

MASTERING



ESSAY & ANSWER WRITING

for UPSC Civil Services

IAS/ IPS & State PSC Main Exam

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- Quotations, Anecdotes, Stories and Poems to make your Essay Stand out

45+

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Essays
&
GS Questions

15

Mind
Maps

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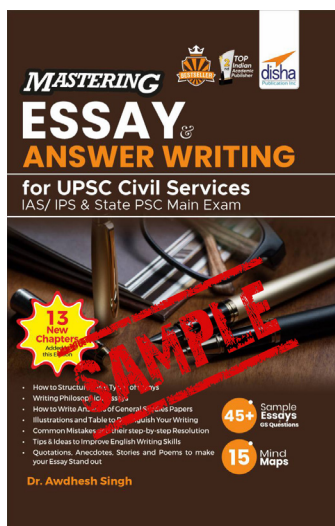
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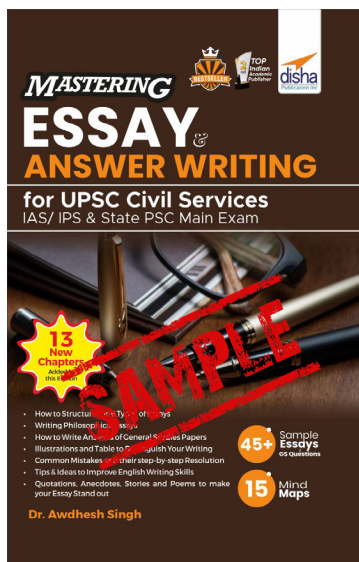
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“No tears in the writer, no tears in the reader. No surprise in the writer, no surprise in the reader.”

Robert Frost

We all know the importance of writing. We have been taking examinations right from our childhood. Even after employment in a job or profession, we have to write letters, emails and many reports for our organization. We may also have to write essays in many competitive examinations for recruitment purposes. Essay writing is an essential means to judge a candidate's suitability for a particular position. Many corporates, colleges, universities and government departments use essays to select the right candidate for their organization.

Why is it that the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) has descriptive answer writing in all its Mains paper and an essay paper in the Civil Services Examination (CSE)? Is it to test one's knowledge or something else?

UPSC already tests one's understanding of various subjects through the Prelims and General Studies papers of Civil Services (Mains). Something else must be under test in the essay paper, which can't be gauged in other papers. To write good essays and great answers in the UPSC Civil Services Examination, we must know the purpose of descriptive answer writing and the purpose of the essay paper. Let us first understand the selection process of the candidates for the UPSC CSE.

The UPSC currently conducts the Civil Services Examination in three stages—Preliminary Examination (Prelims) and the Main Examination (Mains), consisting of written examinations and an interview. The stages of the UPSC CSE are as follows:

1: PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION

This examination serves as a screening test for the Mains examination. The marks obtained in the Prelims by the candidates who are declared qualified for admission to the Mains are not counted for determining their final order of merit. The number of candidates to be admitted to the Civil Services (Main) Examination will be **about twelve to thirteen times the total number of vacancies** to be filled in the year through this examination.

The Prelims papers are objective type tests that test the factual knowledge of the candidates. It consists of two papers conducted on the same day. Both the papers comprise objective type questions with multiple choice answers for 200 marks each. GS-I paper has 100 questions, while the GS-II paper has 80 questions. There is negative marking for all wrong answers. The GS-II (Civil Services Aptitude Test-CSAT) is merely a qualifying test (minimum 33%), and the Prelims merit list is prepared based only on the GS-I paper.

