

## **Answer Writing Class**

1st July, 2023 at 9:00 AM

### **NEED OF ANSWER WRITING (9:07 AM):**

- The mains examination has the most weightage in the overall examination.
- Science & engineering graduates most probably practiced answer writing back in their school days.
- Humanities & law graduates must have done answer writing in their college, but the answer writing demand of the university level is different from that of UPSC.

### **Features of good writing:**

- Clarity/Easy to understand.
- Coherence.
- Vocabulary- not having too many words, but having appropriate words.
- Creativity- it flows from the descriptiveness or engagement of the writing.
- Originality.
- Level of analysis.
- Credibility.
- Concise.
- Multi-dimensional.

### **Good writing from the exam perspective:**

- Unlike authors and columnists, UPSC aspirants have to deal with many constraints:
- I. The audience is an unknown examiner.
- II. Primary purpose is maximizing marks.
- III. Knowledge
- IV. Limited time.
- Due to these constraints, we must not try to attain writing parity with the columnists we read.

### **Aspirants must realize that:**

- Aspirants do not need impeccable vocabulary or supreme knowledge.
- Jargons can actually go against us, as the examiners will most probably be generalists.
- There are certainly going to be questions that are going to be difficult for everyone, regardless of educational background and preparation time.
- Our first priority must be to ace at least the questions that have been sourced from common sources- NCERTs, NIOS, common books, etc.
- There is never going to be a stage where the "Course will be completed".
- Every topic mentioned in the syllabus is a thesis topic.
- The exam expects us not to be fully prepared, but only to be better prepared than others.
- Our criticism must be realistic and positive.
- **For example-** We cannot criticize "Urbanization" as such because no country has prospered without urbanization.
- We can criticize the pace and manner of urbanization though.
- Quotes are important, but they can only improve the content, and not replace content.
- Quotes are anyways to be used more in essays, and not in general studies papers.

### **QUESTION-TIME BREAKUP (9:30 AM):**

- Each question paper will have 20 questions- 10 each of 10 & 15 marks.
- Ideally, we will have 72 minutes for all 10 markers and 108 minutes for all 15 markers.

### **Optimization:**

- We are never going to have a situation where we will be equally comfortable with all the 20 questions.
- We need to properly allocate our time between the questions we know fully and the ones we don't.
- We can never be sure that the questions we think we know, and devoted more time to than others, will certainly fetch us better marks.
- The more we attempt, the better marks we can expect to get.
- To remain in the race, attempting all 20 questions is inevitable.
- After going through copies of previous year's toppers, we are not likely to find high-level vocabulary or too much academic depth, but all 20 questions will most certainly be attempted.
- Planning answer writing is much more tempting and convenient than actually writing the answer.
- If we do not actually write the answers, our questions regarding answer writing are going to remain the same, regardless of the months/years that we will put into preparations.
- So writing answers must be prioritized rather than waiting to get the perfect idea of writing answers before actually writing answers.
- Because this wait of ours might never end.
- Our strategies must be based on commonalities, and not on outliers.

### **Common issues:**

- I. Point Format/Paragraph Format.
- II. How many examples/data must be added?
- III. Covering more aspects/ Covering fewer aspects in detail.
- IV. Presentation skills, etc.
- V. Addressing the questions which we have less/no idea about.
- The only way to get an idea of the above issues is actually writing the answers, rather than waiting/finding the right method to deal with
- Answer writing will get better with practice and initial answers will be sub-standard.
- This progression happens to everyone.
- Reading more books and revision will increase our knowledge base.
- But only discipline & consistency will improve our answer-writing.

### **Qualities of a good answer:**

- Legibility:
  - We must try to use all the answer writing space.
  - But our answers must be legible without cramming.
- Multidimensionality:
  - More than adding more and more dimensions,
- Presentation.

### **Introduction:**

- The primary purpose of an introduction is to set the context of our answer.
- A short introduction will be better than a bad introduction.
- We can use definitions and references from current affairs.

**Main Body:**

- This portion is the most important part of the answer.

**Conclusion:**

- This is required for bringing our answer to a logical end.
- Certain factual questions( like in Geography) can be ended without a conclusion.
- Instead of spending time to come up with an absurd conclusion, we can utilize the saved time for another question.

