



---

## PAPER - I ESSAY (250 MARKS)

Essay is the most taken for granted area in civil services preparation. We spend months preparing for GS-1, 2, 3, 4 but hardly give any dedicated time for preparation of essay. It is important to understand that one essay paper is equivalent to almost 1.5 G.S papers in terms of scoring.

### **What UPSC Says?**

Candidates may be required to write essays on multiple topics. They will be expected to keep closely to the subject of the essay to arrange their ideas in orderly fashion, and to write concisely. Credit will be given for effective and exact expression.

### **Instructions**

**Two** essays, choosing **one** from each Section A (4 essays) & B (4 essays), needs to be written in about 1000-1200 words.

### **Target**

It's realistic to target something around 130. Whatever one gets above this is a bonus.

### **Points To Remember While Writing the Essay Paper**

#### **a) How to choose a topic**

- Don't have any mindsets. At that point of time, inside the exam hall, we have to choose that topic which we really feel like writing. That one we would enjoy thinking and writing about. No other criterion to choose a topic.
- One way of making a quick decision is to firstly eliminate those topics that we are averse to. Of what remains take the one closest to your hearts.
- Also ensure that you choose a topic that you understand well – that you know the meaning of all the words in the topic.

#### **b) How to go about it**

- Read the topic chosen 4-5 time thoroughly. Underline the key words. Read again. Get the actual meaning of what's asked for very clearly. If you have doubts about the meaning of even a single word in the topic, just leave the topic. Choose something else. Otherwise one has to be contended with the scores around 60.
- Go to the last page of your answer sheets and just do a random brainstorming of the topic chosen. Random points - issues / events / definitions / narrations / quotes / news items etc. Whatever comes to the mind.
- After doing this for about 30-40 mins, Cluster the similar points together.
- Then sequence the clusters simply in a logical manner. Have around 11-12 clusters.
- An idea/para should just naturally flow out of the preceding one. The essay needs to be smooth.
- Now start writing the essay. It can be done in about 2 hours' time.
- It's just the expansion of each of the clusters. Make it around one page each. We'll end up with about 13 pages. That's it!
- But while expanding, and after ever page of writing go back to the essay topic again. Just to ensure you are writing on what's asked for. Else it's quite easy for one to drift away from the topic, landing-up around 60 marks.



**c) A great introduction**

You can present:

- An interesting fact
  - A piece of knowledge that is surprising
  - A very intriguing quote
  - A short personal anecdote
  - Provoke the reader through a question
  - State a paradoxical situation
- Most of the times, the examiner reads the introduction and the conclusion fully, but simply skims through the body of the essay. It is not a disadvantage. You just have to use this in your favour.

**d) Body of the Essay**

- **Analyse the topic from various perspectives:** historical, geographical, economical, geopolitical, ethical viewpoint etc. It should be a multi-pronged essay. You are aiming to become a generalist administrator and your essay too should show you as one. Not delving too deeply into any esoteric topic but handling a variety of different topics.
- **Do not use any advanced term** which you learnt while preparing for your optional or your college graduation subject. Like if you have psychology as your optional, do not use any terms in the essay which only a psychologist would know. Or, if you have done economics in your graduation, you should not make the entire essay too economics-oriented and start using complex terms (even if they are with explanation) which only an economist would have encountered before.
- **Write in a very simple manner.** The essay should show your analytical side, yes. But not so analytical that the examiner will have to read an “Introduction to Psychology” handbook before she has to correct your essay. She will just give the minimum marks possible if she is not able to understand what you have written.
- **Use short sentences.** They are easier to read and comprehend. Long winding sentences would get you nowhere.
- **Have a solid thesis statement** before you start writing the body of the essay. And mention it in your introduction. The essay must have consistency in thoughts and continuity in presentation. All the arguments which you put forth in the body of your essay should have a single aim. To convince your reader of the central thesis of the essay.  
For example, in the UPSC 2014 Essay paper there was a question on whether tourism had great potential in India. So your central thesis could be that you believe that tourism is definitely a highpotential sector in India and with adequate investment in infrastructure it will fulfill its potential. After that every single paragraph in your essay should be about convincing the reader of the validity of your thesis statement. But from various perspectives. Say medical tourism, spiritual tourism, cultural tourism etc.
- **Do not adopt an unnecessarily negative tone** about any topic. If you are pessimistic about any issue, suggest ways by which you can overcome that problem. Also, it is not advisable to criticize the Government. If you have to absolutely it should be constructive criticism. But generally, refrain from doing so.
- **Use short paragraphs.** No one likes to read long winding clumps of words. You can occasionally use single-line paragraphs for writing a sentence of impact.
- **Give real-life case studies** and day to day examples to drive home the point.



**e) A Great conclusion**

- If you just restate the ideas which you have already mentioned in the body of our essay, the conclusion may feel flat. A memorable and lasting impression should be left on the reader. Hopefully, we should write something that stays on in the reader's mind long after she has finished correcting your essay. A graceful exit is required. For this you can:
  - Try to create a powerful image in the mind of the reader
  - End with a thought-provoking quotation
  - Talk about what action can be done
  - End on an interesting twist of logic
- You can quote nationalist leaders of India like Tagore, Gandhi, Nehru, Ambedkar and the like depending on your personal preferences. But the quote should be in keeping with the theme of the essay and not something you have twisted somehow into the context of the essay. Also, the exact words of the original quote must be written and not some reproduction in your own words. It leads to you losing credibility in the eyes of the examiner. Especially if the examiner has encountered the quote before, which she most probably has.

**Don'ts:**

- Don't write the essay too technically. This usually happens when one chooses a topic related to his/her option. Be careful. The essay needs to be a very general one, a XII-class school student reading the essay should understand it, like it.
- Do not use many quotations. 2-3 max will do.
- Do not underline.
- Do not adopt an unnecessarily negative tone about any topic
- Don't stretch the essay till the last minute. Finish it off 5-10 mins ahead of time and just have a reading. Nor finish it too early.
- Don't make the essay too lengthy. Stick to the Word limits.
- Don't scribble. Write legibly.
- Don't make any grammar mistakes. Make short sentences and use common words.

**Preparation strategy**

You need to read some good essays and learn how beautifully people put up their arguments. These essay don't have diversity but depth. So reading some good essays can tell you how to begin an essay, write arguments, and conclude. Most Important is how to create a structure of essay.

- In your daily newspaper reading if you find some good lines or examples then keep noting them. Especially editorials.
- Take up some common/general topics like women, education, healthcare, internet, science (look at last 20 years essay) and prepare some fodder on it. Like quotes, imp case studies, examples, factual info, government initiatives etc.
- Have a repository of good opening and closing lines. You will find this through reading newspapers, good essays of others etc.

**Practice**

One should write at least 5-6 essays. When you write try to apply the points we explained above in this article. And most importantly get your essays evaluated by some teachers, selected candidates or sincere friends. This will help in making improvements.

**Time division**

There is no hard and fast rule; it is totally your discretion.

1. Topic Selection : 5 minutes
2. Brain storming/creating outline/structure of essay : 20 minutes
3. Essay Writing : 1hr.
4. Revising Essay: 5 minutes