



Strategy for Mains

'Strategy for Mains' has been prepared using inputs from various honest and trustworthy sources like ex-students with experience of appearing in Mains, students who have excelled in last year's Mains and from candidates who have over the years shared their valuable insight on Mains examination with us.

This strategy is also very flexible in that it allows you to concentrate on your daily studies while aggressively pushing yourself towards newer boundaries. Please do not hesitate to challenge or customize the various stratagems you'll find mentioned here because we want you to adapt and evolve according to your own strengths and weaknesses when preparing for the Mains examination. We wish you good luck on your efforts and sincerely hope your name appears on the final cut-off list!

Team Drishti

Do's and Dont's

What's done is done, don't look back

One of the first suggestions that we are going to make is not to fall succumb to stress and hopelessness if you could not made it through prelims this year. This is because even if somebody doesn't clear the Prelims this year, and if he or she is a serious contender, there is always the possibility of clearing the Prelims in the next year. Preparation done today i.e in 2018 will surely help in 2019!

Understanding Mains

'Horses for courses' approach

The fundamental difference between CSE Prelims and Mains is that while the Prelims focusses on recognition (of information) and requires an exhaustive study covering a wide variety of topics, Mains need the ability to recall, analyse and express (ideas and information, including one's own thoughts) properly which can only be done through an intensive study of the topic. Therefore it is very important to stay focussed and cover in-depth, the topics that you have picked for Mains and in doing so you have to match your skills with the subject at hand. Using the right approach and picking the right parts of the syllabus for intensive study will not only help manage time but also garner more marks in the end.

It is also equally important to understand the syllabus for the Mains pretty well. The syllabus is designed in such a manner that it cannot be directly studied in isolation from current happenings. Moreover the syllabus is open-ended and requires much analysis and an understanding of the underlying trends and ideas. In order to help you grasp the Mains syllabus we have divided it into 'core and peripheral' areas. Core areas are essential to help build the 'Mains vocabulary' and should not be ignored at any costs. If due to the paucity of time one is unable to thoroughly study all of the core areas of the syllabus, at least the basic level of study, by going through the relevant NCERTs, must be done. The peripheral areas can be safely kept aside for study in free time or can be covered when the core areas are done.

GS Paper I

Indian National Movement and Post Independence consolidation of India.

- The questions are interlinked pertaining to a number of affairs. For example- Linking Gandhian ideology to the national movement. So focus should on underlying themes rather than the events.
- Sources
 - Bipin Chandra's India's Struggle for Independence and India Since independence.
 - Also Focus on current based themes such as anniversaries of any important event during the Freedom Struggle.

Indian Society

- Prepare current affairs based questions. For Basics – Indian Society Class XI Ncert.

Geography

- Prepare important geographical phenomena with special focus on Human Geography.
- Class XI and XII NCERTs.
- Focus on Important Geophysical phenomenon - Earthquakes, Tsunami, Landslide etc in news.

World History

- Focus areas are the Enlightenment, American and French Revolutions and the World Wars.
- Sources
 - Class IX and X NCERTs
 - Mastering Modern World History - Norman Lowe

GS Paper-II

Federal relation between Union & States Separation of Powers between various institutions

- Usually current based Questions are asked.
- Sources
 - For basics, follow Lakshmikanth without getting into detail like for Prelims.
 - For Current DCAT or any other standard magazine.

Comparison of Indian Constitution with various constitutions of important countries

Government Policies

- Sources
 - India Year Book 2018.
 - Last one year Yojana and Kurukshetra. (For effort maximization refer to Academic Vitamins in DCAT for in depth analysis).
 - Focus on CAG report on government schemes in news.
 - Also focus on Flagship schemes of the government and their impact.

NGOs and SHGs

- Question related to issues in news are mostly asked.
- Sources
 - Internet for basic functions of NGOs and SHGs and their role in Indian democracy.
 - DCAT Magazine Articles, TTP, Academic Vitamins.

Issues relating to poverty and hunger

- Question related to issues in news are mostly asked.
- Sources
 - DCAT Magazine Articles, TTP, Academic Vitamins.

