

[Article by Mr.Vineel Krishna IAS](#)

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“If a person works hard towards his goal, then the whole Universe conspires to help him” – Paulo Coelho (‘The Alchemist’)

It has been my dream that I should be part of the developmental process of the nation. I wanted to come to such a position from where I can positively influence the policies of the country. I come from a good family background and got the best that the society can provide me. Therefore, I believed that it is my responsibility to serve the society. Of all the options, I found that Civil Service provides the best opportunity. The recruitment is through a grueling 3-stage 18 month process at an all-India level. Ever since I made Civil Service as my career, I have been struggling hard to keep up to the standards of the examination. I would like to share my personal experiences and my knowledge of the exam. I hope it would be of some help to Civil Service aspirants in realizing their dream.

[Personal Background](#)

I was born and brought up in Hyderabad. My father works as Accounts officer in BHEL, while my mother is a Telugu teacher. I have an elder brother who works as Software engineer in Chicago and my sister-in-law is about to complete her MS programme. I have done my graduation in Civil engineering from IIT Madras in 2001.

In my senior inter, I started thinking about Civils. During my days in IIT campus, gradually, it became my main goal. Due to high academic pressure in IIT, I could not concentrate much on preparation. After graduation, I have decided to concentrate fully on the exam and, therefore did not take up the campus placement in Wipro Technologies.

I gave my first attempt in 2001 with Civil engineering and Geography, but could not qualify for the interview. Again, I wrote in 2002, but it was the same story. For the first time in life, I faced failures. It was the toughest part of the preparation. But, I had a strong self-belief that I am suited for IAS. With determination, I doubled my efforts and spent hours together in deep introspection. I decided to reorient my strategy and chose Public Administration as my first optional.

I resolved that in this attempt I shall get into the Service at any cost. I isolated myself completely and started living an ascetic life. It has been a 'tapas' for two years. Everyday I used to get up at around 4'oclock and do yoga. Then the whole day I used to devote for studies or some thing related to the exam. The more I worked the more confident I became. I just believed that all my hard work will pay in the end. And, the Divine grace has been there throughout to help me. After the result, people started asking about the secret of my success. I told them that its an open secret –just work hard with determination- everyone knows it. In any process of achievement, the failures are bound to come and that's what makes the process all the more interesting. In fact, failures teach us a lot of lessons. Its important to take them in the right spirit and work harder to realize the dream.

[Examination strategy](#)

The most important aspect is to understand the nature of the exam. The hard work should be channelised in an effective manner. Many aspirants think that it takes years to clear the exam. This is a completely wrong notion, which should be removed from one's mind. Believe that you can clear it in one year and work hard to realize it. The basic reason why people take many attempts to clear is a lack of proper understanding of the exam nature.

The exam consists of General studies, essay and two optionals, involving a huge syllabus. Its not humanely possible for anyone to master that much knowledge. But due to the hype around the Civils exam, candidates spent most time searching all the possible material and try to dig too much into each topic. That is a sheer waste of time, since anyway, at exam time it is not possible to revise all that. And unless, we revise many times, the performance cannot be good.

If we look at the scores of the successful candidates, anywhere around 55% will ensure the top service. That means it is a 'second-class' exam. This is inevitable due to the huge syllabus and the complicated exam process. So, the most important aspect in preparation is to remember that the objective of studying a topic is to get around 55-60%. To get such a score, its enough to have clarity on the basics. The answers need not be a scholarly, but sufficient if all the basic points are covered. With the same basic points, the scores can be improved by being innovative –for example, good introduction and conclusion, application and contemporary relevance, using maps, flow diagrams, graphs, figures etc. At the same time, the whole syllabus should be

completed. Many candidates try to concentrate only on scoring areas, which might be risky.

The aspirants should be careful on the following aspects:

- Choose the optionals based on interest, scoring nature, availability of good guidance and time gap between optional exams. Since change of syllabus in 2000, the Science optionals have not been performing well. So, many engineering and science students are nowadays opting for Social science subjects.

- The exam makes the candidate undergo a very stressful condition for a long period. To sustain the momentum in studies, it's important to learn to manage stress. In this regard, I found that the "Sudarshan Kriya" taught by the "Art of Living Foundation" is very useful.

- The health should be properly taken care of. If the candidate becomes ill at any stage, then everything has to be started afresh. So, concentrate well on physical fitness, especially learn Yoga and Pranayama, and go for jogging regularly. This will make you physically fit, which will definitely add in the interview.

- Before joining any coaching, talk to the seniors and get proper feedback. The coaching is important since a lot of your efforts will be reduced and you can be in contact with other aspirants.

- During preparation, there will be phases when the candidate feels psychologically low. Just remember that it is quite natural and happens for everyone. The important thing is to stay cool during that period. I observed that some people go for movies when their mind is agitated. You should do things which will calm the mind and not those which will agitate it further. You can try things like Carnatic music, meditation etc.

The preliminary stage should not be that difficult to clear, if the candidate prepares with full seriousness. The focus should be first on the optional paper and in making an extensive reading. Here, the important thing is to understand that Prelims is "test of recognition". It's fine if you can recognize the correct answer. So don't spend too much time in memorizing facts. Once you understand the basics, there should be no problem in clearing prelims. Try to use mnemonics to remember various facts. Regarding General Studies, many face difficulties. Here the importance should be in understanding what not to read. A thorough analysis of the previous years' question will help the candidate in making a very focused preparation. In General studies, concentrate on those areas which are also asked in main examination. Nowadays, current affairs has become more important.

After the prelims, do not relax and wait for the result. The next five months till mains are really crucial. Ensure that you study with dedication throughout this period. For mains, the first preference should be to complete the optional syllabus, with good understanding of the basics. The General studies paper is quite scoring but often neglected by candidates. Regularly, keep looking at previous years' papers so that the preparation is more focused. Keep the last two months for revision and writing practice. The answers should be legible and try to make it attractive by using diagrams, graphs etc using different colours. The objective is to catch the attention of the examiner. The introduction and the conclusion should be written well. In the remaining part, its enough to have basic points. Also, try to incorporate practical application and contemporary relevance. Regarding essay, make a list of topics and then focus your preparation on those areas. Also practice writing essays, so that there is flow of thought and time management. In examination hall, first select the topic carefully, then prepare structure and finally write the essay. The essay should have good introduction and proceed in a logical and smooth manner.