2: MAINS EXAMINATION

A candidate in the civil services is selected based on his score in the Mains written examinations and the interview. The Main examination consists of two stages—a written test and an interview. The scheme of the Mains examination is as follows:

A: Written Test

The written examination consists of the following papers:—

Qualifying Papers:

1. Paper-A: Indian languages (300 Marks)
2. Paper-B: English (300 Marks)

Papers to be counted for merit :

1. Paper-I: Essay (250 Marks)
2. Paper-II: General Studies-I (Indian Heritage and Culture, History and Geography of the World and Society)(250 Marks)
3. Paper-III: General Studies-II (Governance, Constitution, Polity, Social Justice and International relations)(250 Marks)
4. Paper-IV: General Studies-III (Technology, Economic Development, Bio-diversity, Environment, Security and Disaster Management)(250 Marks)
5. Paper-V: General Studies -IV (Ethics, Integrity and Aptitude)(250 Marks)
6. Paper-VI: Optional Subject-Paper 1(250 Marks)
7. Paper-VII: Optional Subject-Paper 2 (250 Marks)

Sub Total (Written test)**(1750 Marks)****B: Interview**

Only those who qualify in the Main examination appear for the Interview or Personality Test. The Personality Test is for 275 Marks.

Thus, the total marks for selection of the candidate are 2025 for Main. The merit list is drawn based on the total aggregate marks in the written test, and the interview of the Main examination and the allotment of service is done based on this overall merit list.

Every year, millions of Indian youth write the Civil Services Examination (CSE) conducted by the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) and State Public Service Commission (SPSC) to realize their dream of

becoming civil servants to serve the country with honour. The selection of the most prestigious services in India like IAS, IPS, IFS, IRS is done by the UPSC CSE. These services offer the best government career in India as these officers occupy almost all the top positions of the Central and State Governments in India.

However, selection in the Civil Services Examinations is not easy since there are only a few hundred vacancies in these coveted services every year. As a result, hardly one student out of the appearing thousand succeeds in the competition. So what is it that differentiates the successful candidate from those who fail to realise their dreams?

KNOWLEDGE AND MEMORY

Most civil services aspirants work hard to gather sufficient material on all the subjects, and then try to memorize them to acquire as much knowledge and information as possible.

Due to their extensive knowledge they often score top marks in the Prelims. However, they often fail to find a place in the civil services' final merit list and wonder where they have gone wrong.

On the other side, the IAS toppers don't spend considerable time acquiring, memorizing and gathering information from every source. Instead, they know that the secret of success in UPSC is not merely knowledge but its application and presentation.

IMPORTANCE OF THE ESSAY PAPER IN CIVIL SERVICES

Knowledge of the subject is necessary but insufficient for getting a top score in the UPSC Mains. If the test of knowledge alone was the aim of UPSC, there was no need for conducting the written and personality tests for the Main Examination, and the merit list could have been made based on the Preliminary examination alone.

We shall soon see that the success of candidates in the Main examination depends a lot on their ability to develop writing and presentation skills and score top marks in their essay paper. If you develop these skills, you score well in your essay and all General Studies papers. You can even improve your score in the Optional papers due to your writing skill.

It is, therefore, no surprise that all the UPSC toppers always score excellent marks in their essay papers. For example, the marks obtained by the CSE toppers in the last six years are as follows:

Table 1: Score of the IAS toppers from 2015 to 2020

Year	Name of the IAS Topper	Essay	GS-1	GS-2	GS-3	GS-4	GS Total	O-1	O-2	Written Total	PT	Final Total
2015	Tina Dabi	145	119	84	111	110	424	128	171	868	195	1063
2016	Nandini K R	142	131	103	116	104	454	164	167	927	193	1120
2017	Anudeep D	155	123	123	136	95	477	171	147	950	176	1126
2018	Kanishak Kataria	133	98	117	117	116	448	170	191	942	179	1121
2019	Pradeep Singh	140	108	115	101	157	481	148	145	914	158	1072
2020	Shubham Kumar	134	115	111	92	106	424	170	150	878	176	1054

It can be seen from the above score table that all toppers have always done quite well in their essay paper. As a matter of fact, most toppers have scored their highest marks in their essays papers among all common papers of UPSC Mains.

Therefore, it is evident that there is a direct correlation between the essay papers and the overall GS paper performance. The toppers who got high marks in essay papers also got better marks in the GS papers. Hence,

developing the skill of essay writing not only helps you get good marks in the essay paper, but also in all Mains papers. Thus, boosting your overall score and making you a winner.