**EXAMPLES (10:00 AM):**

- **Question 1: Identifying the potential opportunities for e-health services in India, examine the challenges in this regard. (15 marks).**

**Introduction:**

- We can start by giving some context of the inaccessibility of health services, and how e-health can be helpful.
- We can use references from some related current affairs/government schemes.
- Here current affairs will not only cover the events of the past few months, but we can even use older references (Like the **National Health Policy 2017**, here).
- We can avoid giving too evident definitions like " providing health services through the electronic medium is called e-health".

**Main Body:**

- We must first identify the parts of the question.
- Each part must be addressed in proper sequencing and with due relevance.
- In most cases, the sequencing will be direct as per the language of the question.
- Like in this question, we need to first mention the opportunities, and then the challenges.

**Conclusion:**

- Even if not asked explicitly, we are expected to end all answers on a positive note.
- A conclusion will also balance our answer because we will add positive dimensions and solutions to the problems that we have raised in the main body.
- Balancing can also be done by adding the related problems.
- Here we can conclude with solution(s) and preferably some relevant government schemes (PMJAY).

**Question 2: Discuss the various social problems which originated out of the speedy process of urbanization in India(10 marks).****Introduction:**

- We can start with a definition of urbanization, and hint how it is happening speedily by some data.

**Main Body:**

- We must focus on the problems that have been caused due to rapid urbanization.
- We must try to include multiple dimensions for problems- social, economic, environmental, etc.

**Conclusion:**

- Here we can end by mentioning a way forward and related government schemes like the **AMRUT** scheme.

### **SOME TAKEAWAYS FROM TOPPER'S COPIES ANALYSIS (10:30 AM):**

- All the parts of the questions must be addressed, keeping in mind the time for the particular question, and the rest questions.
- We are not expected to mention all the possible aspects with great academic depths because attempting 20 questions is the first priority.
- Graphs, presentations cannot substitute words in all cases.
- Graphs, spoke-wheel diagrams, and pie charts must be made as per the demand of the question.
- The main body must be the most important part of the answer.
- The presentation, introduction, and conclusion cannot combinedly add more than 1 mark for any answer.
- Addressing the bare minimum requirements- basic introduction, facts, and conclusion can take us to 5 marks.
- The real challenge lies in pushing the marks from 5-6 and beyond.
- Examples are important, but they must not be explained as such.
- **For example**, if we are writing an answer about **communalism under British rule**, only mentioning **Divide & Rule policy** would be enough, without going into detail about how the policy was implemented.
- We must have appropriate expectations from ourselves.
- The answers written by toppers are writeable for any aspirant.
- The difference in marks between non-successful and successful aspirants is more likely to be a difference in consistency, rather than a difference in knowledge, vocabulary, handwriting, or presentation skills.

### **The problem of plenty:**

- In the initial stages, the questions in which we know the best, we tend to devote too much time.
- For prioritizing points, we need to prioritize as per:
  - I. Direct points.
  - II. Relevant points.
  - III. Example/Data.
- We can never be sure about the fact that even the examiner feels that we know too much
- Practically speaking, we need to limit our answer more on the basis of the answer space given, rather than the word limit.

### **TAILWORDS (11:00 AM):**

- The tail words can be divided into two categories:
  - **I. Critically: Analyse or Discuss:**
- These answers must be divided into two parts equally( 50:50):
  - (a) Reinforcing the statement with facts and examples.
  - (b) Refuting the statements with facts and examples.

### **II. Other tail words:** Discuss, Elaborate, Examine, Illustrate, Analyse.

- We need to follow the same distribution- Reinforcing & Refuting the given statement/ premise of the question.
- But the distribution into two parts must happen in an 80:20 manner.

**SOURCES FOR DATA & FACTS (11:40 AM):**

- Government sources must be the primary sources.
- Going through summaries of the reports would be enough and save much time.
- Some common sources will be PRS, Census 2011, SECC, NFHS-5, NITI, Oxfam, ORF, Invest India, IDSA, etc.
- There is no dearth of readily available resources, and except for some exceptional cases, we will be having too much to cover with.
- Our focus must be to get awareness regarding more dimensions, rather than trying to accumulate more and more data.