The interview is the most crucial stage. It will decide the final position in the merit list. There are many rumours about the boards and the way they award marks. Don't listen to them, even otherwise, there is hardly anything you can do about it. So, just have confidence in the UPSC. The interview is about testing if you are suitable for an administrative job. This not something that can be acquired in one or two months. Over a period of time, mould yourself to the requirements of the interview. The personality traits include – way of walking and speaking, the views you hold, your convictions, body language, mannerisms, value system etc. The preparation should involve mock interviews and group discussions. The areas to be concentrated are bio-data, current issues, optionals and academic background.

If prepared with dedication, anyone can become an IAS officer. There are many people who came from rural background and with low academic qualifications joined the IAS. With strong self-belief and continuously working hard in a smart manner, the exam can be cleared within a short period.

Its my responsibility to guide the next generation of aspirants. I would be glad to share my knowledge.

[IAS - Strategy by Vineel Krishna...Part-1](#)

About the Exam

Before starting the preparation, it is important to have a complete understanding about the exam process, its structure and the various aspects related to the preparation.

The structure of the exam and related information can be obtained from the UPSC website.

Go to www.upsc.gov.in link to examination sections. Then link to the archives, where you will find the notification of Civil services exam. The complete notification should be studied carefully.

Nature of the Exam

In any competitive exam, understanding the nature of the exam is the most crucial phase. The preparation will be more focused when you know exactly what the examiner is expecting. At the same time, the competition is relative. You only need to be better than the other aspirants to get a final place in the merit list.

The nature of the exam can be analysed through the following ways:

- A thorough analysis of the previous year's papers and the recent trends.**
- Discussing elaborately with teachers, successful candidates and seniors.**
- Carefully understanding the requirements of the exam as given in the notification.**

The preparation should start only after having the basic idea about the exam. Later on, as you study, there should be a continuous analysis and comparison between your preparation and the requirements of the exam. This kind of assessment will help in being very focused and all the

efforts can be channelised in the right direction.

Understanding the nature of the exam is very critical for success in civils exam. First of all, let's examine why it takes so much time for many in clearing this exam. There is a lot of hype around the IAS exam. People have very ridiculous ideas about the preparation for it. The coaching institutes, magazines and toppers almost everyone associated with the exam try to increase this hype due to vested interests. So a fresh aspirant comes with the idea that he has to do some hi-funda preparation and be like a scholar in the subjects. He starts his preparation on a high note and works hard in the beginning. For each topic he tries to do maximum and best preparation. In the process, he reads all the text books and the coaching material available in the market. Some spend 2-3 days on each topic and prepare 10-15 pages of notes. Gradually, he feels exhausted and the momentum slows down. Due to this approach, he is not able to complete the syllabus. So, he goes for a selective study as the exam nears. Now the pressure becomes unbearable, as on one hand he has not completed the syllabus and on the other hand he prepared so much notes for each topic that revision becomes impossible within a short time. People have a funny idea that civils can be cleared only in multiple attempts. So, the aspirant starts succumbing to pressure and convinces himself that it is only his first attempt and, therefore, he can prepare better next time. Naturally, his performance in the exam affects and he is in no position to clear the exam. When the marks come, he will compare his marks with what he has written. Then, he will also compare the marks of toppers. With experience, he realizes that the exam does not expect him to be a master in the subject. But merely that the aspirant should be thorough in the basics.

The civils exam is all about the basics with a lot of clarity. The exam process is complex, but the solution should be a simple one. If the aspirant complicates the preparation also, then he is in real trouble. To understand the exam, just observe the following facts:

- The candidates who qualify for IAS (say top 40) get marks in the range of 55-60%.**
- To make it to the final list, a candidate requires 50-55%**
- To qualify for the interview a candidate requires 48-50%**

That means, it is sufficient to get a ‘Second class’ to clear the exam. Even the toppers get only around 60% marks. The reason is due to the nature of the exam itself. The syllabus is so huge that it is not humanly possible to be a scholar in all the papers – GS, essay and two optionals (preliminary, main and interview). In the final month, when revision has to be done, there will be around 2000 topics in all including various sub-topics from which questions can be asked. It is not possible for anyone to master that much syllabus. The exam can be written well when the preparation is simple and the aspirant is very strong in basics with clarity.

In Public administration, there is a theory on Decision making by Herbert Simon. Taking an analogy of that theory to exam preparation, the strategy should be a ‘Satisfying’ approach. It means a preparation which is ‘good enough’ for the exam. Whereas, many try to do a ‘maximising’ approach where they want to do the best preparation without considering the requirements of the exam. The civils exam is all about basics and a Satisfying approach.

Anyhow, the exam process itself is psychologically very pressurizing. We should devise ways to reduce this pressure. By adopting a Maximizing approach, the revision becomes very difficult and the exam days will be a nightmare. When the preparation is complicated, there is a real danger of confusion with respect to clarity. Since, revision is difficult, remembering and reproducing in the exam hall will be affected. Therefore, the focus should be on getting clarity on the basics. When the foundation is strong there is no problem of revision and reproduction. Moreover, the exam only requires 50% marks, which is quite easy with good basics. The marks can be further enhanced with innovation in writing answers. That will take the scores beyond 55-60%, ensuring a top service. So, the real key to the civils exam is – basics with clarity and innovation.

The creativity and innovation is not something that you will get in the text books. They have to be developed on your own. It requires lot of thinking and observation. By innovation in answers what is meant is –

- catchy introduction**
- diagrams**
- graphs**
- flow charts**

- maps
- case studies
- contemporary touch and applicability
- Conclusion.

Basics with clarity will come when there is lot of questioning while studying. The topic has to be studied in a logical manner. Suppose you are studying a topic on Inflation. Think logically as a layman, then you should get the following sequence of questions

- what is inflation
- why should there be inflation, i.e., causes
- So what if there is inflation, i.e., impact
- If impact is negative, then naturally we should be doing something to reduce it, so what steps were taken and what happened
- If still inflation is there, then what's wrong with the steps taken
- How to control inflation , any suggestions by experts and recent developments.

You can add innovations like say a simple graph showing how the inflation has been in recent times and also a flow diagram about the impact of inflation.

In this manner, the basics in the topic can be covered with clarity. And the topic should be remembered in this logical structured way for the exam. It should be understood that once you have done the topic in this comprehensive method through logical questioning, the preparation is over for that topic. You need not go through any journals or hi-funda text books for becoming an expert in the topic. This much of basics with clarity is sufficient for the exam. And, this is what is humanly possible in view of the huge syllabus.

