

GEARING UP FOR THE BIG DAY!!

As UPSC preliminary examination is approaching closer, all the aspirants must be witnessing increasing nervousness, especially the first-timers. It is natural. After all it is an important juncture in the pursuit of our aim. With all the issue about exam pattern getting somewhat cleared now, it is time to focus again on the preparation.

Everybody knows how to prepare for prelim. There are many ways and methods of which one can choose the one suited to herself/ himself. Hopefully everyone must have been on track with study. But I am more concerned about some other things which have a huge impact on our journey in Civil Services Examination: Management of the day of examination.

This is the often neglected part of the exam process. But it is very much clear that if we don't manage this day properly -in our case 24th August- we might reduce our own probability of clearing the examination. Even an aspirant who has studied sincerely can fail to qualify in case this day goes wrong. And it will be a huge injustice done on oneself if one does not qualify because of small small issues even after sincere and hard work.

So here are some practical tips which I would like to share with all young aspirants. These might be very small or trivial issues- at times funny. But managing such small things can help a lot.

1. Get print-out of **hall ticket** as early as possible. Don't keep it for the last 2-3 days. It can become painful to search for even a printer in emergency. Plus you never know when the server goes down.
2. Manage your **stay and travel** proactively. Try to get reasonably comfortable facilities. Avoid staying at relatives' or friends' places in case they are not very supportive. Avoid night journey just before the exam as much as possible.
3. Try to visit the **centre** or at least find the exact location before hand to avoid rush on the exam day morning. This might take some time but it is better than the frustrating search for centre that morning.
4. Set your **biological clock** as per exam time table. If you are a nocturnal person (like me), better try to change this habit gradually in last 8-10 days. Because UPSC can't turn nocturnal for you!
5. **Avoid 'heavy' reading** on the earlier evening or exam day morning. Just as the Model Code of Conduct for elections does not allow campaigning 48 hrs before closing of polls, let us avoid 'heavy' reading 24 hrs before the finishing time of exam.

6. Keep the habit of **scanning newspaper** till the exam day for 15-20 min. Though question paper is set well in advance, paper setters might put a question on some pre-planned event in days of exam like foreign visits of Hon'ble President, some sports event etc. Scanning newspapers is a good change during intense study. Plus it will maintain the link with Mains preparation.
7. **Don't be distracted** by mobile or social media sites in this period. I know everything else becomes interesting during exams. But a true champion has to overcome this.
8. Be cautious about **health** in this these 15 days. Only a fit person can give 100% in exam hall. Special care must be taken about food in rainy season.
9. On the exam day, try to be in a positive and **supportive company**. In case you come across some 'demoralizer', simply avoid such person.
10. **Don't discuss** Paper I in break. Stay relaxed in break. Have light food. It is better not to use phones for chatting or talking in the break too. A switched off mobile is a great relief!
11. During the exam, try to **attempt** as many questions as possible. Don't keep any cut-off in mind, it changes each year. 80-85% is very good attempt.
12. Don't make blind **guesses**. Don't attempt if you are completely blank about all four options. If you can eliminate one or two options, you can always attempt it.
13. **Fill in answers cautiously** on OMR sheet. Be careful that answer is noted in front of same question number in answer sheet. Answer of question 21 should not be noted in front of question 20 or 22 in answer sheet. Darken circles properly. Fill basic information carefully.
14. Well, this one doesn't have a conclusive proof, but I always felt that first 5-7 questions are tough and last 5-7 questions are relatively easier. Maybe a deliberate strategy or just a game of perceptions. But you **can start in between**. There is no ban on starting from question 11 or 25 or 37 if you feel same.

These are some tips I found worth sharing. I would suggest you to consider them and implement only if you are convinced about it. Lastly, remember that UPSC Prelim is just an exam. Only thing is that it requires more dedication and commitment than other exams. So don't get burdened by the hype around. Stay calm and rock the exam! Good Luck!!

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