

# The Essay Writing and the Purpose Behind

**E**ssay is generally a logically well-structured view of an individual examining all the relevant issues including arguments for and against the topic, suitably supported by facts, figures, information and anecdotes for a reader to have a better understanding and appreciation about the same. The presentation of views and facts in an essay should be crisp, clear, coherent, reasoned and well-written. An essay is supposed to be a topical presentation which is self-explanatory, comprehensive yet concise, composite yet unambiguous, informative yet logical.

Essay writing constitutes an important component of the competitive examinations conducted by the Union Public Services Commission (UPSC) and many other agencies including state services commissions. Essay as a common subject for all the appearing candidates aims at testing the systematic thinking and analytical aptitude of the individual. It is not just a piece of writing packed with information and facts with run of the mill views.

The essay in the UPSC mains examination now comprises two parts: the first relating to an abstract topic, the other relating to a topic on current affairs or any topic which has either been in the news or has been facing the nation, society, the international community or the larger human society in recent times. So, as a candidate who wishes to make a mark, one should always keenly follow the events and incidents through the year and the related emerging debates, discussions and discourses which engage the attention of the country or international society as a result thereof.

## How to Prepare Yourself

The art of essay writing, like most good things or qualities, does not come overnight. One should start preparing for the same well in advance. As a serious student desirous of securing better marks in essay, it is advisable to start well in time as a mugged or memorised essay won't make your essay different from others. Reading well-written good essays, as also given in this book, though definitely give you a direction as to what and how to write.

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So, you should first try to cultivate the habit of 'reading actively' rather than passively, something that most of us don't do. While reading anything, particularly an opinion or view or thought, you should not accept the same as given or presented. You should keep thinking and ruminating over the topic when reading, while also questioning the particular views to have a better understanding of the same. Every reading should lead you into serious thinking and you should try to form your own definitive views about the same. This also rids you from the need to memorise an essay.

As a keen candidate, you should always cultivate the habit of reading good opinion articles, magazines or journals as you might find related to the syllabus or as you might deem relevant for the forthcoming examination. While reading newspaper, please make it a point to religiously read the editorials and lead articles as given in the editorial page of the newspaper. You can decide to read one or two newspapers everyday apart from good journals and magazines as might be relevant for the purpose including 'Seminar', 'Yojana' and 'Kurukshetra'.

You can also think of following and watching good chat shows on TV on various important issues. While reading anything, if you ever come across some interesting facts, information, quotation or views, try to make a note in a 'Cue-Sheet' or your Note-Book. You can also think of making a 'Scrap Book' of such snipped articles or write-ups duly underlined for the facts or views as you may find important. This helps you in quickly flipping through and brushing up on the same just before the examination.

So, make it a practice to read all the good essays, articles and writings on some general and expected topics as also given in this book and prepare for the same through notings of quotes, information, facts, government initiatives, etc. You can also think of having a repository of having good opening and closing lines and quotations as also given at the end of this book. Regular writing practice is another must that you should religiously start doing right away as writing skills do not come in a day.

Last but not the least, there are some essays in this book which are marked with double asterisks. You must read them as there are some basic issues, arguments, common scenarios and background material which you can use in most of the essays. So, do read these essays again and again.

### **Which Topic to Choose**

Once the question paper is in front of you and as you see the options before you, you should always select the one you understand the best and not because you think writing an essay on this topic shall fetch you more marks. As the essay is more about your views than the facts, your selection should be predicated on your better understanding of the topic at hand but most importantly your own well formed views. I have always believed that no essay is asked if the same is somehow not related with the incidents or events in recent times.

So, while writing an essay, always find a way to relate your assertions to some incident or event in recent times thereby making it relevant and interesting for the examiner to see through your perspicacity and observing capacity. If you are comfortable with all the given topics, go for one

which is seemingly difficult, unorthodox or non-mundane instead of a very popular topic as then there shall be fewer chances of comparisons with similar essays of other candidates including repetition of arguments. Think for at least 15 minutes and try to recollect all the information, facts and arguments you may put forward before actually starting to write your essay.

