhere. Their probation will be either in Chennai, Mumbai, Kolkata or Delhi and in the Junior and Senior scales they will be designated as Assistant Commissioner of customs. As Deputy Commissioner of customs. As Deputy Commissioner in the JAG they will move to much bigger towns. In this grade of junior Administration Grade (JAG) they could later become Additional Commissioner of Customs.

Central Excise

Probation will be in Delhi, Kolkata, Mumbai or Chennai and will be posted in industrial townships to begin with and then in big cities. In the Junior Scale, the Central excise officer could serve as Assistant Commissioner of Central Excise.

Indian Revenue Service

The job involves all the processes from investigation to decisions and policy planning. As the job deals with the fiscal policy and budget, aptitude for accounts as well as a legal aptitude is useful. The professional training is conducted in the National Academy of Direct Taxes, Nagpur and the probationer will also receive on-the job training at an Assistant Commissioner's office for sometime. Following this they will serve as an Assistant Commissioner for about eight years. They will examine cases in which the tax assessed is more than the prescribed figure. Assistant Commissioners deal with income and losses between Rs 2-5 lakhs.

Indian Railway Service

It is essentially responsible for the running of India's vast railway network. There are four non-technical and technical or engineering cadres in the railways. Entry for non-technical services- the Indian Railway Traffic Services (IRTS), The Indian Railway Personal Services (IRPS), The Indian Railway Accounts Service (IRAS), and the Railway Police Service is through the Civil Services examination. However, the engineering services have a different recruitment procedure.

Indian Audit and Accounts Services

This service audits the accounts of all Central and State government departments, P&T departments, defence, public sector organizations, railways, etc. It functions within the federal structure and coordinates effectively between the Centre and the states. As the head of the organization, the Controller and Auditor General (CAG) is a constitutional authority with a fixed tenure.

Indian Postal Service

It is only service from which one can go on a deputation to the army and serve from Captain to Major General. An attractive aspect of a career in the Indian Postal Service is that there is job mobility as well as variety.

An Indian Postal service officer can serve in any ministry at any level depending on the seniority and aptitude. Officers are also sent on deputation to the Universal Postal Union at Berne, Switzerland or on assignments to other countries.

P&T Finance and Accounts Service

As in the case of the Indian Railways there is separate P&T Finance and Accounts Service. Here an officer works for the postal and Telecom

departments. They are posted in major cities and as this is a comparatively new service, (established in 1974) the promotions are fast within 17 years one can be Joint Secretary (SAG) the IAS. Officers start their career as the Assistant Chief Accounts Officer. Within two years, they are the Chief Officers. After six years they become the Director Finance and Accounts in Junior Administrative Grade. In another eleven years they enter the SAG as GM Finance which is a field posting or as Deputy Director General at the Directorate

Indian Information Services and Indian Defence Accounts Services

The Indian Information Services (IIS)

This was initially called the Central Information Service (CIS) which was constituted as late as 1960. As it is a comparatively new and expanding service there is scope for quicker promotions. The scales in this service are exactly the same as in the other services, till the Senior Administrative Grade. At the top is a grade which is called Selection Grade and has a fixed salary, equal to what the senior most Additional Secretary would get. Training during probation is at the Indian Institute of Mass Communication (IIMC), New Delhi, An IIS Officer can be posted in organizations dealing with print media, in the organizations dealing with print media, in the electronic media or in an advertising agency. In short, IIS Officers can be posted to any of the several Organizations that are controlled by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting or the Ministry of Defence (Directorate of Public Relations).

The Indian Defence Accounts Services (IDAS)

An IDAS officer start off, after probation, as an Assistant CDA (Controller of Defence Accounts) in the junior Scale, and will work in cantonment towns.

Indian Ordnance & Factories Services and Indian Civil Accounts Services

- The Indian Ordnance And Factories Services (IOFS)
- The Indian Civil Accounts Services (ICAS)

The Indian Defence Estates Services (IDES)

This service deals entirely with spacious, well-planned, green, landscaped cantonments. in this service an IDES officer will begin his career in the junior scale, as an Executive Officer in a Class 1 or a Class II cantonment.