Secondly, since the preparation will be simple with a Satisficing approach, it is easy to complete the whole syllabus. The reason why many go for selective preparation is because they maximize each topic, spend 2-3 days on it and in the end there is no time for completing the syllabus. It becomes very risky in the exam if the paper is not favourable. So, its very important that no topic is left out in the syllabus.

It should be noted that completing the syllabus with basic clarity itself

requires lots of efforts. But the hard work would be channelised in the right direction and there would be no reason why the candidate would not be successful.

So, to summarize, the following points should be kept in mind while doing preparation:

- It is a Second class exam which requires a satisfying approach
- The focus should be on gaining basic clarity in each topic, which will come only through lots of logical questioning
- The whole syllabus should be completed
- More time should be spent on thinking about the topic and making innovations, rather than on reading too many study material.
- The previous papers should be thoroughly analyzed to understand the expectations of the examiner.
- The preparation should be focused and all the hard work should be channelised in the right direction.

Choosing the optionals

The most important step in the exam is choosing the optionals. There is a need to be really cautious about the optionals. The main problem is lack of level playing field between the optionals. In fact, the result depends a lot on the optionals that we take.

Some criteria which should guide you while choosing optionals are:

- interest in the subject. This is quite important for sustaining the momentum in studies and completing the huge syllabus.
- Availability of guidance – in the form of seniors who cleared with the optional, coaching, material, etc.
- Performance of the optional in the last few years.
- Time gap between the two optionals. Chose the optionals combination so that there is some time gap between them.

Some of the optionals which a majority take are: Anthropology, Geography, History, Political Science and International Relations, Psychology, Public Administration, Sociology and Literature.

The main advantage with these optionals are:

- availability of guidance, which reduces the efforts to a large extent**
- the knowledge also helps in GS, Essay and interview.**
- They are also relevant for an administrative career.**

The reason why they are called ‘scoring’ is not because the examiners give more marks here. The guidance helps a lot in understanding the exam quickly. So, we can prepare accordingly and score well. Also, because there is market for these subjects, the material available is also of good standard. Moreover, there is no risk associated with these optionals.

If a person is from professional education background, which optionals should he choose? This is a basic question for many. There is a tendency to opt for the graduating subject. Let's understand the problems associated with these subjects.

- There will be no guidance available. So, lots of time will have to be spent in understanding the requirements of the exam. Then, searching for the material. It becomes a trial and error process. All the energies will be spent on this, while you get exhausted when really studying. At the same time, you will also have to complete the huge syllabus of another optional and GS.

- Because of the above problem, it will take more time and more attempts. While, your friends in other fields go far ahead. So, both peer and social pressure starts. The exam is anyhow psychologically draining, if other pressures add to it, then it becomes unbearable. Finally, your goal of cracking the exam becomes impossible.

- You will have to do every thing on your own. Initially it might be fine. But the exam is of long duration. It becomes difficult to sustain the momentum on your own.

- Previously, science and engg. Optionals used to do very well. In top 20, there used to be 18-19 from IIT and engg background. But after 2000, UPSC has modified the syllabus. It became a very huge syllabus and even the exam questions are made tough. That's the reason why, very few are writing the exam from IITs now. Many engineers are taking arts optionals instead of sciences. Just observe the background of the toppers and their optionals.

A person might be University topper, but we have to understand the

difference between an academic exam and a competitive exam. Moreover, the optionals are not on the same platform. So it is very important to be careful, while choosing optionals, even though you might feel you are really good in a particular subject.

Still, if you are confident about your subject, then do take that optional. Because, there is nothing like a scoring or non-scoring optional. There are some people who cleared with optionals that others don't take generally. But take into consideration the following points

- do you have a senior who has cleared with this optional and who can guide you well**
- do you have close association with professors who have good understanding about this exam.**
- Are you clear about the requirements of the exam? Study the previous papers thoroughly and assess yourself**
- Be clear about the books to follow. Don't do trial and error process. Do a focused exam oriented preparation.**
- Be aware that you have to put double the efforts compared to other aspirants. This should always be on your mind.**
- Do not neglect other optional and GS. Give equal importance.**
- Form a group of aspirants with same optional. If you prepare in isolation, then there will be no flow of information.**

There are some successful candidates with following optionals – Agriculture, Animal Husbandry & Veterinary Science, Botany, Chemistry, Commerce and Accountancy, Management, Mechanical Engineering, Medical Science, Philosophy, Physics, Zoology.

Do not be in a hurry to decide about the optional. Be very cautious and consult the right people about the information. Analyse carefully all the pros and cons, and then take a decision purely based on your assessment.

Coaching

Due to the complex exam procedure, the coaching assumes a crucial role. Unfortunately, it is a costly affair. But the coaching has the

following advantages:

- helps in understanding the requirements of the exam quickly, so that the preparation is focussed.
- reduces the efforts in preparation, as subject experts teach the topics in exam orientation. Any how, the candidate has to prepare for atleast one new optional.
- helps in getting many contacts with co-aspirants which is useful for exam related information. Never prepare for this exam in complete isolation. In any complex situation, information plays the key role.

It is advisable to go for some coaching classes. But remember that there are not many genuine teachers available. So be very careful while joining any institute. Please take into account the following points:

- do not merely go by the advertisements, nor the claims made in magazines or the interviews supposedly given by the toppers.
- meet the successful candidates and the seniors who have taken coaching from that institute.
- do not go by the advise of only one person. It is better to contact as many as possible and get a general opinion.
- meet the teacher personally,ask for their programme details, results,etc, and assess yourself if it is worth joining there.

If you are working somewhere or economically under privileged, and therefore, cannot go for coaching, please do not get discouraged. There are many people who cleared the exam without coaching. You can device ways of getting the required information about the exam. But you should always be aware that you will have to work harder than others to clear the exam. So be prepared for that and believe that hard work will always be paid back in the end.

Check out the competition magazines to get the addresses of various coaching institutes.

Marks:

The following data about the marks and the ranks will give a general idea about the efforts that are required. The marks and the ranks keep varying every year depending on the vacancies and the standard of the question papers.

In prelims, a score of above 300 out of 450 is desirable to be on the safe

side. In GS, it is better to be above 80. The scores for the optionals should be in the range of 80-90 or above depending on the subjects. Usually, it is believed that a proportion of students are taken from each optional. So, in any case, you are expected to be in the top segment in your optional to get selected for the mains.

The scores for the mains are in the range of 50-55%. Usually, a score of above 1050 is better to ensure a place in the final list.

