How to plan your IAS Preparation

Description

With all the energy of the young age and the sharpness of the studentâ??s mind, the just-out-of-college guys have higher probabilities to clear IAS exam. But unless the preparation is focused on right guidance and strategies, the attempt may turn futile, resulting in the loss of precious attempts.

Aspirants should never let this happen. We hope this post would surely help those who are looking for the right guidance to prepare IAS exam while in college, especially the final year students and pre-final year students.

Selective & reflective study

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Your study should be quality based not quantity based. You should not lay emphasis on just reading increasingly books, magazines, and journals but reflect on your subject and try to become an expert in it. You should develop your rational faculty to assimilate relevant information and analyses problems dispassionately.

Your reading must be purposeful. Distinguishing between the important and the irrelevant reading material, you must keep in mind what is useful from the examination of view.

Studying together

Study with a fellow or a group of friends who are also preparing for the same test. Regular discussions with such friends are very helpful. This way you not only revise what you have studied but also learn many points which you might not have covered or did not know. Such a company happens to be of supplementing nature to each other. Besides, it makes your study more interesting and competitive.

This is also helpful in removing doubts, getting motivated and avoids seclusion and depression.

Revise once in a week

Periodical analysis of what you have studied and its consolidation is necessary. It will make you realize your weaknesses and strengths. Without this periodical stopover, you will keep on learning and you may forget what you piled up in your mind earlier.

Last few hours before the Test

It is better to start revision early and be prepared to bear the pressure you may have to face in the examination hall. This will give you an opportunity to overcome the difficulties you may encounter in the examination hall.

While attempting the Question Paper

To begin with, have a positive approach. Be confident that you are well prepared to answer the questions.

Follow the golden principle of Simple to Complex i.e. taking up questions that are easy to solve and then go to difficult ones. Glance through all questions quickly and mark the easy ones. Then proceed to answer these questions first. It will save time and build up your confidence. Now you can proceed to take up the difficult ones. This way you will get more time to solve these tough questions.

Try to read each question carefully. Read, think, and then proceed to attempt the question.

Remember, time is precious. Try to manage within the specified time properly. often, many candidates waste time in the beginning and then find it hard to complete the paper satisfactorily within the given time. Such haste results in waste. Try to maintain even speed and save time for revision also.

Follow the directions stipulated in the question paper. Mark the answers clearly, darkening the circles properly, wherever needed.

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Speed up yourself

Speed, in terms of the entrance examination, means the average time you take to solve a question. With every passing year, the competition is becoming tough. That, however, is not the cause of despair because the opportunities are equally rising fast. The main cause of concern, however, is the rising of the bar for the effort required to achieve success. In the sixties, a 1st division or a good second division was enough to ensure selection everywhere. By eighties, one had to excel and score above 80% to succeed but today even score of 90% leaves you cold as far as the best choices are concerned.

It is seen that most of the students still spend 99% of their energy and time gaining input i.e. acquiring increasingly knowledge and ignoring output. It is very important for a student to measure/ monitor and improve his output. The best tool to monitor your output is by periodically appearing in tests. A test will not only help in measuring your output but will also enable you to know where you stand. The factors you should monitor regularly are (i) Speed: Ability to solve questions quickly. (ii) Strike Rate: Ability to sol questions correctly. (iii) Selection: Ability to select what to do and what not to do.

Apart from solving questions what is equally important is that whether you can solve the questions in the shortest possible time.

You can calculate your speed by dividing the total number of questions to Total Time spent (in seconds).

You can build your speed by the following methods:

- Memorizing standard formulae, concepts which you can apply directly.
- Avoid the use of a calculator during preparation.
- Solve questions mentally.

- If a student has a low strike rate it is not because his fundamentals are/are not clear but because of a lot of confusion and wrong approach of attempting MCQs.
- Do each exercise and every question under a time limit? Allocate time for an exercise keeping your existing speed in mind. For example, if you are solving a Physics exercise consisting of 60 questions and your current speed is 60 minutes and you want to improve it to 40 minutes while doing this exercise allocate time slightly less than your current speed say 50 minutes. This would put you under time pressure and hence would gradually help in improving your speed.
- Taking an identical test to check whether you know the application of basic concepts: It has been observed that most of the students lose 10 to 15% of their marks not because they do not know the subject but because they fail to apply the basic concepts clearly. It is basically due to the examination of fear and pressure.

Clear your concepts

The first two or three months should be spent in revising your basic concepts (topics like algebra, mechanics, etc.) which had been taught to you since class 11th. Concepts in topics like algebra, mechanics, and Stoichiometry should be studied in detail as they also form the basis for other topics and are very scoring. There should be no doubts in your mind about these concepts. For these develop the habit of inquisition. Clear all your doubts so that mentally you feel confident, tackling any concept. Regular problem solving not only strengthens the concepts but also increases your mental sharpness. Initially which are not complicated should be tried. Briefly, concept clearing involves knowing the significance of concepts, exceptions to these concepts and when, where and how to apply these concepts.

