ANALOG IAS INSTITUTE

2nd Floor, 1-2-288/32, Indira Park 'X' Roads, Domalguda, Hyderabad – 500029
Ph. No: 040-64590440, 9912441137   **www.analogeducation.in**

CIVILS PRELIMS (CSAT Paper II) Analysis

The Civil Services Aptitude test has been introduced in 2011, which comprises of topics like Arithmetic, Reasoning, English Comprehension and Decision Making. This paper consists of 80 questions, which carries 200 marks. The paper has NO 'SECTIONS'. The questions from any of the seven test areas, as mentioned by UPSC in its syllabus, are not placed in any specific sequence. Each of the 80 questions carries equal marks of 2.5. There are 72 questions for which 0.833 marks(one-third) is deducted for any wrong answer marked. The remaining 8 questions (on Decision Making & Problem Solving) do not carry any negative marking.

Now let us analyze the past three years' CSAT papers.

CSAT-2011 Paper II Analysis

The paper was broadly in line with the sample questions released by UPSC. There was no surprise element. Paper II had 80 questions. The paper had no sections. The questions from any of the seven test areas, as mentioned by UPSC in its syllabus, were not placed in any specific sequence. Each of the 80 questions carried equal marks of 2.5. There were 72 questions for which 0.833 marks was deducted for any wrong answer marked. The remaining 8 questions (on Decision Making & Problem Solving) did not carry any negative marking. Out of these 80 questions, there were 36 questions, which were based on passage – Comprehension (27 Qs from 8 passages) and English Language Comprehension Skills (9 Qs from 3 passages). Students, with non-vernacular background, found that the difficulty level of the paper was manageable. Students who read and understand English will be able to answer most of the questions. The remaining 44 questions were from different topics like Data Interpretation(Pie Charts), Time & Distance, Numbers, Equations, Percentages, Mensuration, Counting Techniques, Cubes and faces, Triangles, Number Series, Blood relations, Venn Diagrams, Situation Analysis etc. In order to answer these questions, good conceptual, mathematical and reasoning skills are required. Overall, the difficulty level of the paper was average. Most of the well prepared students did not have any problem in solving the paper. UPSC has not specified minimum marks for Paper I and II. There is no cutoff declared. UPSC may consider the grand total of the two papers for the cutoff. It is estimated that 100 marks in this paper will be a good score(By attempting around 55 questions, with 85% accuracy, a net score of 100 marks is obtainable).

The categorization of the questions based on the difficulty level is as follows:

Difficulty level	Number of questions
Easy	30
Medium	36
Difficult	14
Total	**80**

The area wise split-up of questions is as follows:

Test area	Number of questions	Marks

English Comprehension	27	67.5
Decision making & problem solving	16	40
Analytical ability & logical reasoning		
General mental ability	28	70
Basic numeracy		
English language comprehension skills	9	22.5
Interpersonal skills including communication skills	-	-
Total	**80**	**200**

CSAT-2012 Paper II Analysis

Paper II was as expected, with no change, with respect to previous year, in terms of the number of questions or in terms of the marks. However, this time, questions in test area -Basic Numeracy were just 3 in number. The majority of the questions were from Comprehension and Reasoning. Clearly, this time the students were tested more on English usage skills and Logic skills. This paper had a total of 80 questions, with a total of 200 marks, to be attempted in 120 minutes. Each question carried equal marks. The paper had no sections. These 80 questions were from seven test areas viz. Comprehension, Decision Making & Problem Solving, Analytical Ability & Logical Reasoning, Interpersonal Skills including Communication Skills, General Mental Ability, Basic Numeracy & English Language Comprehension Skills. The questions from any of these test areas were not placed in any specific sequence. There were 73 questions for which 0.833 marks was deducted for any wrong answer marked. The remaining 7 questions (on Decision Making & Problem Solving) did not carry any negative marking. Out of these 80 questions, there were 40 questions, which were based on passages - Comprehension (32 Qs) and English Language Comprehension Skills (8 Qs). A candidate with good reading skills would not have faced much difficulty in answering most of these questions. However, there were some of the questions which were quite tricky and the options were very close to each other. In order to crack the remaining 40 questions, any candidate good in conceptual and reasoning skills would have found the paper to be manageable. Overall, the difficulty level of the paper was moderate. UPSC has not specified minimum marks for Paper I and II. There is no cutoff declared. UPSC, most likely, will consider the grand total of the two papers- Paper I & Paper II for the cutoff. Out of 80 questions, there were 48 easy, 13 medium while 19 difficult. Even if one does a total of 58 questions, with an overall accuracy of 85%, one can get to a net score of 110 marks, considered as a good score. The questions can be classified area-wise. The table below gives the broad overview of the questions which were there related to each of the test areas.

TEST AREA	NUMBER OF QUESTIONS	MAXIMUM MARKS	DIFFICULTY LEVEL
Comprehension	32	80	MODERATE-DIFFICULT
Basic Numeracy	3	7.5	EASY
Decision Making & Problem Solving	7	17.5	MODERATE
Analytical Ability & Logical Reasoning	14	35	MODERATE-DIFFICULT

General Mental Ability	16	40	
Interpersonal Skills including Communication Skills	-	-	-
English Language Comprehension Skills	8	20	MODERATE
TOTAL	**80**	**200**	**MODERATE**

The table below gives the number of questions (difficulty level wise) with respect to each test area.