In the interview, a score around 150-180 is a normal performance. Some get a score of even 220-240. The UPSC has deliberately kept a wide range in interview (scores vary between 50-240), so as to have the final say in who would get into the service. So, it is very important to make personality development a vital part in your preparation. The final rank is going to depend very much on the interview marks.

In general category, the score should be above 1290 to get into IAS. The actual ranks and the service placements can be obtained from the personnel ministry website. www.persmin.nic.in

Exam time table

The exam time table is almost the same every year. This information will be useful in selecting the optionals. But remember clearly that your interest in the subject should be the main criteria.

The exam sequence is as follows:

GS

Essay and English

Indian language paper

History

Mathematics, Statistics

Sociology, Anthropology

Geography

Engineering subjects

Political Science, Public Administration

Literatures

Physics

**Commerce, Management
Zoology
Economics
Botany
Law
Philosophy
Agriculture, Veterinary Science
Psychology
Chemistry
Geology**

General Suggestions:

Observe the following points:

- Long hours of study and lot of other sacrifices are needed. You should have a very determined mental make up and a never-say-die kind of spirit.
- The fortune favours the brave. So work hard with courage inspite of the failures. The final reward is bound to come. The luck factor does not help if you don't work hard to your full capacity.
- to err is human, but the one who rectifies is a champion. So, do lots of introspection as you progress in the preparation. This will help you in identifying the mistakes and rectifying them at the right time.
- Devotion and Determination are the keys to the success. Be ready to work hard. But at the same time, ensure that your efforts are channelised in the right direction.
- Plan your study and try to work it out within schedule. Set weekly targets and at the end of the week, do a self-appraisal.
- Patience and perseverance always pays. You should have the confidence and the killer instinct. Remember clearly that there are no shortcuts to success.
- there will be lots of temptation to give up the attempt, as you progress in the preparation. This is mainly due to the huge syllabus and the accumulating pressure. But be aware that these are the critical moments. You should face all these pressures with courage. Be determined to clear the exam in the first attempt.

How should a fresh candidate approach the exam?

A new aspirant should keep in mind the following points:

- first try to understand the exam. Gather information from various

sources, analyse the previous years' papers, meet seniors and teachers, and think deeply about the exam and the way you should prepare.

- chose the optionals very carefully.**
- Settle down in some place where you can study without disturbances, it is better to be isolated for a year during the preparation.**
- select the coaching centers carefully after enquiring from various sources. Do not merely go by the advertisements.**
- Do not be in a hurry to buy all the material available in the market. Be selective and chose only the best, based on advise of right seniors.**
- Establish good relation with the teachers and make complete advantage of their experience.**
- Remember always that you are going to have a tough period for next two years. So be well prepared for all situations. Keep working hard right from the beginning without any distractions.**
- Believe strongly that you will clear the exam in the first attempt itself and do not compromise at any stage. If required work harder than ever before.**
- Take care of your health aspects. It is better to learn 'Sudarshan Kriya' as early as possible.**
- Do not be in a hurry to complete the syllabus. Go slow when you read new concepts. Do regular revisions.**
- make writing practise a part of your daily routine.**
- The current affairs notes should be prepared every day.**
- The preparation should be started atleast a year ahead of the prelims exam.**
- Do not give the attempt unless you are confident of qualifying for the interview. The first attempt should be the best one, so work hard with determination.**

[IAS-Prelims strategy -Part-2](#)

Preliminary Exam:

This is the first stage of the exam and should never be taken lightly. The preparation should be such that you should not have any doubt about clearing the exam. The prelims should only be a passing phase. If you

prepare well for the mains exam and be clear about the basics, then prelims should not be problem. The preparation for the prelims should start from January. The main focus should be on the optional subject first. At the same time the GS should be done regularly. Since there is well defined syllabus for the optional, you should prepare thoroughly in all aspects and score as much as possible. On the other hand, the GS preparation should be good on the basics.

The prelims is a test of recognition. It is sufficient if you can recognise the correct answer from given choices. So if you are strong in basics this should not be problem. Do not spend too much time in memorising facts. Its fine if you can recognise it. Prepare some mnemonics which will help you in recognising the right answer.

Practising previous papers and the tests is very important. It will help you in time management and also in identifying the weak areas. This practise should be right from the beginning and not in the final stages.

General Studies:

The GS paper is feared by many at the prelims stage. There is an opinion that very difficult questions are asked from wide areas. While preparing for the GS paper, the first efforts should be to analyse the previous years' papers and then start preparation. Even while studying, you should keep looking at past questions. This will help in a focused preparation. In GS, it is equally important to know what not to study.

The score required is around 80-90 out of 150 to clear the prelims. So here it is to be remembered that you can afford to lose 60 questions. If suppose, you make 65 correct answers, then out of remaining 85 questions, there is probability of another 20+ being correct due to good guesses. To get 65 really correct, it is sufficient if you can be strong in basics. The questions are also given in such a way that 70-80 questions are easy, 50 questions difficult and another 20-30 very difficult which none can answer. Many aspirants orient their preparation keeping in view those 30 very difficult questions. This can be counter productive since it is not possible to master all areas in GS and while trying to remember too many facts, the basic clarity will be lost.

So, preparation should be made in such a way that in every area the basic understanding is very clear. All the basic questions should be answered

correctly in the exam. That is sufficient to qualify for the mains.

History:

The areas to be covered are the history from ancient to modern period. The basic understanding can be obtained from below 10th NCERT books. The focus should be on modern Indian history which is covered in the mains. The basic contours in other areas is sufficient. Some cultural aspects should also be covered.

The NCERT books are good enough for the purpose.

Polity:

The Constitution and various related aspects should be done well. Some articles and facts should be memorised. It is better to prepare this area well since it will be helpful in mains and interview.

The Indian Polity by Laxmikant and NCERT books are sufficient. Also refer, DD Basu.

Economy:

The basic concepts are being asked along with current affairs based questions. The basic clarity can be obtained from the standard books. The current affairs can be studied from Economic Survey and the newspapers.

Economic Survey

Dutt & Sundaram or Mishra & Puri or IC Dhingra

Sciences:

Some times the questions are asked very difficult that even science graduates cannot answer. But the preparation should be in such a way that all the basic questions can be done correctly. The questions are also asked in applications orientation.

NCERT books

What, Why & how books by CSIR.

Mental Ability:

Do lots of practise from previous years papers. The preparation can also be made from some standard guide like the TMH Publications. The speed and accuracy should be practised.

