

# CIVIL SERVICES (PRELIMINARY) EXAMINATION PREPARING FOR CORE SUBJECTS

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With the Civil Services preliminary examination approaching fast, it is imperative to discuss the right strategy for success in the examination. As per the scheme of preliminary examination, there are two papers, viz. General Studies paper also known as GS-I and the CSAT (Civil Services Aptitude Test) also known as GS-II. CSAT is a qualifying examination in which a candidate is required to score a minimum percentage of marks (i.e. 33 percent). Thus, the score in CSAT is not added to the total score of the preliminary examination. However, it must be noted that if a candidate fails to qualify in the CSAT paper, his GS paper shall not be evaluated. This means that if one fails in the CSAT, he will not even know what marks he had secured in the GS paper.

CSAT, since its introduction in 2011, remained a simple paper for some years. But ever since it was made a qualifying examination after protests from certain sections of the aspirants,



this paper is becoming tougher every year so much so that even qualifying in this paper has become a nightmare for a large number of candidates. However, there is nothing in CSAT that makes it invincible. It is just a matter of practice for a few months to familiarize oneself with the pattern of the CSAT questions in order to know one's weak areas. Once the weak areas are known, one can work on a daily basis to master those sections.

The CSAT strategy is simple. If a candidate is good in the

comprehension part, but weak in the math and reasoning parts, he should maximize his score in the comprehension section. In addition, he should select some parts of math which appear easy for him to command and master it through intensive practice. Finally, in the reasoning part also, one should concentrate on those areas which are adaptable to

one's interest. For those who have good knowledge of math and reasoning, they should try to solve maximum number of questions from these two sections and also, to do reasonably well in the comprehension part. The task is indeed easier for those who are good in both the comprehension as well as in the math and reasoning sections. Without solving the last years' UPSC questions on CSAT, your preparations will not be aligned to the needs of the UPSC.

## IMPORTANCE OF HISTORY: SYLLABUS & APPROACH

There are four core subjects in the GS paper- history, polity, geography and economy. Together, these four core subjects account for 60-70 questions out of a total of

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**EN QUESTION OF THE WEEK**  
Readers' views elicited on important issues  
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**CIVIL SERVICES (PRELIMINARY) ...**

100 questions. Thus, it is not difficult to understand their importance in the examination given the weight they carry in terms of the number of questions asked. Core subjects are a key to success because of two reasons. First, they account for a large number of questions, and second, they can be prepared well through the available text books. Therefore, one can overcome the uncertainty of current affairs questions by cementing one's preparations in these core subjects.

There is no detailed syllabus for any core subject given by UPSC. Therefore, it is imperative to prepare a topic-wise syllabus of all the core subjects. Of all the core subjects, history is important because it also covers questions on art and culture. For adequately preparing for history, the following approach is best advised.

**Ancient and Medieval India**

While preparing for ancient and medieval India, one should study each topic under the following sub-headings:-

- **Chronology:** It means you should know which period a particular topic pertains to.
- **Geographical extent of the period:** For example, the Mauryan period, Gupta period etc, to be understood in terms of geographical areas they covered.
- **Sources:** For every period in ancient India, there is variety of sources like archaeology,

coins, edicts, literature etc. Read about the main sources for the period in consideration as some questions on sources are always asked.

- **Polity:** It includes the ideas of monarchy, central, provincial and local administration, names of important officials etc.
- **Economy:** In this, agriculture, trade, major taxes should be studied.
- **Art and culture:** Features of temples, sculptures, paintings, pottery belonging to the period should be noted.
- **Religion:** Religious practices, dominant religious sects, and modes of worship should be studied.
- **Decline:** Each empire and every civilization finally declines. One should probe the major causes of their decline.

If ancient and medieval India is pursued in this manner, a complete picture of each topic will emerge.

**Major Topics of Ancient India**

Indus Valley civilization, Vedic Age, Buddhism, Jainism, Ajivikas, Lokayata philosophy. Six schools of philosophy in ancient India, Mauryan empire, Satvahanas, Foreign invasions and their impact, Sangam Age, Gupta period, Harshawardhana, Indian cultural expansion in Central Asia, South East Asia. Temple building, paintings,

sculptures, literature, coinage, science and technology, important eras in ancient India.