Group B Services

The group 'B' services include the Central Secretariat Service (Section Officers Grade-CSS), the Railway Board Secretariat Service (Section Officers' Grade-RBSS), the Indian Foreign Service (Section Officers' Grade-IFS 'b'), the Armed Forces Headquarters Civil Service (Assistant Civilian Staff Officers Grade), the Customs' Appraisers Service, the Delhi and Andaman & Nicobar Island Civil Service (DANICS), the Goa, Daman and Diu police Service, Posts of Assistant Commandant, post of Deputy Superintendents of Police in the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

Though officers of the Group 'B' Services start off almost at par with their Group 'A' counterparts, yet after the fourth year they lag behind by five to seven years. This gap widens further by the 18th year when Group

‘A’ officers enter the Super Time Scale. The most coveted service among the “Group B” services is the Central Secretariat Service (CSS).

SELF-MANAGEMENT

Motivated during Civil Services Preparation

UPSC is considered to be one of the toughest exams which require ample time duration for preparation. During this long journey of preparation, times come when you feel low, have doubts about your path, and start losing motivation. As we all know that there is no shortcut for success for this you have to keep yourselves uptight and motivated during the entire journey of preparation.

Key Points to Follow

- ❖ Set achievable targets
- ❖ Self-motivation is the best motivation
- ❖ Listen to Motivational videos and read some quotes
- ❖ Stay connected with your family and friends
- ❖ Go for an outing or movie
- ❖ exercise regularly
- ❖ Learn to Relax
- ❖ Practice Acceptance
- ❖ Talk Rationally to Yourself
- ❖ Get organized
- ❖ Reduce Time Urgency
- ❖ Disarm Yourself
- ❖ Quiet Time
- ❖ Watch your Habits

❖ Talk to Friends

Mental Health and Civil Services Preparation

Being a student is stressful. And performance pressure in UPSC examination and other responsibilities can make it even harder. Thus, it becomes essential to keep your body as well as your mind healthy. Though it is not difficult to keep yourself healthy both internally and externally, only a few things need to be kept in mind, and you are good to go.

Key Points to Follow

- Get up and Move : Physical activity does more than improve your physical health. It releases endorphins that boost your mood and reduce stress.
- Take a Deep Breath: One deep breath can make a huge difference when you're feeling stressed or anxious. Deep breathing exercises lower blood pressure and ease the mind.
- Get Fresh Air and Exposure to sunlight: Exposure to sunlight increases the production of serotonin, a chemical that regulates mood in the brain.
- Pursue a Hobby or a New Activity: Participating in activities that you enjoy helps you stay engaged and in turn, happy. Picking up new skill challenges increases your concentration levels, and makes you feel good about learning something new.
- Express yourself: Poorly managed or unregulated emotions can be harmful to your mental health.
- Prepare for a Good Night's Sleep: A regular Sleep routine can establish a sense of normalcy and keep stress at bay.

Handling Stress During Civil Services Preparation

Stress and depression during studies are increasingly common stress is nothing but just the result of our reaction to outside events. To put it simply, it is the “**fear of failure**”.

The key to success is to **think positively**. Stress is a normal part of a student’s life. However, if handled rightly, a little stress is good. It can be motivating for students to overcome challenges.

- Half of today’s students suffer from anxiety and depression.
- one out of five actively considers suicide.

Take control of your stress and anxiety by learning effective techniques to combat them. Relaxing bodily tension to reduce the physical sensations of stress is good place to start.

Key Points to follow

- Get organized
- Prioritize your time when revising
- Make a revision timetable
- Do mock exams at home
- Improve your exam time management
- Use Positive Thinking and Affirmations
- Trust yourself
- Cut out caffeine, alcohol, and nicotine
- Exercise and eat healthy
- Take calming breathes
- Listen to music

How to Handle Failure?

“I’ve missed more than 9000 shots in my career, I’ve lost almost 300 games. 26 times, I’ve been trusted to take the game-winning shot and missed. I’ve failed over and over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed.” – Michael Jordan

Overcoming failure is one of the important steps in the UPSC Civil Services Journey. Failure is generally looked upon with despair, anxiety, and fear. Being stuck in past failures presents a mental obstacle towards seeing present opportunities. Thus failure becomes a cycle that becomes hard to break.

The question is how to embrace failure and make it work in your favor? How to handle past failures and fulfill one dream of civil services or bounce back from failure.