Current affairs:

This has become a very important component. The preparation should be continuous from the sources given in mains strategy. The notes should be focused on the factual aspects that come in the news. Many questions are asked from this area, so prepare thoroughly. The efforts will be useful for all stages of the exam. It should become a part of your daily routine.

General Knowledge

Quite a few questions are asked from this area. Some difficult questions are also asked. Do not spend too much time in memorising unnecessary facts. You should have a broad awareness about various fields. At the same time, focus more on areas which have been asked in the past.

India Year Book - This is important for the prelims and also for some mains two mark questions. But do not read every thing given in the book, be logical and concentrate on the basics which can be asked in the exam. You should prepare notes on the various terms that are given in the book. Do not focus too much on unnecessary facts given in the book.

Manaroma Year book - This book should also be taken as reference.

For the GS prelims, If you want a compilation of all material at one point then can refer some standard guide like TMH. But do not ignore the NCERT and other books since they give better clarity.

Public Administration:

This subject has become very popular as a prelims optional. The main reasons are:

- availability of good coaching and study material
- guidance is easy since many seniors opt for it
- subject matter is easy to understand
- syllabus is quite manageable

However, a very good score is required and the competition is tough.

The main source for the prelims is the TMH guide by Laxmikanth. It is a very good compilation from various sources in exam orientation. The questions and tests given at the end are up to the UPSC standards. The preparation should concentrate mainly on this book. The preparation should be such that any question based on the material in this book should be answered. The study should be thorough including the various questions given in the book.

Since the questions can be factual and can be asked from anywhere, there is need for wide study. But the first effort should be to study TMH thoroughly and the main standard books to gain basic clarity. After that some time can be spent every day in scanning various material for the additional study matter. Here, you should not spend too much time and also should not read from end to end, but only scan for areas that you have not done before or some new facts.

Books:

- Awasthi and Maheshwari- Public Administration
- Prasad and Prasad - Thinkers
- Ramesh Arora - Indian Administration
- Mohit Bhattacharya - New Horizons in Public Administration.
- Maheshwari - Indian Administration
- IGNOU books.

Practise lots of tests from anywhere you get. Identify the weak areas and focus accordingly.

Note the following points:

- make a note of the mistakes that you make in the tests and try to rectify them
- if you do not understand the question, look at the Hindi translation and see if you can gain clarity on whats being asked.
- prepare mnemonics sheets to remember various facts. Read them again and again, especially before the exam date.

[IAS- Mains Strategy by a Topper](#)

Main Examination

The main exam is the most important stage of the exam. If you are well prepared for the mains, then a good foundation will be made. The risk involved with the interview can also be reduced with good main performance. The preparation should be mains-oriented right from the beginning. You should try to gather as many marks as possible in the main exam.

Note the following points:

- Improve your handwriting
- The answer is the medium through which you are conveying to the examiner. So you should think as to how to impress the examiner with the answer. Your pen, handwriting, writing style, logical presentation, innovations, relevance to the question, etc, everything matters. Be careful about these aspects right from the beginning.
- The final two months should be devoted to repeated revisions.
- the writing practise within time limit should be done from the beginning. This will help in understanding what you can remember and reproduce within the time limit. If you do this as the preparation progresses then the study will be exam-oriented.
- use colour pens when you draw figures, diagrams etc.
- While writing answers, focus on good introductions and conclusions. The presentation should be logical. The introduction should introduce the reader about the path he is about to take and what's instored for him. It should raise the curiosity of the reader. While, the conclusion should sum up what the reader has gone through in the path. There should be a balanced judgement in the conclusions.
- You need not have a very good vocabulary or scholarly writing style. It is sufficient if you can present your answer in a simple logical manner.
- your aim should be to score equally well in all the papers. In general, you should get above 300 in optionals and the GS. Depending on your strong areas you should get more marks in some papers. The essay score should be above 100. In this way, if you can get around 1100, then the position will be very strong.
- At the end, you should be in a position to lecture 5-10 minutes on any topic. Then it means you have the basic clarity.
- The presentation is to be practised well. Do not dump the information, but present it in a logical and attractive manner. The point form can be used only for some factual areas. Other wise, paragraph mode with good analysis should be used.

- read the question carefully and grasp the aspect being asked. The answer should be relevant to what is being asked.

General Studies

The GS paper is common to everyone both at prelims and mains stage. It is usually observed that the aspirants fear the GS paper. But with proper orientation GS becomes very scoring. In fact, many try to concentrate more on optionals than GS. This may not be a good strategy, as GS gives good marks with less efforts. The GS is also helpful in essay and interview, and also later on in career. Therefore, proper attention should be given to GS preparation.

Firstly, the nature of GS should be understood. This can be done by a thorough analysis of the previous years papers. It can be observed that the examiner is not asking anything under the Sun, which is contrary to the opinion of many aspirants. The questions are focused only on certain dimensions, especially those relevant for an administrative career.

It is important to know the difference between a generalist and a specialist. A generalist is a person who knows “less and less of more and more”, while a specialist is a person who knows “more and more of less and less”. The civils exam in the GS paper is testing the Generalist approach.

History:

The national movement and related developments have to be studied with good basic clarity. The aspirant should have a clear idea about the chronological sequence, the linkages between various topics and a good analysis about each stage. It should be remembered that the portion is not to be studied as if writing History optional. The GS paper will only test the basic clarity on the national movement.

Since the syllabus is not clear, you can identify topics based on those given in the History optional syllabus. But ensure that you prepare in GS orientation.

Books:

Modern History by Spectrum Publications – This is written well in exam orientation.

Bipan Chandra books as a reference and to get the clarity.

NCERT books for a basic understanding.

Take care of following points:

- observe the forward and backward linkages at every stage of national movement and its importance in the overall context. Note that all the events were related in some way or the other.
- prepare simultaneously for the two markers- note down the personalities, places, terms, movements, journals etc. You should be able to identify them if given in exam. This is a very scoring area.
- innovations like maps (eg. 1857- spread and centers of revolt), flow diagrams etc can be made.
- try to attempt factual and non-controversial questions.
- Concentrate on the cultural aspects also which are asked for two markers.

Geography:

There should be a good understanding about the geography of India. This will also help a lot in prelims. The topics can be identified based on Geography optional paper 2 syllabus. But in GS, you need to go into basics only.

Books:

NCERT books

Note the following points:

- Some current affairs based questions are also asked. eg. MRTS,
- Lots of maps and diagrams can be used.
- this part is quite scoring with focused efforts.