E-Governance

International Relations

International institutions

Electoral Reforms

- Prepare from current affairs. For eg. The simultaneous holding of elections.
- Sources
 - DCAT August Issue for in depth analysis.

GS Paper III

Agricultural Issues

- Prepare time tested areas like Farm subsidies, MSP, Irrigation etc.

Macroeconomic issues that are 'in the news' including issues on infrastructure like waterways, railways and ports

- Prepare topics like Monetary Policy, RBI's role in the economy, Employment viz. skill training, Economic Survey Vol. II, 25 years of LPG subsidy, Civil Aviation Policy etc.

Science & Tech.

- Prepare from current affairs topics New Technologies, India's Defence and Space program, Milestone development in Medical Science, Nanotechnology, and Biotechnology.
- Sources
 - The Hindu Science and Tech segment for the last one year. (Refer to archives in case you have missed any segment).
 - DCAT september issue supplement.

Environment

- Prepare exclusively from current affairs but also study the science behind the facts. For example, topics like CAMPA Bill or the man animal conflict viz. culling etc.
- Sources
 - The Economic Survey chapter on Climate Change.
 - DCAT supplement.
 - India Year Book environment chapter.

Disaster Management

- Prepare from current affairs keeping an eye out for policy frameworks. Topics like Urban flooding and water crisis, Drought and Farmer's suicides, Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the National Disaster Management Plan should be prepared.
- Sources
 - NCERT class XI: Physical environment.
 - DCAT October issue supplement.
 - ARC recommendations (only summary).

Internal Security

- Traditional topics connected with current affairs is the way to go. For example, Cross border terrorism and Mob lynchings , AFSPA, Money laundering viz. Fugitive Absconders Bill, NRC and Assam Accord etc.
- Sources
 - DCAT October issue Supplement.

- Internal Security of India-Tata Mcgraw Hills.

GS Paper-IV

Case Studies

Best prepared after consulting previous years Q&As. There are lots of case studies out there so knowing which ones to read and which ones to not read will save a lot of time. Please go through previous DCAT issues and the forthcoming Ethics supplement that we are working on.

Ethics

Prepare on topics that have current relevance, like Doping (ethics in sports). Also prepare on ethical issues in corporate governance, Civil Service, environment and the art of ethical living, international issues and relations.

- Sources
 - Lexicon for Ethics, Integrity and Aptitude.

Leadership

- Prepare ethical biographies and understand the reasons behind some of the historical decisions taken by the leaders (like Gandhi) who shaped Indian history and society.

The art of coverage of Mains syllabus is a secret that very few will share in all honesty. The untold secret of Mains prep is the fact that the syllabus cannot be covered 100%. The most brilliant of candidates will testify that even their own coverage of the syllabus was not completely 100%. The best way to, therefore, prepare for the Mains is to selectively choose or leave topics. But such decisions have to be taken after due considerations and not just randomly. Topics that have been in the news are generally considered as more important. So they must be prepared at all costs.

There are going to be areas of the syllabus that you will be familiar with and there will be topics that will be relatively easier for you to master. These areas should serve as your strength and in no way should you take them lightly. These areas should rather be intensively studied, so that whenever a question comes from 'your area of expertise' you can answer them with gusto and lucidity. For areas in the syllabus that you find challenging it is best to tackle them relentlessly until you succeed but it must also be kept in mind that time is of the essence here. Do not waste time chasing after topics, the study of which require unreasonable amounts of time. Remember to maximize your gains and cut your losses

The art of Answer Writing

Please go through the following points and remember them by heart because it will help you not only in CSE Mains but also everytime you open a question paper in any examination at your life.

- To write an answer first understand the question. Every question should be read and re-read at least two to three times before attempting an answer. In the meaning of the question lies the secret to a good answer. Only if the aspirant can understand what the question is demanding then he or she can treat it with finesse. Please consult the table given here to see what different types of questions mean.
- Before attempting an answer it is necessary to have at least a bare minimum framework for the answer. Things like how to begin, what point should come where and how to close the answer, should be decided before-hand. This helps streamline thoughts and saves valuable time. You can use the rough pages in the answer sheet for this purpose.
- Always and as a rule of thumb answer only what the question demands. Do not write unnecessary things or give useless data (false information is even worse) related to the topic but not demanded by the question. This will generate a negative impression on the examiner and may even affect the marking process. It will also save time. If there are multiple parts in a question, remember to answer the question completely and not just one part - do justice to all parts of the question. Also do not overshoot the word limit as it would be a double penalty as one would lose out on time and

may also be penalized by the paper checker.