THE FATAL MISCALCULATION

Unfortunately, most UPSC aspirants focus their energy and time on acquiring a plethora of knowledge and information from numerous books and coaching centre materials. They fail to practise writing as they underestimate the importance of essay writing. As a result, they waste many years of their life and still fail to realise their dream of becoming an IAS officer. Once you develop good writing skills, you score high marks in all the four General Studies papers and even in the optional papers.

If you get just one extra mark in each General Studies question, you end up getting more than 100 extra marks in your Main examination. Hence, your success in UPSC Main hinges on your ability to master the skill of essay and answer writing.

EXPECTED SKILLS OF CIVIL SERVANTS

UPSC specifies the skills and abilities it intends to test in the Mains' syllabus. Let us analyze the UPSC syllabus, which explains these attributes.

UPSC Syllabus for Mains Examination

The Main Examination is intended to assess the **overall intellectual traits and depth of understanding** of candidates rather than merely the range of their information and memory.

The nature and standard of questions in the General Studies papers (Paper II to Paper V) will be such that a **well-educated person will be able to answer them without any specialized study.**

The questions will be such as to **test a candidate's general awareness of a variety of subjects, which will have relevance for a career in Civil Services.** The questions are likely to test the candidate's **basic understanding of all relevant issues, and ability to analyze, and take a view on conflicting socio-economic goals, objectives and demands.** The candidates must give **relevant, meaningful and succinct answers.**

Essay Paper

Candidates may be required to write essays on **multiple topics.** They will be expected to **arrange their ideas in an orderly fashion and write concisely.** Credit will be given for **effective and exact expression.**

Personality test

He will be asked **questions on matters of general interest.** The object of the interview is to **assess the personal suitability of the candidate for a career in public service** by a Board of competent and unbiased observers.

The test is intended to judge the mental calibre of a candidate. In broad terms this is really an assessment of not only his intellectual qualities but also social traits and his interest in current affairs.

Some of the qualities to be judged **are mental alertness, critical powers of assimilation, clear and logical exposition, balance of judgement, variety and depth of interest, ability for social cohesion and leadership, intellectual and moral integrity.**

Candidates are expected to have taken an intelligent interest **not only in their special subjects of academic study but also in the events which are happening around them both within and outside their own state or country as well as in modern currents of thought and in new discoveries which should rouse the curiosity of well-educated youth.**

Based on the UPSC syllabus, we can summarize the skills and abilities needed in a UPSC aspirant as follows:

- ★ Correct knowledge of the subject
- ★ Intellectual traits like rational thinking, logical analysis, humility
- ★ The aptitude of the candidate for civil services
- ★ Mental alertness (readiness to see, understand, and act in a particular situation)
- ★ Critical analysis of divergent ideas
- ★ Ability to describe something with clarity and logic
- ★ Write relevant, meaningful and concise answers
- ★ Basic understanding of all issues relevant to a civil servant
- ★ Analytical ability to understand complex issues
- ★ Ability to take a view on conflicting socio-economic goals, objectives and demands
- ★ Balance of judgement (weighing up of evidence to form a decision or opinion)
- ★ Interest in a variety of topics and a deeper understanding of issues
- ★ Leadership qualities like decision-making, initiative, courage
- ★ Intellectual and moral integrity
- ★ Interest in the current events and their impact on the society
- ★ Knowledge of the recent discoveries and innovations

Besides the qualities mentioned above, which apply to all Mains papers, candidates need some additional attributes for the essay papers. For example, in all other General Studies papers, the candidates have to attempt all questions. However, there are four topics in the two sections in the essay paper, and you have to write only one essay from each section. The availability of choices in essay papers reduces the 'luck factor' since you can choose the best-prepared topic for your essay. However, some candidates get confused and waste lots of time selecting the best topic for the essay.

The selection of an essay is also a test of your decision making. If you can choose the right topic for your essay, you can add 10-20% marks to your essay paper.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

It is essential to understand that writing great answers for the UPSC Mains examination is not merely a matter of linguistic skills. You have to learn how to think like an ideal civil servant and write answers accordingly. We are used to thinking like ordinary citizens. We are often excessively critical of government officials as we take the good work by the public officials for granted while focusing more on their shortcomings.

