How to prepare for Essay in UPSC Examinations?

Description

Many students have been seen who are worried about this, but not many are seen working on it. The reason behind this is the typical mentality, â??whatâ??s there in an essay, we can manage to write itâ??. Believe me and start making efforts to get rid of this mentality, if your mentality was right, there was no need to include this paper.

There is no doubt in it that an essay cannot be prepared in the same way as General Knowledge and optional papers. However, it is not the case that the preparation cannot be done, or it happens on its own. You should keep this thing in mind that nothing happens on its own in life, so much so that even your finger doesnâ??t move on its own. You have to move it. Keeping all these points in mind, I am going to give you few tips which will definitely help you in writing a good essay. And the day it happens; you should believe that you have overcome one of the biggest problems faced in the IAS exams. I am saying this because I personally feel that a person who knows how to write an essay automatically learns how answers of General Knowledge and optional papers should be written.

SHRI RAM IAS

(i) Study some basic books

I hope you now agree with me when I say that an essay is a reflection of a personâ??s intelligence and personality. If a question of General studies is answered by 100 people, then, we can still find some similarity in terms of contents and style, whereas it is not possible in an essay. An essay written by 100 people will have quite different content, if not completely. different, and the way of writing will be different too. That is why it will not be wrong if I call an essay a reflection of your inner self.

Now the question is what should we do to Mold our intelligence and personality in the way it is expected to be by our nation?

Joint preparation: the way we join a gym to keep our body fit and active, in a similar way we should study, think and contemplate to improve our intellectual make-up and moral nature. You have no choice but to do this.

You read some basic books for General Knowledge. Then, you keep updating it with the help of newspapers and magazines. This definitely helps you in essay writing but considering it as everything will be a mistake. I have already told you the main difference between general knowledge and an essay. You have to do this, and you should continue doing it too. How should you use this general knowledge in an essay, I will discuss this point later. However, you should remember that the knowledge obtained from General knowledge should be used as raw material in the essay and not as the final product. If general knowledge is like a shop from which vegetables are bought, then, an essay is the procedure of making the vegetable edible after having bought it. On one hand, you do the work of selling the vegetables and on the other hand, you try to make it edible, the work of a cook.

Separate preparation: the essays asked in IAS preparation should be observed very minutely and carefully. No matter what the topic of the essay is, you will find that either of the following facts would be present at the very core:

- The essay will be related to life or
- Related to the society. When I say society, it includes the entire nation. Nation is also a part of the society, and those aspects are also a part of it that contribute to its development like, economic, social, educational, political, cultural, industrial etc.

This is the actual challenge posed by an essay and this is how it is different from General Knowledge. You cannot do any justice to the facts present at the very core of an essay unless you have a clear and deep social viewpoint and unless you have a criterion to determine it.

Here I have talked of two things- vision or viewpoint and criterion. Where will you get this vision from? Of course, by studying, observing, discussing, experience and also by using it. However, you are not that old that you can give more importance to experience and usage. At this moment the most advantageous solution is studying, which you already are doing. But maybe you are not able to understand the subjects for essays.

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I would like to strongly advise you to study two subjects mainly- even if these two subjects are beneficial for the general knowledge and optional papers or not. And anyways you should prepare extra for essay as out of the total marks in writing. 14.5% marks are contributed by essay. Why have you thought that this kind of study is not important for it? This is your misunderstanding. My suggestion is that you should prepare for these two subjects and the preparation should be of the graduation level. These two subjects are- sociology and philosophy.

Now you may have a question on what kind of books should be studied. I would suggest you read the books of Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU). But this is not the only suggestion. If you get other books written by other authors, then, you should read them as well.

Why should we study philosophy and sociology?

Now I would tell why I suggested you study these two subjects. In my opinion (as a teacher, writer, a thinker of life management) sociology creates a view in us and that is the social viewpoint. This is the viewpoint which is realistic. When we understand what constitutes a society and how it changes, it is only then that we can be in a position to decide which things it needs. It is only then that we can deeply understand its problems. Studying sociology helps in preventing our vision from unnecessary aggression and sentimentality.

Talking of philosophy now. It provides us the criterion that we can use to analyse our vision. Philosophy is basically related to life, which is not very different from the society as a society is made by people only. Like people like society. And society, in return, makes the people on the basis of how it has been made. Both of them are inter-dependent.

By studying philosophy, you will be able to understand, even the small issues very deeply. For example, the first essay which was asked in 2013 was: â??bring the change you want to see in others in yourself firstâ??- Gandhi. You should try to write it. I am honestly telling you that you will be baffled. The topic seems to be very easy and â??You understand it as well. However, after writing about 400-

500 words, you will realize that you have nothing new to write in it. Since you have to write maximum 2500 words, writing 500 words will not be justified, hence, you will keep writing, just for the sake of writing. The amusing part is that you will just repeat what you have already written. That is why I said that you will be baffled, and you will keep spinning in the same sphere. And the examiner will get to know this. And it is your bad luck that he will not even help you in this. You will have to help yourself, and studying philosophy will make you capable of helping yourself.

