



## **ESSAY ENRICHMENT PROGRAMME**

*Expert Guidance, Feedback & Telephonic Discussion*

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*Expert of Essay Enrichment Programme*

Essay Paper in civil services examination carries 200 marks out of the 2000 mark scheme of the main examination. Like the interview (that carries 300 marks), the success and rank of an aspirant is determined significantly by this little but important segment. It is in fact easy, simple and beautiful paper. But sadly most of the aspirants do not realize this until it is too late. Not many candidates have managed to score over a 100 marks according to the statistics of the 2009 main results. There have been a shockingly high number of double and even single digit scores on the essay score-card of this time. But, this should not and does not mean that this paper is difficult or is non- scorable .

This simply indicates towards the need of a good strategy through experienced guidance and practice in right direction that's all. There are students who have scored 150 plus marks in 2009 main examination only, for instance - Puneet Gulati, AIR-319 has scored 140 in the UPSC-2009. Puneet too recognizes the importance of strategy - he writes: "while none of us can justify the extremely low scores given out by UPSC, I do think that there does exist a strategy for tackling the Essay paper, which, if adopted and implemented thoughtfully, can reap a decent 50-70% mark in the Essay. Such marks will ensure that a candidate does not fail to make it to the list just because of poor showing in the Essay".

The nature of essay writing for the Civil Services Examination is different than those of the academic or scholarly essay writings. As in here, one has to be diplomatic in taking up a stand and tackling the issues concerned. The precision of language, discipline of thought and lot of patience in showing up the views are the prerequisites. Remember! Your entire personality is going to be judged on every single word that you happen to write. Therefore, one needs to be extra careful about choosing the words.

But now let us first answer some of the basic questions – like, what is an essay? And how should one write it to obtain the maximum marks?

Essay is an art of writing ones thought in a very coherent, logical, and lucid manner so as to make an impact or place an individual opinion for due consideration in the ongoing debate. Essay writing reflects a democratic way of making a point. Therefore, essay is one of the most popular forms of literature for placing one's view point in the public. There can not be a definition to an essay as such; as it varies according to the subject matter and an individual writer who is attempting the essay.

Literally the word 'essay' means an "attempt". It is an attempt to compose one's thoughts so as to present them in a logically coherent structure and sequence. It is a literary composition usually in prose form, dealing with a particular subject and bringing out its various aspects one by one, with a view to present a graphic picture of the whole subject-matter in a very well-knit composition. Thus, an essay becomes a test not only of one's knowledge and information but also of the maturity of thoughts, rationality of imagination and of the ability of presentation of an individual.

In order to obtain a high score in the essay paper of the UPSC, one needs to understand the requirement of this exam along with the purposes of this exam. As it is quite evident that UPSC is looking for a mature decision maker, a good administrator and an overall leadership quality in you. So you got show all these attributes in not only the essay writing but in all of your write ups including your optional subjects as well as the G.S. Remember! Come what field may you come from like science, commerce, art, or humanities there is always a scope of showing the above mentioned attributes. Just you have to learn to produce them as and when needed. Further you need to have a comprehensive understanding of the nature of the current essay paper and equip your self with the changing trend.

The nature of the current essay trend is opinion based. For this, one has to first of all be able to differentiate the meanings of knowledge and opinion. Knowledge is basically a very broad and absolute term that shows things to be eternally true i.e. true in all times to come - that which is objectively true i.e. true for all human beings. It can be falsified by none at no point in time. So most of our knowledge claims would in fact not be fitting into this criteria of knowledge, as nothing can be so authoritatively be true, that too for all times to come. Therefore, we should avoid being authoritative in our judgements regarding a particular stand point. As such claims at best be one of the sound opinions, not an absolute knowledge as we often tend to show. Hence we got to be decent

enough to accept this fact and keep our self at a balanced position avoiding the extremes. Further - knowledge could also refer to the scientific knowledge where the knowledge claims are supported by logic and verifiable evidences. Such definitions of knowledge is acceptable therefore, support your knowledge claims with proper evidence and adequate logic.

Then there are opinions which most of the time we possess and often get confused with knowledge. Opinions are something that one makes based on his/her belief system and understandings of the world. So while giving the opinions one has to show maturity and objectivity having a democratic outlook of things. At the same time scientific attitude has to be displayed i.e. a logical justification has to be provided each time an opinion is made.