The key to scoring excellent marks is to think like a civil servant, who can solve the problems and not simply find faults in the country or the system. Only when we have internalized the qualities expected of us as civil servants and we can express them in our essays and answers with conviction like a civil servant.

In the subsequent chapters, we shall learn the qualities expected of civil servants in India to develop them within us. We shall then learn the skills of writing excellent and precise essays and answers according to the requirement of the UPSC.

If you possess the will to succeed in the civil services examination, this book shall show you the **way**. There is no prerequisite to using this book except having a basic knowledge of English, and a deep desire to learn. So please follow the instructions provided in the book and practise as much writing as possible to realise your dream to become a top civil servant in India.

STEPS OF ESSAY WRITING

“I’m not a very good writer, but I’m an excellent rewriter.”

– James Michener

Execution is always the most critical step in any mission. For example, Sportspeople prepare for several years before displaying their skill in a game of only a few minutes. In the same way, an examination displays the result of all your years of preparations.

You can’t develop the skill of writing simply by reading a book or watching a video lesson. Instead, you have to get into action to build writing skills. This chapter discusses the steps to help you write great essays that can fetch you high scores in the competitive examination.

I. SELECTION OF ESSAY

In the UPSC Mains examination, the essay paper consists of two sections having four essays each. You have to write one essay from each section. Selecting the right topic is thus the first crucial step for writing an essay, and choosing the right topic itself can add 10-20% of your marks.

Selecting one topic from the four given topics implies that you have to eliminate three topics from each section. The following rules can help you select the right essays:

Rules for the selection of an Essay

(i) Understanding the Topic

Don’t choose a topic which you don’t understand properly. For example, the topics like ‘Reality does not conform to the ideal, but confirms it’ (CSE 2018), or ‘Wisdom finds truth’ (CSE 2019) are too philosophical, and it is not easy to write essays on such topics.

Therefore, if you write an essay without understanding the topic, you may digress and get poor marks.

However, if by chance, you have already read or practised such an unconventional essay topic earlier, you must choose such a topic to make a mark since very few candidates would be choosing this topic.

(ii) Knowledge of the Topic

You can't write good essays on some topics unless you have accurate knowledge of the subject. For example, if you wish to write an essay on the topic 'Rise of Artificial Intelligence: the threat of jobless future or better job opportunities through reskilling and upskilling' (CSE 2019); you can't do justice to the essay unless you possess appropriate knowledge on Artificial Intelligence (AI). You must know how AI affects jobs worldwide and how to re-skill and up-skill to create jobs in this area.

Therefore, you must attempt an essay on this topic only if you are a domain expert or have studied the subject area well. When the essay topic pertains to your area of expertise, you must prefer such an essay since you stand an excellent chance of outscoring others by writing on a specialised topic.

(iii) Availability of Material

Most essay topics in CSE come from the syllabus of the General Studies (GS) papers. Hence, you usually have the requisite knowledge of the subject, which can be helpful to write answers in 150-250 words. However, you often don't have sufficient material like data, anecdotes, quotes, stories, and information to write a 1000-1200 words essay.

Hence, while choosing a topic for an essay, assess how much ready material you have on the given topic. You must select an essay where you already possess enough material.

2. DISSECTING THE TOPIC

Often, an essay or a question covers multiple areas. Therefore, dissecting the topic into different parts is essential to plan the essay.

For example, the essay ‘**A good life is one inspired by love and guided by knowledge**’ has three components:

- ★ What is a good life?
- ★ How love inspires people to have a good life?
- ★ How does knowledge guide people to have a good life?

You must include all three dimensions in your essay. The topic of the essay should be crystal clear in your mind before you write your first word on paper.

3.THESIS AND ANTITHESIS

We must develop the thesis statement for writing an essay. The thesis statement informs the reader of the author’s point of view or stand, and it should be specific and address one main idea. Furthermore, it must incorporate the question(s) you intend to answer in the essay.