**Major Topics of Medieval India**

Delhi Sultanate, Chola empire, Vijayanagara kingdom, Mughal period, Marathas. Art and cultural aspects of medieval India-Bhakti and Sufi movements, Indo-Islamic architecture, medieval literature, Mughal paintings.

**Major Topics of Modern India**

Exploits of the European companies, important wars between the EIC and the Indian regional powers like the Marathas, Sikhs, the Revolt of 1857 and other tribal, peasant revolts, British administration upto 1857, formation of the Congress, the Moderate and Extremist phases of the Congress, rise of revolutionary nationalist movement, Home Rule League movement, arrival of Gandhi and the national movement under his leadership-Champaran, Kheda, Ahmedabad Millssatyagraha, Rowlatt Act, Khilafat Movement, Non-Cooperation Movement, Vaikom Satyagraha, the Congress Swaraj Party, Civil Disobedience Movement, Quit India Movement.

The modern history also covers important constitutional developments including the Regulating Act 1773, Pitts India Act 1784, Charter Acts of 1813, 1833, and 1853, the Govt of India Act 1858, Indian Councils Acts of 1861 and 1892, Morley-Minto Reforms of 1909, the

Govt. of India Acts of 1919 and 1935, the Indian Independence Act, 1947. Role of Simon Commission 1928, three Round Table Conferences, 1930-32, August Offer 1940, Cripps Mission 1942, Wavell Plan 1945, the Cabinet Mission, 1946, the Mountbatten Plan 1947.

Equally important under modern history are the following topics:

- Socio-religious movements and their consequences
- **British administrative structure:** civil services, land revenue, central and provincial governments
- Education in British India with special reference to important educational commissions
- **Important leaders of national movements:** Gandhi, Ambedkar, Bose, Nauroji, Gokhale, Tilak, Annie Besant and others.
- Important Governor Generals and important events during their tenure.
- Role of women, role of foreigners, role of the capitalists in the national movement
- Important newspapers published by national leaders, important revolutionary organizations, important trials and various conspiracy cases in British India, important social reforms undertaken by the government, important social organizations run by the Indians.

**Preparation Methodology**

Gaining command over the above mentioned topics and areas is going to be no mean task. Therefore, one needs to set boundaries within which to keep one's studies confined or else, it may become unmanageable. For this, concentrate only on those aspects from where questions can be raised. In other words, whatever you read, ask yourself this: what question can come from this section? Then formulate the expected questions yourself and cover them through your studies. Also,

whenever you read a particular topic, always look into last several years' questions on that topic. This will apprise you of both the nature of questions being asked and their sources. Most importantly, make a glossary of crucial terms and terminologies. This can be done with the help of the index given at the end of the book. This glossary will help you revise the syllabus many times within a very short period. Also, as stated earlier, a close look at the maps is very important to know the geographical areas under study.

**Important Text Books on History**

**Ancient India**

1. R S Sharma: Ancient India
2. A L Basham: The Wonder That Was India
3. Upinder Singh: Ancient and Early Medieval India
4. Romila Thapar: Early India
5. Romila Thapar: Asoka and the decline of the Mauryas
6. Nilakanthasastr: A history of South India
7. Majumdar, Raychoudhury and Datta: An Advanced History of India

**Medieval India**

1. Satish Chandra: Medieval India
2. S A A Rizvi; The Wonder That Was India
3. A L Srivastava: Medieval India
4. Majumdar, Raychoudhuri and Datta: An Advanced History of India

**Modern India**

1. Bipan Chandra: Modern India(NCERT)
2. Bipan Chandra: India's Struggle for Independence
3. R C Pradhan: Raj to Swaraj
4. A R Desai: The Social Background of Indian Nationalism
5. M V Pylee: Constitutional History of India
6. Majumdar, Raychoudhuri and Datta: An Advanced History of India

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A-41011/1/2020-ESTT.-CPC  
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