This is where students generally lack and commit errors on a given topic, they never follow-through to justify their opinions. The first thing that one must realize is that your audience (the experienced diplomats who check your essay scripts) is not in the least bit interested in your “opinion” or anyone's opinion for that matter. This is a shock to some students who believe that what we've been doing is just trading opinions on various topics. The confusion lies in the fact that some students are only attending to the *first* part of a two-part process — they are forgetting or not sufficiently following the *second* part of the process. The experienced readers are just *not* interested in your opinions. They are rather interested in the *argument* that you can give which explains *why* you hold that opinion. Giving an argument that supports and defends your opinion is the second-part of the two-part process that we encounter in our writings and discussions. Generally speaking, you should treat all opinion-statements as *logical conclusions*, and the art of good reading and writing is to dig back to the premises, the assumptions, and the evidence that led a person to draw that conclusion. Just as in math classes, wherein providing *only* your conclusions is unacceptable, you must “show your work” in essay-writing too.

So an argument comprises of three statements- which are also called as premises. They are Major premises, minor premises and the conclusion. For example –

1. There is smoke on the hill : Major premiss
2. where there is smoke there is fire : Minor premiss
3. Therefore, there is fire on the hill. : The Conclusion

In the above example it is evident that there is a logical connectivity between these premises and finally in the conclusion. The premises logically converse into the conclusion. So it is coherent to

conclude the idea of fire on the hill when smoke is evident, showing the logical relation between the fire and the smoke. This is called method of drawing logical inferences in logic. On the similar fashion we have to write our ideas with logical connectivity to the next idea hence maintaining the harmony and the lucidity of a good write up. Then things look simple and smooth. It becomes a delightful reading for the reader and finally you become successful in impressing upon the examiner who in turn fetches you with good marks.

Once a student has stated his belief say in the following manner - “God makes our destiny”, or “abortion is immoral”, or “animals should not be tortured”, or “racism is bad”, or “science is too masculine” etc. —he/she has only *begun* to give a proper response, which is yet to be justified. One must now go on to detail the *specific reasons* and the *specific evidences* that led him/her to hold that belief. This second step is the only truly important part of a good paper, and some students never even begin to provide it in their essays.

“Opinions” are like “armpits”, everyone has them and nobody really cares. A class in which everyone just stated their opinions (for or against) the death-penalty, for example, would be as fascinating and illuminating as a class in which everyone just stated their favorite ice-cream flavor. The smart reader wants to know *why* a person holds a particular opinion, but some students mistakenly believe that simply *stating* the opinion is enough. It is not enough to write “I am against the death-penalty” in your essays and then move on to some additional opinions. One must explain in detail the reasons, experiences, and factual evidence that lead a person to be against the death-penalty. One can argue against the death-penalty on ethical grounds, social grounds, religious grounds, epistemic grounds, economic grounds, and more.

A student must articulate the most compelling grounds for their opinion and present them in the most persuasive and logical terms possible. Notice also that each and every “controversial” claim that is made in the sequence of your argument will likely need additional argumentation and justification. For example, it will not be terribly helpful to claim that you believe capital punishment is *wrong because* the Bible says so. It will then be immediately incumbent upon you to give some argument for *why your* interpretation of the Bible is the only correct one, and then you will also have to give some argument for the *existence* of God, and quickly follow this with a strong argument for why God is communicating through *this* scripture and not, say, the Bhagavad Gita, and so on. All this is a very tall order, especially when we remember that the essay topic in this case is only the death penalty and one should stay focused on the topic at hand.

When someone feels very strongly about some issue (say - the death penalty, animal rights, the existence of Fate, etc.), they can become so close to their belief — so familiar and comfortable with it — that this belief will seem utterly natural and uncontroversial to them. It will seem so obvious as to be unworthy of any further explanation and justification. This is one of the most common reasons why students neglect to give arguments for their opinions/beliefs. Students believe that many of their claims are so obvious that they don't need to “spell it out” which is WRONG!

Beware! Of the followings:

- I. Adamant conviction does not substitute for logical argumentation. (e.g., yelling or weeping does not improve the cogency of someone's position.) Appealing to fear is also a fallacy. For example, a lawyer might say “If you do not convict this criminal, one of you may be his next victim.” This is fallacious because what a defendant might do in the future is *irrelevant* to determining whether he is responsible for a crime committed in the past. It may be relevant at the time of sentencing, but not during the deliberation of guilt or innocence.
- II. Nothing follows from the fact that you passionately believe x to be true, except that you passionately believe x to be true. In other words, the external world need not mimic your subjective internal states. (e.g., believing with every fiber of your being that Jim Morrison is still alive, has nothing whatever to do with Jim's current status.).
- III. Correlation is not necessarily cause. (e.g., a recent prime time T.V. program argued that since a number of wealthy men had consulted with psychics about their investments, psychic insight *caused* their investment.)