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Practical Application

When you have become an expert in the fundamentals and the concept is/ are clear to you, you must apply it in solving problems based on these fundamentals. The next move should be towards taking up an intricate type of problems. Co-relating the learning of your subject with the day to day life practical examples helps you to understand the fundamentals better.

Sketching the Problem

If the problem is complicated, it is better for you to express it in the form of a diagram as per the question and try to understand the complications with the help of a diagram. You may not be able to draw a clear diagram at once and modifications may be required at several steps unless you have drawn a diagram which is an exact representation of the question.

Revision of the subject

Regular revision of the subject is required to retain it in your memory. It will also help you to analyze your performance and take corrective measures.

Self-study is the best tool

As of today, cultivating the habit of self-study is the prime need of the students to be successful in competitive exams. Self-study helps the students to get exposed to the subjects by understanding and practicing them on their own. Generally, in a classroom scenario, a teacher is bound by time and inclined to complete the exhaustive syllabus in time and in this system the actual learning is hindered. Since every student has his/her own learning capacity, therefore the pace of the lecture both in content and duration directly affects the overall learning of tile student. Self-study helps in keeping pace with the syllabus and it gives an opportunity to a student to learn better.

Create a friendly environment for reading:

- Find a quiet place for reading which is free from distractions like loud music, noisy roommates, or family members.
- Spend less time watching television or browsing on the Internet.
- Make reading a pleasurable experience by having good tea or coffee or fruits or chocolates while you read.
- Fix a high target to read 50 (or some other number) of books in a year and try to accomplish it, all through enjoy while you read.
- Never be in a hurry to meet the target.
- Pick up a book that is of your interest. Before you read it, first have a glance at the table of contents to form an idea of what tile book is about.
- Prefer the books which satisfy your curiosity and enrich your knowledge and not tile one that is too high for your level as it will only waste your time.
- Practice your reading habit. Initially, if you find it difficult to read for a long period, not put too much pressure on yourself. Practice for a shorter span of time 15-20 minutes. Repeat this till it becomes a pleasant exercise. Remember, never give it up!
- Select your best reading hours; it may be early morning hours, evening hours, late night hours or any other time of the day per your convenience.

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Why make Notes?

Writing pithy notes greatly helps in the preparation of any competitive exam, more so for IAS.

Writing notes help both ways you canâ??t write meaningful notes unless you understand the topic thoroughly and effective notes enable you to understand and answer questions correctly.

They help in remembering the important points and help in quick last minute revision.

How to make pithy notes

- Organize the material required for writing notes- source material/books, dictionary, dedicated register or pages or flip cards, ballpoint pens of different colours, pencils, eraser, sharpener, etc.
- Divide the register topic-wise or write events topic-wise on each page. For example, national affairs, international affairs, the economy, etc.
- Practice writing pithy notes, i.e. short but expressed well and full of meaning.

- Now get ready to write notes: Understand the topic thoroughly â?? read and re-read until you are clear about the concept and the subject matter.
- Underline the important points and summarize them
- Donâ??t depend on a single book, use different sources for making effective notes
- Write notes immediately after reading/understanding the topic as points are fresh in your mind
- Make notes in such a way that help you revise quickly. It should not be more than a few sentences long and contain only the most relevant information
- Long notes should be kept separately.

Coaching: How to find out the right IAS Coaching Institute

Generally, students go for IAS coaching Institute for proper guidance and ease of materials for learning. In case you decide to join a **Best IAS coaching institute**, go for coaching much in advance of the Exam and keep the following points in mind while finding out the best institute.

- If possible, prefer an institute near to your place
- Find out about the faculty. In this connection have a discussion with the students who have attended the institutes. Their method of teaching, the seriousness of purpose, how co-operative they are, tutorials, assignments provided, etc.
- Facilities provided by the institute. For example, free books, library, Internet study, E-books, etc.
- Quality of study material provided by the Institution; compare it with the material provided by another institute.
- The success rate of the institute â?? the number of students selected in various exams of UPSC
- Inquire about fee structure, mode of payment, no. of students in a batch, etc.
- Whether individual attention is provided or not
- Please check the list of some Prominent IAS Coaching Institutes given in the last section of this book.

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How to make the best use of IAS coaching

Once you have decided on the Institute, try to make the best use of it, how?

- Be regular and punctual. Never miss a class, what come may!
- Be attentive in the class. Take class-notes and fair them up after getting back home
- If any point is not clear or you have a doubt or question, donâ??t hesitate. Ask for clarification immediately or at the end of the class.
- Before coming to the class, study the topic to be taught in the class and note down any points not clear to you for seeking clarifications.
- Revise what has been taught in class every day regularly
- Make friendship with the bright students of the class for academic discussions, revision, etc.