The mentioned essay is general, but as per philosophy it is a very deep topic. It not only has depth but also different angles of life. For example, its one side is related to psychology, whereas the other is related to that part of sociology which is related to the way we behave with each other. Its third side is that of religion and spirituality where Jesus Christ said, â??you shouldnâ??t behave with others in the manner in which you donâ??t want them to behave with youâ??. It can even have a fourth financial argument that even the most dishonest businessman wants his employees to be the most honest. This way philosophy will help you to talk about this in detail.

I am unable to decide if you agree with me on these things or not. But, since I agree with these things, I have told you the same too. I believe in these things because I told the same to my students and I am glad to say that I didnâ??t disappoint them.

SHRI RAM IAS

(ii) Studying apart from Syllabus

I have already told you to study philosophy and sociology. But this isnâ??t enough. Donâ??t worry, I am not going to ask you to study another subject. I am going to tell you those minute things which will really help you while writing an essay, provided you are careful. Whatever I am going to tell you now is something which you would already be doing. However, you are mistaken in not being alert for these things as you donâ??t know they are important too. It is similar to our life in which we get various opportunities but, we donâ??t realize they are the ones since we are not careful. And that is why we cannot even get hold of them. This way we not only miss the opportunity but also life. You should note the following things:

- You must be watching movies but only for fun. From now on you should be a little more careful and watch them even for your essays. I anyway, would like to say, â??studying filmsâ??, rather than â??watching filmsâ??. If you start watching films from the perspective of lifeâ??s philosophy, you will find that the entire meaning of the movie changes. Behind the pictures of the movie, you would see a different side of life. This will make your vision comprehensive towards life and society.

The biggest strength of a movie is its dialogues. You should observe the language being used in movies, which is todayâ??s language, a lively one. You should observe the language, words, the way they have been said and also the way the sentences are framed. The words or sentences which seem to be impressive should be noted. Hence, you shouldnâ??t regret wasting your 3 hours and also Rs.200 or think that you could have studied something during this time. Now you should be happy that, â??you bought a book for Rs.200 and that you managed to. finish it in 3 hours.

- You shouldnâ??t read only those articles in newspapers which you think are important for General Knowledge. You should read every article written on the editorial page. This develops your vision. And if any article is written in form of an essay, then, you should keep a cut-out of it.

- Similar attitude should be employed with magazines. I will not ask you to read the whole magazine, but you should at least have a look at it and whatever seems important should be read carefully. This way you can collect information to write essays.
- You also shouldnâ??t hesitate to listen to â??the lectures of the scholars in your city. You shouldnâ??t be lazy and think that 2 hours will be wasted. Maybe, the lecture is not that good, but it is impossible that you will not get even one useful sentence. Even if you get one new point or opinion, then your purpose of attending the lecture has been attained. You cannot expect, and it is not necessary either, that the whole of it will be beneficial. Also, it doesnâ??t matter whether you liked it or not. What actually matters is whether it was useful for you, if yes, to what extent.
- You should always listen to and participate in discussions, as and when they happen. So much so that if two people are talking on any topic, then, you should listen to it carefully.
- You should also develop a habit of observing and see what and how things are happening. Some or the other incidents happen everywhere. You should see them and try to figure out their reasons. You should also try to analyse and understand them from within. If you can be a part of it and play a role in it, then, you should do that rather than just looking at it.
- It is not important to have figures in essays, but, if you are writing an essay on economics, then, the essay will be incomplete without figures. You can even add figures from the sociological viewpoint to make them more impressive and attractive. However, these should be used in the right number just like salt in food. Hence, as and when you get to know new and basic figures, you should note them down.
- The same applies to few good sentences. While reading books, magazines, newspapers or while listening to something, whenever you come across good sentences, you should note them down. This will not only help you in essays but other subjects too.
- I have already asked you to read philosophy. I am saying the same here because I really want to highlight this point. Last 40 years have witnessed a rapid and drastic change in every sphere of life. Since the new scientific developments are bringing evolutionary changes in the society, they are also changing the thinking related to various fields. These schools of thought are of economics, society, culture, media, psychology, art, history and all the other fields that have an impact on the society. You need to know all these thoughts. These will not only provide you with vision but also various criterions which will make your essay writing much better.

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On the surface level, these small things seem to be useless. But this is not the case. The development in our thinking and an eye to observe everything comes with this, like the great artist, Michelangelo said, â??entirety comes with little things and entirety itself is not a small thingâ??.

These are my views on writing an essay. You will also have some views, and few can be different from mine. I would welcome your views too. But it is entirely up to you to create a balance between my views and yours and to create a perfect model.