### **Make a Framework before You Start**

Once you have decided on a topic in consonance with your comfort for views and facts/information at your command, don't forget to make a basic outline, framework or what they call a 'Mind Map' before you start writing. After you have chosen the topic you shall be attempting, close your eyes and think of all the important facts, information, arguments, views, cause-effect or cost-benefit analysis, examples, maxims, proverbs or quotations as might be relevant for the purpose for the next 15 minutes.

Jot them all down quickly in a separate rough sheet and make a logical structure of the essay you are going to write. While abstract topics can have more and more quotations, proverbs or anecdotes as might be relevant for the purpose, topical, serious or current affairs topics should have more information and facts as might be relevant for the purpose. However, a good analysis with well-argued views is a must for both types of essays.

Your introduction should be informed and interesting, to be followed by the well-structured balanced arguments and views. As they say, you don't get a second chance to make the first impression, so you should ensure that your introduction or opening lines are interesting and powerful enough to retain the interest and attention of the examiner through your entire essay. After all, well begun is half done.

You can also think of following a 'Past-Present-Future' matrix for your essay, e.g., your introduction can refer to the past, then the major body can discuss the present situation and finally you can talk about the future direction. Your essay must touch different dimensions of the topic at hand by talking about its political, societal, ecological, cultural, ethical, technological, economical and other such aspects to better cover all the relevant points.

### **Writing the Essay**

Once you have made a suitable framework or outline for your essay, start writing with a well-knit introduction which should be interesting yet relevant. The opening paragraph should give a glimpse of the main arguments to come through in the next paragraphs of your essay. Your opening lines and sentences are very important as you would also see when glimpsing through the essays in this book.

Each paragraph should be logically connected to the previous or next paragraphs. Views should not appear to be unconnected to the basic thrust of your introductory paragraphs as also the basic demand of the topic you have chosen. You should always stay relevant while you write. The facts, information, views or arguments should accordingly be presented. Beating about the bush by deviating from the topic may cost you your marks.

As it is an essay, not a debate, you should be careful to present a balanced view without appearing to be overly personal and passionate. However, the same should be guided by the dominant national or international opinion and values. In case of a conflict between national or international opinion *a la* India's nuclear option, you should present a balanced view with a tilt in favour of the dominant national opinion. Similarly, for an essay on issues like corruption, your arguments should definitely be loaded against corruption with various arguments about its ill-effects as that is what is in consonance with the dominant societal values.

So, your essay should point out about the limitations, potential and possibilities, solutions and suggestions, future directions, positive and negative consequences, cost-benefit analysis, cause-effect scrutiny, recommendations, dominant expert or societal opinion, general societal discourse, new paradigms and developments. Your each argument should be duly and suitably illustrated and elaborated. Your arguments could also be grouped or clubbed with suitable sub-headings or sub-titles. If they are more in numbers like those for or against arguments, you can think of an alphabetical or numerical arrangement of the same.

Your each individual paragraph should focus on a single idea which supports your central thesis. Each paragraph should begin with relevant sentences; each assertion should be supported with evidence and should be expounded in the most lucid way. Opinions and arguments with strong self-explanatory sentences should reflect the candidates' solid and clear understanding of the topic at hand.

All said and done, the basic arguments and views in your essays should be so structured as to be supporting the dominant societal values and norms in a liberal democratic society unless you think you have better views or arguments contradicting the dominant societal views and values, something which would be and ought to be more suitable and relevant in the interest of the human life or our society, nation or comity of nations. The main body of the essay must develop, support and explain the main ideas or thesis stated in the introduction which tells the examiner or reader about the broader thrust to be followed through the essay. Always be careful not to deviate from the topic at hand.