- When writing an answer always end on a positive note. Even after an intense criticism, find a way to end on a positive note. This is because the Mains test is meant for budding Civil Servants and not University students. Civil Servants are supposed to be positive individuals with a positive outlook in life. So, remember to put yourself in the shoes of a Civil Servant while answering any question in the Mains examination. Remember the saying 'every dark cloud has its silver lining' and apply it to your answer writing.
- This is perhaps one of the most popular and yet one of the best advices for someone aiming to conquer the Mains exam - Practice Makes A Man Perfect. Practising answer-writing is a quintessential part of any Mains preparation. Write answers (including essays) daily and try to get them evaluated by either peers or professionals. Any form of evaluation is better than practising answer-writing all by oneself. You may join the Drishti IAS Mains test series for evaluating your answers. Remember that keeping stock of progress is very important and should be done at regular intervals.
- Last but not the least, it is imperative to address the language side of the UPSC answer-writing technique UPSC wants its candidates to write in precise, easy to understand language while avoiding 'flowery language'. This basically means that if an aspirant has a good command over the language he or she is writing in, it is best to write simple and fluid sentences while avoiding complex words and unnecessary stylistic elements. For those who have to struggle a bit with the written language it is best to write in points or bullets the main parts of the answer, while writing simple and easy introductions and conclusions in paragraphs. It is therefore important to remember that for CSE Mains, '*content is more important than expression*', but at the same time mistakes in things like grammar and spellings may sometimes cause a reduction in marks. So, it does no harm in practising answer-writing that is expressive and yet free from common spelling and grammatical mistakes.

Directive	Meaning	Answer Structure
Comment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To Comment choose your position on the subject/issue and stick to it. ▪ Provide arguments and examples/facts to support your choice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Start with an introduction. ▪ Follow with a body containing your opinions and the relevant examples. ▪ Finish with a short and precise conclusion.
Critically Comment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To Critically Comment mention both sides of the arguments including both the positive and negative points. ▪ Your opinions in the answer should be based on facts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Begin the answer by writing the positive arguments first, followed by the negative arguments. ▪ Based on your opinion conclude by supporting either the positive or the negative argument.
Examine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To Examine probe deeper into the given subject/issue. ▪ Support your answer by going into details like the causes, implications and what is being done about it. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Begin with a brief discussion of the various aspects of the issue at hand. ▪ Follow it up with the details and conclude in the same paragraph.
Critically Examine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A Critical Examination requires going into details of the issue while also mentioning the strengths and weaknesses. ▪ The answer must also carry whatever consequences/implications the issue may have. This includes consequences for any action taken over the issue. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To answer, first write the strengths/positive aspects, then write the weaknesses or the negative aspects. ▪ Third paragraph should carry the consequences. ▪ Conclude briefly without taking sides.
Discuss	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Discussion requires a broadly covered and all encompassing answer. ▪ Also have to mention both Positive/negative and strength/weakness. ▪ The causes and consequences are also to be mentioned. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Begin with an introduction. ▪ Then write the Positive/Negative aspects. ▪ Follow it up by framing the cause and consequences. ▪ In next paragraph provide the solutions/remedies/prescription or suggestions for the issue. ▪ Conclude by covering the issue holistically.

Evaluate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To Evaluate, assess both sides of the statement. ▪ Follow it up by mentioning the worth or usefulness of the subject. ▪ Also mention both the positive and negative arguments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Begin with an introduction to the then write in paragraphs the positive and negative arguments respectively.
Critically Evaluate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Almost the same as to Evaluate with the exception of requiring to establish the "value" of something. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Same as above.
Analyse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To Analyse, break the main idea into constituent ideas. ▪ Then simply Examine each part separately. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Write a short introduction. ▪ Then explain the broken down idea by one. ▪ Write a conclusion addressing the idea.

PDF Reference URL: <https://www.drishtiias.com/printpdf/strategy-for-mains>