Polity:

There is standard syllabus for this part and good material with clarity is also available. The questions are also mostly asked directly. So scoring becomes easy with good understanding with clarity. The knowledge in this polity also helps a lot in the essay and interview. This will give a good foundation for the career as an administrator. It is very important to study polity well.

Books:

- Indian Polity by Laxmikant, TMH - it is a very good compilation from various sources.
- DD Basu can be used as a reference.
- NCERT books provide the various topics from which questions can be asked and also provide material with good clarity.

Note the following points:

- You need not mug all the articles. There are only around 50 articles which are important. Note them when referred to in the text.
- Its better to quote some articles and Court judgements(only very important ones) while writing answers.
- give examples with contemporary relevance.
- prepare simultaneously for two markers.
- some questions are repeated, so be thorough with previous years papers.
- Questions are linked to various topics. So while preparing you should be aware of the inter-linkages between various topics.
- Various current affairs topics which are linked to polity are asked. Also, some times basic questions linked to current affairs can be asked. For eg. When TN assembly punished some media persons, a question on Legislative privileges can be expected.

Social issues:

There is no standard material for these topics. Further, questions are also not asked every year. Even if asked, mostly they are of general nature which can be answered with common sense. So do not spend too much time on these areas or in search of material. Prepare well for other parts of GS and later if time permits then come to these areas.

Books:

- coaching centre material
- competition magazines
- yojana
- NCERT books
- Social problems by Ram Ahuja
- Spectrum Publications.
- Internet

Note the following points:

- you only need a basic logical structure for each topic. If there is no material,

just spent time in thinking on the topic and to prepare a basic structure. Then, you may spend time in searching for material. For. eg. Drug abuse, you should raise following logical questions
what is drug abuse; what are the causes; distribution; impact; efforts to check; problems with strategy; suggestions;
- discuss it with other aspirants and get the information.
- Current affairs based question can be asked. For eg. Some controversial case related to Child labour comes in media, then you can expect a question on Child labour.

India and the world:

The questions are asked to test the basic understanding about the relations with other nations and India's foreign policy. Mostly, questions are related to current affairs. There is a need to have clarity about the basic contours of the evolution of India's foreign policy. But do not get into too much depth or controversial topics. You are expected to have a basic clarity on India's external affairs.

There are not many standard books available on the subject. Mostly, the preparation has to be based on current affairs.

Sources:

- NCERT 12th std book on Political science
- Old NCERT book on Political Science
- Newspapers - Hindu articles, C.Raja Mohan articles in New Indian Express.
- AIR spot light- analysis by experts.
- Foreign Ministry website

Note the following points:

- Understand the core issues between India and various nations.
- The external relations can be structured into political, economic, defence, cultural, S&T, etc. so prepare in these dimensions.
- The relations with important nations are to be done for long answers, while for other nations it is sufficient for the two markers.
- note the various terms eg. Track 2, which can be asked for two markers.
- There is no material for the topics on Overseas citizens of India. So look out for any issues that come in media related to NRIs. They can be asked for the two markers.
- you can make innovations like maps, flow charts, etc. For eg. A map for Indo-Iran pipeline, or for Munnabao-Khokrapar rail link.

International Affairs:

The questions are mainly current affairs related. The most important developments which appear in the newspapers will be sufficient for the preparation. Observe the terms, personalities, places, etc which can be asked for the two markers. Also prepare for the institutions. First list out the various important institutions. Then gather basic material on them. You can also try the web sites of the institutions for the information.

Economy:

This is an area which is feared by many, especially because of lack of proper exam-oriented text book with clarity. But with some basic understanding, economy can become very scoring because of 15 two mark questions.

Sources:

- Dutt and Sundaram or Mishra and Puri - These books are a big compilation with lots of unnecessary facts. Do not read the book from end to end. You should be able to get clarity out of every topic. So, first scan through the topic and the side headings. Then question logically in various dimensions. Try to find the answers to the questions raised as you go through the material and prepare a logical structure.

For. E.g. Unemployment

What is unemployment; types; extent and distribution; causes; impact; efforts to reduce; appraisal of policies; recent measures; suggestions;

- Economic Survey- It is a very useful document which should be focused upon. Prepare notes from the Survey. Also observe the graphs which can be used as innovations in answers. While reading, note the terms which can be asked for two markers. The box items are very important.

- NCERT books

Note the following points;

- Questions can be on basics or the current affairs based.

- you can use innovations like graphs, diagrams, flow charts etc.

- the main aspect is to gain the basic understanding with clarity. So spend more time on logical thinking and inter-relating, rather than on various books or articles.

- Simultaneously, prepare for the two markers. Note the various economic terms that keep appearing in the newspapers. Also, be thorough on the

previous years' papers.

Science and Technology:

Some Arts students fear this part and leave them for the exam. However, note that the examiner is not interested in the technical aspects. They are only testing if the candidate has basic understanding on the technological developments. In fact, technology is going to play a very key role in changing the administration. So, do take an active interest in the technological developments, as they will help you in being an effective change agent when you join the service.

In the exam, the questions are being asked from both the standard and the current-affairs based. While preparing concentrate on the relevance and the application of the topic. The following dimensions should be focused:

- What is the basics technological dimension of the topic
- How is it being used; applicability
- developments in India

There is no good material available for this area. The notes has to be prepared from various sources. The synopsis should also focus on the diagrams and figures, wherever applicable.

Sources:

- S&T - RC Reddy Publications(you will get it only from their institute)
- Science Reporter
- Employment news
- Yojana
- Eenadu - Thursday paper
- competition magazines
- Internet
- Newspapers
- Websites of various related ministries and departments(www.nic.in)

Note the following points:

- Do not go into much technical details, even if you are from technical background.
- Concentrate on applications and related issues.
- put innovations like figures, diagrams, flow charts, etc.
- prepare notes on the various computer related terms.

Statistics:

This is another area which is feared by students from Arts background. While, others from technical back ground take it too lightly, and lose marks in the end. This area is very scoring for anybody who can concentrate on the basics and do lots of practice.

Sources:

- NCERT 11th std.
- Koteswar Rao sir's notes
- Spectrum publications.

Note the following points:

- Understand the basics well with clarity.
- Practise the previous papers within the time limit
- Show the calculations clearly
- Draw the diagrams and graphs neatly.
- Do not forget to take the calculator to the exam hall.
- Some times difficult questions are asked. Do not orient preparation keeping those questions in view. Just be strong on the basic standard questions that are asked every year.
- Attempt the statistics question in the beginning of the exam. Do spend more than 45 minutes in the exam hall on these questions.