We must also develop the antithesis on debatable issues, the opposite of the thesis, and provide the counter-view. Antithesis is vital to offer a 360-degree view of the issue. Here you act as devil’s advocate to argue the antithesis. However, your intention is not to support the antithesis. Instead, you wish to prove the weakness of antithesis to strengthen the thesis. A thesis is thus a prelude of conclusion and must be written keeping the conclusion in mind. We shall learn deeply about the thesis in a later chapter.

4. BRAINSTORMING

Brainstorming is a standard method in management and administration to generate new ideas and solutions. It is often done in groups wherein the participants are encouraged to think aloud and give their suggestions based on whatever thoughts come to their minds.

Brainstorming is an essential step of essay writing too. However, the difference here is that all the ideas come from the mind of a single individual, the writer, who jots them down on paper and then finally uses those for writing answers or essays. Considering the importance of

brainstorming for essay writing, we shall discuss this topic in detail in the next chapter.

5. RESEARCH AND RECALL

After brainstorming, recall the information and knowledge from your memory about the brainstorming ideas. If you find that you have enough material on the essay topic, research to find the relevant information, quotations and data about the thesis and antithesis. After that, incorporate the material appropriately into the structure of the essay.

6. PRIORITIZE AND REORDER

You have the limitation of time and words for writing your essays. If you have lots of material available for the essay, you must prioritise the ideas generated during brainstorming and drop the irrelevant or less important ideas. After that, you must reorder the ideas for the flow and logical consistency.

7. STRUCTURE OF THE ESSAY

An essay is divided into three broad parts, i.e. 'Introduction', 'Body' and 'Conclusion', further sub-divided into paragraphs. There is no hard and fast rule about the length of a paragraph. Each paragraph must have at least one cohesive idea. It should neither be too short nor too long. Don't present the entire thought in a single or 2-3 long paragraphs, nor go for 15-20 shorter ones.

It would help if you made your paragraphs of optimum length to make it easier for the examiner to navigate the entire text. For example, it is reasonable to use 10-15 paragraphs in an essay of 1000-1200 words.

We shall discuss all three parts of the structure of an essay in the forthcoming chapters.

8. DEVELOP FLOW IN THE ESSAY

The flow of an essay means the way an article holds together and moves from point to point. It is like shifting the gears of a car. The transition

should be smooth and not abrupt. Flow ensures cohesion and synergy of facts, data, and information, making the essay lucid and improving the reading experience.

We shall discuss flow in a separate chapter later in this book.

9. REVISE

Revision involves rearranging, adding, or removing paragraphs, sentences, or words. Revision can be done after a draft is complete or during the composting process. The purpose of revision are as follows,:

- ★ Identify the effectiveness of thesis and antithesis
- ★ Reconsider the structure and revise it if needed
- ★ Identify the weaknesses of your essay
- ★ Reconsider logic, reasoning and evidence
- ★ Incorporate appropriate evidence to make your arguments stronger
- ★ Clarify unclear positions
- ★ Assess the flow in the essay
- ★ Ensure that the essay serves its purpose

After considering the above factors, you must revise and rewrite the essay while practising at home. The regular revision will continuously improve the quality of your writing.

10. EDIT AND PROOFREAD

Editing means looking into each sentence carefully and ensuring that it's well designed and serves its purpose. Proofreading involves checking the spelling and grammatical mistakes and correcting it. We can learn about our common mistakes by editing and proofreading our drafts while practising essays or answer writing at home and avoid them in the examination hall.

In the examination, editing can help us correct the mistakes we tend to make when we are in the flow of writing.

WHY SHOULD WE WRITE

“I can shake off everything as I write; my sorrows disappear, my courage is reborn.”

Anne Frank

Writing is a means to express our thoughts, just like speaking. While talking, we are spontaneous as we say whatever ideas come to mind. In verbal communication, the words flow automatically to transmit our thoughts. In the same way, our thoughts get crystallized into written words on paper.

English is the most popular language for writing Civil Services Examination. Unfortunately, English is not our mother tongue, and most of us are not comfortable in spoken and written English. We first think in our native language, translate our thoughts into English, and then write them down on paper. As a result, the flow of ideas slows down, reducing our writing speed and leading to poor answers.