### **Conclusion**

Like your introduction, your conclusion has to be equally forceful. It should be lucid enough for the examiner to understand your own views or opinion on the topic. Your conclusion should follow naturally as you build your arguments through the course of your writing. All the preceding lines and paragraphs should therefore be marshalled in such a way to logically take you to the basic thrust of your own views on the topic which should come out clearly in the concluding paragraphs. While writing an essay, always conclude the same on a positive note with suitable practicable solutions, suggestions and future directions being given.

Instead of facts or information, your conclusion should clearly reflect your own views and understanding of the topic in clearer terms, duly supported by or laced with a relevant quotation or a proverb if you can think of one. However, your conclusion must end on a

positive note while relevantly relating the same to the extant broad national or international views or discourse. And yes, don't forget to just re-read and revisit your essay again after you have written it all for finding out and correcting any mistake, grammatical error, linguistic slip-ups or inconsistency in thought to quickly correct the same before you finally submit your answer sheet.

### **Certain Things to Remember While Writing an Essay**

- Never come out with sweeping and vague generalisations, e.g., never say all politicians are crooked or all policemen are corrupt or all Muslims are fundamentalists or all Hindus are rabid.
- Use of colloquial and slangs should be carefully avoided.
- Always relate the essay to your context; socio, cultural, economic or present national and international scenario.
- Your essay is about finding out your own understanding and views on the topic. Do structure your essay in such a way to give a clear picture of your own personal views.
- If the essay topic is about some concept, thesis or theory, don't forget to elucidate the same before proceeding further.
- Avoid unnecessary use of difficult or bombastic words or jargons unless warranted by the context. If you are using any technical words, immediately explain the same through simpler words or definitions.
- All the acronyms or short forms should be duly expanded in parenthesis or bracket.
- Don't use irrelevant facts or opinions just because you like it. All such information, facts or views should be logically related to bring out the basic thrust and demand of the topic.
- Long sentences should be avoided. They should be duly broken into suitably readable sentence for retaining examiner's attention and interest. Phrases like 'moreover', 'however', 'notwithstanding', 'besides', 'again', 'nevertheless' and 'in addition to' could be used for bringing about an organic connection with the arguments in your essay.
- Don't deviate from the stipulated word limit given. Try to structure your essay in such a way to be able to adhere to the word limit as might be specified. This also enables you to stay within the given time limit. If you have more time, use the same in thinking and organising your thoughts before setting about writing.
- Be careful while selecting the topic for writing your essay from among the options given. Read all the topics again and again and then zero in on the topic about which you have the best understanding.
- Don't use a figure or fact if you are not sure of.
- Controversial views or opinions should be duly garbed to dissociate yourself from the same. You can write controversial views by referring them to 'critics think', 'observers believe', 'experts opine', 'many supporters point out', etc.
- Don't get very personal and passionate while expressing your views. And always

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appear neutral while referring to a controversial view, opinion or facts.

- Never use name of a political party, a politician, religion or anything negatively, e.g., don't say 'the BJP did this' or 'the Congress did that' or Suresh Kalmadi did this or Arvind Kejriwal did that. Find out neutral expressions like 'many political parties' or 'some political parties' or 'our political class'.
- It is not advisable to criticise the government. After all, if government has taken a decision or made a policy, they as popularly elected government must have done the same after due deliberations and discussions. So, just come out with balanced views for and against the topic to come out with a suitable conclusion. This is to avoid attracting the biased evaluation of the examiner who may have his/her own ideology, prejudices and preferences.
- Avoid the pitfall of cluttering your essays with too many quotes or facts. This only shows you have no arguments or views of your own.
- Stick to the point. Don't unnecessarily keep elaborating and expanding your arguments or points unnecessarily. Don't write more than warranted to remain within the prescribed word limit.
- Don't forget to underline the main arguments as and where warranted to attract examiner's attention. Though a school/college time writing style, it always works.
- Explain through suitable national/international examples or case studies whatever you are trying to explain. Don't forget to mention government initiatives, policies and plans wherever possible.