

Simplify for Success in the Civil Services Examination

Aloysius Xavier Lopez

With just 46 days left for the Civil Services (Main) Examination 2010, the only strategy for a successful candidate would be to simplify the task of preparing for the examination. According to feedback from candidates who have emerged successful in the previous civil services examinations, the candidates who were able to handle the element of surprise in the question paper were able to perform better.

“Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) is expected to continue testing the analytical mindset of candidates in this main exam too,” says R. Sudahar, an official of the Indian Police Service (IPS), who continues to guide civil service aspirants. A chunk of the questions will be based on the application of a concept in the syllabus, he adds. Last year, only a small percentage of candidates were able to score more than 300 out of 600 in the General Studies papers.

Most candidates would have worked hard on optional subjects but simplifying the general studies component is the key to success.

Most candidates forget the first sentence mentioned by the UPSC as part of the general guidelines of the examination. It reads: “The nature and standard of questions in the General Studies papers will be such that a well-educated person will be able to answer them without any specialised study.”

So the candidates who had scored more than 300 in the General Studies papers would be those with good understanding of the subjects they had studied at the secondary and higher secondary school level. They do not require any specialised study in any of the subjects for the general studies.

The NCERT books of history, geography, polity, economy and statistics would be useful for revising the syllabus for the main examination.

IGNOU materials of optional subjects could be used for understanding the basic concepts for the General Studies and the optional subjects. The candidate would require “basic understanding of all relevant issues, and ability to analyse, and take a view on conflicting socio-economic goals, objectives and demands,” according to the general guidelines given by the UPSC on General Studies papers. “The candidates must give relevant, meaningful and succinct answers.”

Most of the candidates who successfully touch the 300 mark in the general studies papers are those with proper understanding of the general guidelines of the UPSC for the main examination. In paper I of the general studies, questions on history of modern India and Indian culture generally carries around 60-75 marks. Reading IGNOU material and NCERT books on history of the country from about the middle of 19th century is one of the suggestions given by successful candidates.

The questions on Geography of India carry around 80 marks and candidates may revise basic NCERT books covering physical, economic and social geography of India.

Questions carrying around 90 marks are usually being asked on topics such as the Constitution of India and Indian polity. Current national issues and topics of social relevance are generally being covered from those reported by broadsheet newspapers.

Last year, around 50 per cent of the questions, including those pertaining to science and technology, were based on reports by broadsheets such as The Hindu. "Reading editorials of The Hindu helped me in answering questions on polity and social issues," said S. Selvanagarathinam, a successful candidate in the previous examination. Broadsheet newspapers continue to rule supreme in paper II of the general studies too.

Questions on India and the world carry 50-60 marks, India's economic interaction with the world 75-90 marks, developments in the field of science and technology, IT and space 50-85 marks and international affairs and institutions about 50 marks.

Candidates with commerce, statistics or mathematics background are expected to answer questions for around 40 marks on statistical analysis, graphs and diagrams at the beginning of the examination.

The marks scored in this topic play a key role in the final ranking. But candidates who are not confident in answering these questions are advised to answer the questions after finishing a chunk of the questions, said J. Kumaragurubaran, an IAS officer.

Courtesy: The Hindu, Education Plus Dt 13.09.2010

Dream Dare Win

www.jeywin.com