Current Affairs:

This is the most important component of the preparation. It has crucial role in prelims, essay and interview. It requires continuous efforts throughout the year. The notes has to be prepared from various sources. The effectiveness of the preparation will increase if you have a good understanding about the questions that are asked every year. That way you will be in a position to discriminate between what to read and more importantly what not to read.

Sources:

- the Hindu newspaper, some aspects of the New Indian express
- The Frontline
- AIR news - 8AM,2PM,9PM.
- Yojana
- Internet
- Dr. Khurram. He is a current affairs expert in Hyderabad. He prepares material for the Indian Army. The books are not available outside. They

bring out 2-3 books in a year. The material is quite good with clarity and back ground information. They can be obtained from United academics International, Banjara Hills, Hyderabad. You contact the through email ----
uaistudymaterial@hotmail.com

Note the following points:

- prepare topic-wise. As you go through various sources, identify the topics that can be asked in the exam. Write the topics on a sheet of paper. You will be preparing notes for those topics only. Now, for the notes you will have to go through the material. The main source will be the Hindu newspaper. The other sources should be supplemented to gain clarity in the topics.
- Everyday listen to the AIR news bulletins. They cover all important topics in a dispassionate manner. The analysis after the bulletin is also quite good. Try doing some thing else while listening the news so that you don't waste time. If any political or unimportant issue is being discussed in the news you can ignore and concentrate on your work.
- Next day by the time paper comes, you already know what to expect from that since you followed news on AIR previous day. So, go to the important topics and read slowly, and prepare notes.
- Do not read everything in the newspaper. Read only that which is important for the exam. Do not even look at the items from second page to centre page. The main focus should be on front page, editorials, articles, news analysis, business etc. In the sports page just spend time on recognising the personalities and tournaments which can be asked in exam.
- Before reading a news item, question logically about that topic or issue. Then read the article. This way the eyes try to gather the answers for the questions raised. Also, the clarity on the topic increases.
- The logical and intense questioning is very important. For eg, if there is a news item on Siachen Glacier, then you should question and find answers as following:
what is Siachen Glacier; where is it; what is the problem; why the problem developed; what is the impact on Indo-Pak relations; what efforts have been made to solve the dispute; what are the difficulties; what is its significance; how can it be solved;

Once you have a logical structure, the preparation is over. And, this is what the examiner expects from you.

- With practise, you should increase efficiency and should not spend more

that 1.5 hrs on newspaper.

- many innovations can be made like maps, diagrams, flow charts, graphs, case studies etc.
- Keep two mark questions in mind while preparing for the current affairs. Make separate notes for the personalities, places, awards, terms, etc.
- keep cuttings of the editorial in a monthly file.

General Suggestions:

- writing practise within the time limit is very important. There is problem of time management for the GS paper2.
- Go through the Vajiram coaching material if you have access to it.
- while reading newspapers observe the following- abbreviations; new terms; organisations; quotes and examples which can be used elsewhere; etc.

Essay:

With some good preparation and writing style, it is easy to get a score of above 100. There is no standard material for the essay preparation. You will have to gather material from various sources. The preparation should be based on the topics. First list out the various topics from which questions can come. Then think logically, raising questions intensively, and try to find answers for them. The main purpose will be to gain clarity on the essay topic. Prepare a brief structure on the various topics which can be revised before the exam.

Note the following points:

- Practise is essential for getting a good score.
- While writing in the exam, first prepare a structure in the last page and show it clearly for the examiner to follow. After selecting the topic, question intensively in various dimensions to get a logical structure. As you get the ideas, note them down in the structure. This process can go upto 45 minutes. Once you are satisfied that the topic has been covered in a comprehensive manner, then start writing.
- Try to give a good introduction. It should guide the examiner to what you intend to convey in the essay. The conclusion should be good and satisfy the examiner. Always conclude on a positive note.
- the main focus should be on giving a good analysis of the topic.
- you need not use flowery language. Simple logical presentation is sufficient.

- Do not divert into areas which are irrelevant to the topic.
- Make sure that you have sufficient understanding and material to write, before choosing the topic.

Languages:

These papers are only of qualifying nature, but at the same time cannot be ignored. If you do not qualify then your other mains papers will not be evaluated. Note that every year there are some candidates who get disqualified. So ensure that you have the minimum knowledge about the languages. The score should only be above 40% and the questions are also set in such a manner that this is not difficult at all. There is no need for any preparation. But do practise previous years papers to gain familiarity.

Those from non-English medium schools might face some difficulty in English paper. Then the preparation should be made from some standard book. Note that the grammar is not much tested, but it is only the functional knowledge in the language.

Similarly, some face difficulty with the Indian language paper. Ensure that you have functional knowledge in at least one Indian language.

Public Administration:

This optional at the mains is supposed to be good, even though many fear to take it. The scores have been decent and consistent, and some have really scored high. The knowledge will also help in GS, essay and interview.

Note the following points:

- the questions might seem indirect and vague, but with good basic clarity any question can be attempted. In recent times, the long questions are being asked directly. The examiner only expects you to write a simple logical answer with clarity.
- do not try to remember too many quotations as it is difficult to reproduce.
- the introduction and conclusions should be written well
- Do not read all the books from end-to-end. Prepare topic wise in a comprehensive manner. The main priority should be given to gain the basic clarity.
- Practise well the previous years' papers.
- Use examples, contemporary relevance, case studies, flow diagrams etc.

Introduction chapter is to be studied well as it deals with the basic evolution of the subject and the trends. The questions might seem difficult. But with good understanding it can be very scoring. The concepts can be used elsewhere also. The material is available on most topics.

The theories chapter should be done well. This is a very scoring and with well defined syllabus preparation can also be comprehensive. The material availability is good.

The Structure chapter is easy and can be covered quickly. But questions may not be asked every year. The material availability is good.

The Behaviour chapter is very scoring. The questions are also asked regularly. The material is also good.

The chapter on Accountability is scoring. This area is important in the contemporary trend. So questions are asked regularly. There is also scope for a lot of innovation. The material is deficient for some areas. There is also a need to prepare from current affairs.

The Administrative Law is a very short chapter with limited scope. The questions may not be asked regularly. But it should be attempted if given in exam. It is scoring and the material is also available.

The administrative reforms chapter is short and easy. It can be scoring with innovations.

The material is also standard. Be open to any information that appears in the newspapers.

The CPA chapter is scoring. It can be attempted in the exam. But questions may not come every year. The material availability is a problem in some aspects.