Writing is a skill that can be developed only by writing. Just like you can't learn swimming or driving without actually swimming and driving, you also can't build writing skills without extensive writing. Unfortunately, most UPSC candidates focus on collecting information and data instead of practising writing because learning new things gives them instant satisfaction in completing the syllabus. On the other hand, improvement in writing skills is gradual, and any perceptible change can be visible only in a long time. Most students thus fail to appreciate the importance of developing writing skills. As a result, even after qualifying the Prelims, they fail to secure good marks in the Mains, where all answers have to be descriptive.

In this chapter, we shall learn the importance of writing for our UPSC preparation.

IMPORTANCE OF WRITING

Civil servants perform their job through written orders, letters, judgements, adjudication, notification, or policy framing. Therefore, good writing skills are mandatory for all civil servants.

You can develop writing skills by joining an essay writing course, reading essays written by prominent authors, improving spelling and grammar, and regularly practising essays and answers. You can also develop writing skills indirectly by reading articles, editorials and books. Reading good books develops deep thinking and naturally improves your writing skills, grammar, and spelling. You also learn how to put forth your thoughts in an ordered manner.

However, mere reading won't help you improve your skill unless you also practise writing. Just like you can't develop your muscles and stamina merely by eating nutritious food unless you also work out, you also can't build your writing skill simply by reading unless you practise writing. When you start writing regularly, you gradually develop the skill to express your views, put forth your arguments, produce evidence and reason logically to prove your points and convince the reader of your viewpoints.

1. Improve focus

Writing is the best way to focus your attention on your studies. I always carry a pen, pencil or highlighter when studying something. I always highlight or note down the critical points in the book, so I don't have to reread the whole text to understand the chapter. Your mind tends to drift when you are merely reading something, and your attention gets diverted.

However, your focus is much better when you do something physical along with reading, like noting down something.

2. Identify Weaknesses

Writing provides the best reality check on our level of preparation. We often read an article or complete a chapter and assume that we have understood the topic. However, when we attempt to write an answer based on the same topic, we struggle to recollect what we have just learned.

Writing, thus, makes us aware that we have not understood the subject well enough. And there is a need to revise the topic.

Similarly, we often fail to recollect the right word for our essays and end up using a less relevant word, multiple words or a sentence to explain the most appropriate word. For example, we may write ‘very happy’ for ‘delighted’ or ‘thrilled’. Only when we practise regularly can we naturally remember the right words for our writing. Hence, the habit of writing helps us understand our weaknesses and forces us to work upon them to improve our knowledge and understanding.

3. Clear Thinking

The power of civil servants emanates from their pen. For a government official, the pen is mightier than the sword. However, we can enjoy this power only if we possess the knowledge and excellent writing skill.

Our mind is like monkeys, restless and jumping from one branch to another! According to a study by psychologists at Queen’s University in Kingston, Canada, published in *Nature Communications*, an average person has 6,200 thoughts per day. It is, therefore, tough to focus our mind on a single thought or a bunch of relevant ideas to write a long essay of 1000-1200 words. As a result, when we start writing, we present our content in a haphazard manner that may not make much sense to the reader.

Fortunately, unlike the spoken words that we can’t take back, we can always revise our essays and correct the errors to make them coherent and meaningful. Hence, when we practise writing, our thinking gradually becomes clearer since we learn to identify our mistakes and avoid them in future. Therefore, regular writing habits make our thoughts more disciplined, our ideas more refined. Gradually, our writing becomes interesting, lucid and crystal clear. Thus clear writing also leads to clean thinking.

4. Broader Vision

We generally share our thoughts with familiar people like our family members, teachers and friends. We know them personally, and therefore,

we tailor our words according to what they wish to hear, or what we think is appropriate for them. For example, we don't speak to our parents in the same manner as our friends. Even with different friends, we talk differently.

Thus, our verbal communication is based on context, person and place. We generally discuss the issue with like-minded people. Even if our friends or family members disagree with us sometimes, they often don't argue with us, or try to prove the errors or flaws in our argument or facts because they don't want to annoy us.