Thus the most important aspect of your essay is the subject matter. You should expect to devote a significant amount of time in simply brainstorming ideas for the subject matter before you actually start writing the essay.

To begin brainstorming a subject, you should look deep into your background, interests, information and aptitudes. Yes friends! Your previously learned skills would be a good asset as they shall reflect your individuality and originality. You got to learn to access them and use them in right perspectives. Consider the following points for brainstorming your past and incorporate them in not only deciding the topic of your essay but also in keeping those skills and experiences intact in writing the entire essay.

Take the help of your educational backgrounds in deciding the topic - suppose if you are a science student you may choose a topic where there are possibilities of applying your years long learned skills and some of those important facts that you can substantiate your answer with and make it more informative. And if you are say - a law graduate or sociology/political science/geography/philosophy etc. student choose your topic accordingly. As then you have the X-factor, an edge over many other students. Moreover, that is going to represent your individuality and originality which is widely appreciated.

Lastly but the most importantly remember the teachings of the preamble of Indian constitution particularly the ideals and aspirations – those magical words sovereignty, socialism, secularity, democracy, republic, equality, liberty, fraternity etc. You need a comprehensive understanding of these words as they are not merely words but a concept in themselves. If you really happen to understand what they mean that time onwards you become the most eligible candidate who can not be stopped from entering into the service. Well, they need a great deal of thinking and introspection. They will get reflected in your personality through your writings anyway.

Thus, Essay requires the student to exhibit not only the art of writing, but also the art of thinking.

Our Essay Enrichment Programme is modeled to cater the needs and requirements of the students coming from all walks of life. It is intended to harness and harmonize those vital components of the essay so as to optimize the examination scores of the course participants.

VISION IAS

## **ESSAY ENRICHMENT PROGRAMME**

Fee	: Rs 3000
Duration	: 1 Month
Nature	: Flexible
Starting on	: Any day of the month
No. of Mock Test	: 3 (Dispatch Interval: 10 days)

The Essay Enrichment Programme of **THE VISION IAS** proposes to incorporate the following to enable the candidates with adequate skills, to equip them with required information and to empower them with valuable experiences and exposures needed for the confidence building and securing the high scores in the UPSC examination.

### **1. Strategic guidance for the Essentials of a Good Essay**

We shall provide you with the training of the followings:

- a. **Exposure of the subject-matter**
- b. **Building the structure of your essay**
- c. **Developing your own Style**
- d. **How to incorporate your personal Imprint i.e. your originality**
- e. **How to use your previous learnt skills and knowledge into the essay**

### **2. Developing the Stages in Essay Writing**

A plan is necessary for all compositions, just as a plan is necessary to build a house or to make a garden. For compositions of considerable length, it is always wise to make a written plan. Our programme is designed to teach you the details of the following.

There are four stages in Essay Writing: -

- i. Think about the subject and jot down on paper all the facts or ideas.
- ii. Arrange these facts according to the topic and so construct an outline of the structure in a tree form demarcating clearly the shares of introduction, body and the conclusion.
- iii. Write the essay following the structure and incorporating suitable examples from current happenings.
- iv. Revise what you have written.

**3. How to make the right Choice of the Subject**

**4. Guidelines for Collection of materials**

**5. How to discipline ourselves within a Word limit**

**6. Language competency**

**7. Logical Arrangement keeping the natural connectivity of the ideas**

**8. Writing The Essay**

**a. How to Begin an Essay**

**b. How to start with a good introduction**

**c. How to develop arguments and proceed in the body**

**d. How to converse your thoughts into a logical conclusion.**

**e. How to use the relevant Quotations and Proverbs to make the essay more effective**

**9. How to make the rational choice of that one essay out of the six (given in the UPSC) in order to use your full potentialities and experiences to give your best shot.**

The course will comprise of a detailed study materials covering all the above issues. Students will be taught a host of tangible innovative techniques which can uniquely enhance the rating of their essays. Within the area-wise coverage, all potential topics will be discussed. Similarly, due stress will be given to ignite the original thinking capabilities of the students with reference to these topics.

There shall be 3 mock test papers strictly on the UPSC patterns comprising 6 essays on 200 marks platform as part of this Essay Enrichment Programme. The test-papers will be diagnostically evaluated so as to bring out the vulnerabilities and strengths of students. The tests are periodically placed in the course so that academic progress of each student can be tracked. And a regular personal interaction shall be made available on individual basis so as to tackle the student specific problems on essay writing. At the end a list of probable essays for main paper shall be provided along with their proper structures.