Key Points to Follow

- **Acceptance:** Denying failure blocks any real change. Acceptance of what has happened will enable you to take concrete action.
- **Learn from your Mistakes:** Failure is not a failure if one is ready to learn from it and apply the lessons to the next attempt. We have ample examples to see where despite failures, candidates have risen from the ashes and realized their goal of civil services.
- **Nishkama Karma:** This profound wisdom has been part of our culture since time immemorial. As Lord Krishna teaches Arjun to focus on actions and not on the outcome. This is important as it will lessen any kind of mental burden and shout out distractions. You must remember that there is nothing that a focused mind cannot achieve.

How to Handle Family Pressure?

UPSC civil services examination presents varied challenges for aspirants. Apart from studies, they have to go through problems that are often not shared and spoken of. Any kind of family pressure usually manifests in the form of family gatherings, festivals, comparisons, remarks by family members.

Such pressure can also be an unsaid thing between you and your parents where a particular outcomes is expected. Many aspirants go through the pressure of not working or earning or left/her job in pursuit of civil services. Such occasions can cause a buildup of stress and lead to self-doubts. Aspirants must exhibit immense passion and clarity of purpose when they decide to take up Civil services as their career goal.

Key Points to Follow

- Talk Openly
- Ignorance is bliss
- Focus on What you can change

How to Tackle Insecurities?

Students often feel down or insecure at some point in their journey. These momentary feelings of self-doubt can be due to social anxiety, unhealthy competition, or feeling less intelligent. However, one needs to understand that these feelings are completely normal and are just part of a student's life.

But, if you are fixated with your flaws or have constant feelings of disappointment, this may lead to severe depression, insomnia, hostile behavior or even suicidal thoughts. Thus, tackling your insecurities is crucial for your growth. Not only students but every person deals with insecurity on some level but is left unchecked.

And only 'you' can help yourself. Though it can take some time, the result is worth it.

Key points to Follow

- Identification of the source of the problem
- face your fears
- Yoga and meditation
- Stop judging yourself (or anyone else)
- Stop comparing
- Be assertive
- Build confidence

How to Tackle Insecurities?

By seeing the length and width of the UPSC Exam Syllabus and subjects, it can be overwhelming to maintain the pace of study during the preparation. According to research conducted by Dr. Larry Rosen, professor emeritus at California State University, an average student is distracted for at least five out of every 15 minutes during studies.

The fears regarding clearing the UPSC Examination, failed attempts, and anxiety to cover the whole UPSC syllabus, time management issues, individual learning hurdles, and especially the tough times of the Corona pandemic make it more intense. Most of us also get distracted by notifications, text messages, and phone calls. With so much going on, it becomes very difficult to stay focused, but it's not unachievable.

Key Points to Follow

- Make a to-do list
- Break Down the entire preparation into smaller pieces
- Silence the Alerts

- Take a break
- Find the right place
- Clear study desk
- A little reward
- Refrain from excessive usage of the internet
- Don't go off-topic
- Don't get anxious

CIVIL SERVICES IS NOT THE END

INTRODUCTION

Every year lakhs of people appear for the UPSC Civil Services exam with the dream of joining the IAS, IPS, IFS etc. Only a few hundred finally achieve their dream. The success rate is just around 0.1% which makes it one of the world's toughest entrance examinations.

As the competition is intense and the vacancies are limited, the failure rate is obviously high. There is thus a logical need for fallback career options. One should therefore prepare for this examination keeping alternative career options always in mind.

Before, looking for other career options, one should see why there is a craze for civil services especially the top services such as IAS, IPS, IFS, IRS, etc. There appears to be three main reasons apart from other minor factors.

Firstly, it is one of the best paid jobs that the government offers taking into account the salary and perks. Secondly, no other government job provides such a level of social stature, authority and recognition. The third important factor for joining the civil services is the perception that

a career in the civil service provides an opportunity to actually make a difference in society and in the lives of the common man.

OTHER GOVERNMENT JOB OPTIONS

Usually engineers, doctors, lawyers, Chartered accountants who have a go at this examination have naturally better options to fall back upon rather than aspirants from other general stream of education. A doctor can always go back to his medical profession if he fails to clear the services. Similarly, engineers, lawyers and chartered accountants have their respective areas to go back and make their effort. It is only the aspirants with a general education like BA, MA, MSc etc who have to think hard for their next step. For such aspirants it is always better to have sound knowledge of other career avenues in the government and private sector.