The DA chapter is relevant to Indian context. So prepare well for this area. The questions are asked almost every year. The material availability is a problem for some areas. A lot of innovation and contemporary relevance can be included.

The Public policy chapter is not asked every year. The material availability

is also a problem.

The personnel chapter is very scoring and should be attempted. The questions are also asked every year. The material is good. So, do well in this chapter. Check out for latest information in newspapers.

The Financial chapter is scoring in some areas. There is problem of material in some topics.

In Indian administration, the scoring areas are: evolution, framework, union, state govt., reforms, law and order, welfare.

There problem of material in many areas. The contemporary relevance has to be added in most topics.

Books:

Mohit Bhattacharya - New horizons

Awasthi and Maheshwari - Public Administration

Ramesh Arora - Indian Public Administration Comparative Public Administration

Public Administration - Sadhana and Sharma

DD Basu - Constitution

Sachdeva - Social welfare administration

Prasad and Prasad - Administrative Thinkers

Public Policy - Sapru

Rumki Basu - Public Administration

Maheshwari - Indian Administration

NCERT books

IGNOU material

IJPA special edition in 1998 on the occasion of Golden Jubilee.

Geography

Geography has become a very popular optional for the civil service exam. The scores have also been good enough and many became successful with this optional.

The main advantages of Geography as an optional are :

- Availability of good material and guidance. There are many successful candidates with this optional, which makes easy access to strategy required.
- Geography is helpful for the GS prelims & mains, essay, interview and even for some other optionals.
- The map questions make it a very scoring subject.
- There is enormous scope for innovations in writing which can boost the scores.
- Students from science background find it easy to tune to this subject.

There are certain points which should be kept in mind while preparing for geography:

- Read the basics well and then think on your own about how to make innovative answers.
- Because of availability of much material, there is a tendency to do a research-kind of preparation. This is highly counter productive.
- Prepare basics well with good clarity. You may refer the standard book for this. Then if required just scan through other books for any different dimension. Do not start mugging each and every book from end-to-end.
- Take the topic, do intense questioning to get clarity. Then in a logical manner prepare a structure for the notes.
- Put lots of maps, diagrams, flow charts, graphs, etc. Be as innovative as possible.

Physical Geography

i) Geomorphology :

- very scoring chapter
- scope for lot of innovation.
- Good material available.

ii) Climatology

- very scoring chapter
- scope for lot of innovation.
- Good material available.

iii) Oceanography :

- very scoring chapter
- scope for lot of innovation.
- Good material available.

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iv) Biogeography :

- very scoring chapter
- scope for lot of innovation.
- Good material available.

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v) Environmental Geography :

- very scoring chapter
- scope for lot of innovation.
- Good material available.

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Section-B

Human Geography

i) Perspectives in Human Geography :

- Not much scoring because of lack of diagrams and maps.
- Some avoid this chapter, but this may not be appropriate. Do not spend too much on this topic. But be aware of the basics. You should be able to write short notes from this chapter.
- Material is available.

ii) Economic Geography :

- This chapter is less scoring. But you should be able to write short notes.
- Some topics like world agriculture–typology of agricultural regions are scoring.
- Material availability is a problem for some topics.
-

iii) Population and Settlement Geography :

- scoring
- good material available

iv) Regional Planning :

- conceptual and can be scoring if written with clarity.
- Material is available

-

vi) Models, Theories and Laws in Human Geography :

- Very scoring and should be attempted in the exam.
- Material is available for most of the topics.

World Map: This question is highly scoring. The aspirant should spend good amount of time in mastering the world map. The examiner is only interested in testing the basics and important places. But some times very difficult map points are asked as done in 2003. But the preparation should not be based on that year's question. In general, focus should be on preparing the basic points which are more likely to be asked. If preparation is based on 2003 paper, then it is not possible to master all small and insignificant map points. Finally it will be counter productive as there is a chance of forgetting even the basics. If difficult points are asked it will only be bad luck. So while preparing for map, please do keep these suggestions in mind.

While writing the 10 words, you need not put a sentence. Just put down as much info as possible using “;”. Also, underline the most significant fact.
Foreg.

Rekjavik: Iceland; capital city; northernmost capital; very cold climate; midnight sun; geological studies; Mid-Atlantic ridge;

Paper-II

Geography of India

Section-A.

i) Physical Setting :

- Scoring chapter.
- Material is available.
- Better to attempt question in the exam.

ii) Resources :

- Scoring chapter.
- Material is available..

ii) Agriculture :

- Scoring chapter.

- Material available for most topics.
- Scope for innovation and inter-linkages.

iii) Industry :

- Scoring chapter.
- Material is available.
- Some topics will have to be prepared on your own.

iv) Transport, Communication and Trade :

- Some topics are scoring.
- Material for some topics is not available.

Section-B

i) Cultural Setting :

- Some topics are scoring
- Material available for most the topics.

ii) Settlements :

- Some topics are very scoring.
- Material is available.

iii) Regional Development and Planning:

- Some topics are scoring.
- Questions are being asked regularly.
- Material is available.

iv) Political Aspects :

- Scoring if written with good orientation.
- Material not available.
- Scope for innovation.

iv) Contemporary Issues :

- Some topics are scoring.
- Material availability is a problem.

India Map:

This question is highly scoring and the candidate should prepare well. Here also only the basics and important points are being asked. So, first analyse the previous questions and prepare accordingly.

In writing the answer, try to put as much as you know.

Eg.

Kaveri: Karnataka-Kerala-TN; Source-Talakaveri; Western Ghats; Delta in TN; major river; highly used for irrigation; Inter-state river water dispute; Mettur dam; Krishnasagar dam; Tiruchi; hydroelectricity;

Books:

Old NCERT books are better than the new ones for basic clarity. You should also go through the new books for the latest data and analysis.

Savindra Singh- Geomorphology, Physical geography, Environmental Geography

Majid Hussain- Physical geography, Human Geography, General Geography and geography of India.

Climatology by Lal

Oceanography by Vittal

Rupa publications on Physical and human geography- vol 1&2

Regional geography - Rai Choudhary, Puri

India- Khullar

Certified physical and human geography- Goh Cheng Leong , its very good for the basics.

Spectrum Geography guide- it is quite a good compilation with lots of diagrams. It can be depended upon for many areas. Keep reading this for every topic. The only problem is lack of clarity, otherwise it is a helpful source.

Urban geography- Ramachandran

Maps:

-NCERT - prepare notes as you come across various points in the maps.

- Atlas- OXFORD (student), Ttk, Orient Longman