

Preparation is the key

The Civil Services Examination is a test to choose suitable administrators. It tests the candidate right from the stage when one starts the preparation. TEAM AVENUES brings you up close with some tips for the right way to prepare

One common misconception about the Prelims is that it is a test of facts and figures. However, that was never the case. A candidate should have the right frame of mind and the will power to succeed in the exam. A proper action plan is needed for the preparation itself since he/she will be tested for some essential qualities like power of retention, clarity of concepts, ability to identify the correct alternatives with efficiency and accuracy. All this requires a quick decision making power.

■What to expect?

The new pattern involves more stress on language skills and analysis and decision making capacities, so work on these on a consistent basis as these are skills that are developed over the years and not just in a few months. It would be advisable to start focusing on your problem solving and language skills as soon as you decide to take these exams.

Since the Preliminary Exam in particular is a test of endurance the candidate needs to prepare himself on the physical as well as mental level. The main constraint is the time one gets to answer the questions in. On an average one gets around 40 seconds for each question. Added to this time constraint is the fact that the exam is conducted usually in the month of May/June which is usually the hottest month all over the country. Most of the centres for the exam do not have proper facilities which adds to the stress. One sure way of dealing with this stress is to count numbers or to take a few deep breaths. Meditation and Yoga also help in dealing with stress to a great extent.

■How to prepare?

Now we come to the actual preparation for the Prelims Exam. Since it is a multiple choice question paper, it needs a different preparation and a proper strategy.



The first thing a candidate needs to bear in mind is that the examination is designed to evaluate certain qualities like a sharp memory and basic retention power. There are ways to increase one's memory like preparing charts. One gets confused when faced with mind boggling facts and figures. Important facts and figures can be simplified and represented on charts and they can be arranged in the form of tables or graphs.

Another thing to remember is to make short and brief notes on each topic so that the entire syllabus can be revised a day before the exam.

There is yet another technique to help retaining information — the use of abbreviations. Since the syllabus involves exhaustive information abbreviations help you to remember it better.

■Points to keep in mind

Many candidates make a mistake of overloading themselves with lots of information and end up remembering nothing. One should be able to differentiate between relevant and irrelevant information. Since the exam is an elimination round the candidate should also learn to focus only on the information needed and filter out the rest.

It helps to discuss with friends and teachers but the most reliable way is to solve past years question papers. One should also keep abreast

with current events and information related to them.

An important thing to remember is that for this exam it is just enough to remember information but to understand the concepts well instead of memorising facts and figures.

It is a good idea to go through previous years and model question papers and solve as many as possible. Taking a mock test of a certain number of GS questions and maths and general ability questions would be a good practice and help to pick out the most appropriate option.

■During the exam

Each Prelims paper is for two hours but a lot of time is wasted in signing attendance sheets etc, therefore, there is a lot of need for effective time management not only for the exam but in the preparation as well. It is not enough to know the right answer but it has to be marked correctly on the answer sheet. Speed and accuracy are important, so solving model question papers on a regular basis would be a great help.

A good presence of mind is needed to eliminate the least appropriate options and arrive at the right one. However, beware of negative marking so it is better to mark only sure shot answers than make guesses. Even with all this preparation, it is necessary to have a positive attitude and a great amount of will power to succeed to achieve your goal.