Some Alternative Career Options

State public service commission examinations, Indian Engineering Services (IES), Assistant Central Intelligence Officer (ACIO) and Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) etc. Group B jobs provided by Central and State Public Service Commission's /SSC are also similar to civil services in nature though promotional avenues are little slow. Those who have a liking for uniformed jobs can opt for exams like CDS, etc.

Bank jobs are another very good option. Scope in RBI and public sector banks etc are huge and those who prepare for civil services usually find these exams on the easier side. Apart from banks, there are some other

semi government jobs like insurance sector, public sector companies like ONGC, GAIL, etc which also provide adequately good service conditions.

Teaching is another option which is easily available to persons with good command over his/her subject. It's good social service and has good satisfaction value attached to it. Teaching in government colleges commission, lecturers and professors have good pay scales and promotion opportunities. One has the added advantage of pursuing research alongside teaching jobs.

PRIVATE SECTOR JOBS

Private sector jobs in your own field of study and expertise is available but one has to start early so as to get valuable on-the-job experience. One may also have to start at a lower pay scale which may be lower than one's caliber but in due time private sector also takes people to top level provided they have the required talent and the capacity to work hard and deliver results.

There are also options nowadays like joining coaching institutes wherein you train students and aspirants based on your educational background and qualifications.

The areas include coaching for UPSC exams, engineering entrance examinations (JEE), medical (NEET), law (CLAT), higher engineering (GATE) etc. Well known coaching centres offer a high pay package but the working hours are long and hard.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP AS AN OPTION

Entrepreneurship is another option that aspirants can always go for. Today, the government is encouraging entrepreneurship through tax benefits, easy loans etc. This requires a perfect blend of innovation and patience. Also, the field of entrepreneurship can be related to issues like water scarcity, energy conservation, software development, agricultural innovations, etc and thus could be highly beneficial to society at large. There have been many entrepreneurs who have made real difference to the lives of the people.

POLITICS AS AN OPTION

There is a huge scope in politics as well which needs educated and well informed minds. Politics in a democracy requires good oratorical skills apart from knowledge of our country's basic history, geography, polity, internal dynamics, our relations with our neighbors etc. Civil service aspirants who could not make it can take the plunge to politics as they have sufficient theoretical background on a wide range of topics ranging from politics to economics to social issues. They also have well-formed opinions on social and economic evils like poverty, unemployment, women's rights, etc. Nowadays there are also many civil servants who are quitting their prestigious job to contest elections as they also feel that politics is the best way to serve people if one wants to.

OPEN AN NGO OR JOINING AN NGO

If social service is what you wanted to do, then joining an NGO or opening one would also be a good option. There are of course challenges, but working in an NGO provides a wide range of experience in major sectors like health, education, child care, senior citizens etc.

citizen, livelihood promotion, women specific issues, natural resource development, awareness and advocacy, etc. There are many NGOs which work in association and in consultation with the United Nations and have huge resources which they can use for development and also have good pay packages. In India there are thousands of NGOs like CRY, Aandolan, Goonj, etc which have had a great success and has impacted the society in a great way. International LNGOs like Amnesty International, Reporters without Borders, etc have been quite successful. It's a great option to serve the society.

RESEARCH WORK AND HIGHER STUDIES

Research work is another field which is gaining popularity in the present age of data sciences and technology. It can be used to find solution to inherent problems existing in the society.

Higher studies are an option always available to the aspirants who can go to foreign countries and can easily get a respectable job after that. Recently the admission process to various institutions abroad has been eased.

WHAT IT ALL BOILS DOWN TO?

Life is about happiness and satisfaction. There are numerous ways to achieve satisfaction in your chosen career. India is an agrarian economy where still more than 60% of our population are employed in agriculture. There are people who are into agriculture and are happy and satisfied. There are many people willing to do innovation in agriculture and transform the lives of the people and this doesn't need a person to be IAS/IPS/etc.

It's all about finding a right balance to your passion and your aptitude. You can still become an architect, lawyer, teacher, singer, painter, actor, journalist, blogger, content writer, microbiologist, environmentalist, fashion designer, sportsperson etc.