On the contrary, anyone can read our article when we write on any public platform like on a blog, Facebook, Quora or a Whastapp group. Hence, we may have to face criticism from unknown people who make us realise our flaws. We then try to accommodate divergent points of view, we develop a broader perspective of important issues as we can visualise the reaction of a much wider audience.

Our opinions gradually become more accommodating, and we become broad-minded since we write our essays, not for ourselves or any known individual, but the public.

When we learn to take a balanced view on a controversial or emotional topic, we present ourselves as a fair, rational and unbiased candidate who is most suitable for civil services.

5. Develop Empathy

Since we do not personally know the readers, we don't write our essays the same way as we speak. Instead, we imagine the audience and intuitively guess what they like or dislike. We learn to avoid taking a one-sided view and moderate our writing to present a balanced view. Thus, we gradually develop vivid imagination to put ourselves in other people's shoes and build empathy.

6. Reduce Stress

Abraham Lincoln, the former American President, used a strange technique to deal with his rage during the Civil War. Whenever he was

angry at a cabinet member, a colleague or one of his generals in the Union army, he would write a letter venting all of his pent-up rages. And then he would put it aside. After a couple of hours or days, he would open the letter to “attend to the matter with a clearer eye.” Most often, he would never despatch the letter. Several years after his death, historians discovered a trove of letters with the notation: ‘never sent and never signed’.

Writing also helped the teenaged Anne Frank live through year-long confinement during the Second World War. She once admitted, “I can shake off everything as I write; my sorrows disappear, my courage is reborn.”

We can also use writing to reduce our stress and bust anger, which is inevitable when we aim for a challenging task like preparing for the civil services examination. I have found writing to be relaxing and recharging. You can also practise writing when your energy levels are low, for example, after studying a complex subject. Use the magical power of writing to improve your skills and reduce stress.

7. Better Learning

When you are only reading and not writing, your purpose is limited, and the grasp of the subject is not good. However, when you intend to summarise the lesson and answer a question on the topic, you have higher motivation and focus on your studies. When reading is done purely for knowledge gathering, we read casually, merely concentrating on the facts and information. However, when we read something as a writer, we also look at the craft of writing like the structure, arguments, evidence, logic, spelling, grammar, and the formation of sentences and paragraphs. We thus grasp much more from the books and articles than just facts. Hence, we enjoy reading more and learn faster.

Therefore, writing makes you a better reader, thinker and learner. When you learn more, it further improves your writing skills. Hence, by choosing to practise writing regularly, you start a virtuous cycle that enhances your ability to read, write and think better.

8. Develop Creativity

Since childhood, we have learned to accept the writer's reason, logic, and facts without questioning. We never challenged their premises or tried to find flaws in their evidence or reasoning since we considered them intellectually superior. Hence, instead of developing our own, we developed the habit of repeating the same arguments we studied in the books.

However, in civil services examination, we have to develop the ability to analyse different points of view and build our concepts based on our understanding of the issue. Therefore, as a good writer, we must not readily accept a famous writer's view but learn to challenge them by presenting solid arguments and evidence. For this reason, writing can become incredibly thrilling as it allows you to create a new concept based on your understanding of an issue.

Writing is an active process because we have to think deeply about the concepts and information we recall in writing. Moreover, when we write, our minds automatically generate new ideas and arguments, reflecting relevant information and evidence shreds, often learned from multiple sources. When we combine these ideas, we end up creating something new.

Developing creativity is like building muscles by doing a physical workout. When you challenge your body by lifting weight or running, it builds muscles and enhances your stamina to face the challenge and achieve your goal. You can't build your creativity muscles simply by reading, just like you can't build your physical muscles by watching people exercising in the gym or watching their videos. You have to wear shoes and get on the treadmill to build stamina.

Do not just be a consumer of knowledge by being a reader. Get into writing and create new knowledge and arguments that can impress the examiner and differentiate you from the rest. Reading can only make you more knowledgeable, while writing makes you smarter and wiser.