Test Area	Number of Questions (Level of Difficulty wise)			
	Easy	**Medium**	**Difficult**	**Total**
Comprehension	18	6	8	32
Basic Numeracy	3	0	0	3
Decision Making & Problem Solving	5	1	1	7
Analytical Ability & Logical Reasoning General Mental Ability	18	5	7	30
Interpersonal Skills including Communication Skills	-	-	-	-
English Language Comprehension Skills	4	2	2	8
Total	**48**	**14**	**18**	**80**

Let us analyze the different types of questions from each of the test area, number of doable questions in each of the test area, and a good net score.

COMPREHENSION

No. of Questions: 32

The paper had 32 questions from a total of eight passages. This test area had some of the questions, for which the answers cannot simply be obtained by just scanning through the passage. One has to read through the passage, get the essence of it and then look for applying those points in arriving at the answer for the questions. These questions demanded good application of logic, and inference and hence clearly were more analytical. However, there were many other questions which were easy in nature. One of the key highlights, here, was that out of 32 questions, there were 18 questions, where each of these questions was followed by two to four statements. In such questions, you have to identify the correct/incorrect statement(s)/assumptions/inferences. This format is exactly in line with the question types as given by UPSC in CSAT2011 -Paper II. In 50 minutes, a good candidate can attempt at least 24 questions with at least 80% accuracy. Thus, a good score in this test area, alone, will be 38+ marks.

BASIC NUMERACY

No. of Questions: 3

One of the surprise elements in this paper was almost negligible number of questions in Basic Numeracy in comparison to the number of questions in English or in Reasoning. The number of questions pertaining to

Basic Numeracy was restricted to only 3. This would have come as a big relief for many of the candidates, especially those who are from Non-Maths background. There were no questions pertaining to Data Interpretation, or other mathematical topics. It is important to note that these 3 questions were easy. A good student should in a position to answer all of these three questions with ease in less than 7 minutes.

DECISION MAKING & PROBLEM SOLVING

No. of Questions: 7

This test area comprises questions from Situation Analysis. Answering these questions will not take much of time, as these types of questions do not demand much of your calculation skills, as what is required in case of Basic Numeracy/General Mental Ability. However, in order to answer these questions, an active critical reading is required. For each of these seven questions, there was NO negative marking. At least five of these questions were doable. A good time allocation strategy would have to attempt all of these questions within 10 minutes.

ANALYTICAL ABILITY & LOGICAL REASONING, GENERAL MENTAL ABILITY

*No. of Questions:*30

This test area comprises questions from topics like Sequencing, Distribution, Deductions (Syllogisms), Venn Diagrams, Cubes, Blood Relations etc. The questions pertaining to Syllogisms & Logical Connectives were moderate in difficulty level. However, there were many other questions which were very easy in nature and the students would not have faced any difficulty in marking the right answers for those questions. For e.g., the set of 5 questions on sequencing was very easy. Similarly, the individual questions on distribution, blood relations, comparison were also easy. There were 19 easy and doable questions (out of 30). By doing these questions with at least 80% accuracy, one can score 34+ marks. A good time allocation strategy will be 30 minutes for these questions.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE COMPREHENSION SKILLS

No. of Questions: 8

The passages are small, as compared to the passages pertaining to Comprehension. A total of three passages were there. A candidate, who has a basic command over English language, can score well in this area. A good time allocation strategy will be 16 minutes. In this time, one can score 10 marks, which would be a good net score.

CSAT-2013 Paper II Analysis

Civil Services (Prelims) 2013 - Paper II had 80 questions. Each of the 80 questions carried equal marks of 2.5. There were 74 questions for which 0.833 marks was deducted for any wrong answer marked. The remaining 6 questions (on Decision Making) did not carry any negative marking. Out of a total of 80 questions, there were 31 English questions (from 12 passages), 24 Reasoning, 19 Numerical aptitude and 6 on Decision Making. These questions, however, were placed in a random order. In English part, all the questions were pertaining to the passages. The number of questions ranged from 2 to 5 per passage. Out of 12 passages, there were 3 passages which were simpler to understand as compared to the remaining nine passages. One does not require any prior knowledge of any particular topic to be able to answer the

majority of questions. However, the questions were such that the answers cannot simply be obtained by just scanning through the passage. One has to read through the passage, get the essence of it and then look for applying those points in arriving at the answer for the questions. So, these questions demanded good application of logic, and inference and hence clearly were more analytical. However, the questions pertaining to Numeracy & Reasoning were such that in order to crack them, the candidate need to be good in reasoning & elementary mathematical skills. Overall, the difficulty level of the paper was MODERATE. For a well prepared candidate, it would not be difficult to score at least 120 marks(out of a maximum possible 200) from this Paper II alone.

Out of 80 questions, there were 51 easy, 13 medium while 16 difficult. Even if one does a total of 60 questions, with an overall accuracy of 85%, one can get to a net score of 120 marks, considered as a good score. The questions can be classified area-wise. The table below gives the broad overview of the questions which were there related to each of the test areas. The last but one column in the table gives an illustration of how at least 110 marks could have been obtained in this paper.

TEST AREA	NUMBER OF QUESTIONS	MAXIMUM POSSIBLE MARKS	DIFFICULTY LEVEL
Comprehension	23	57.5	MODERATE-DIFFICULT
Basic Numeracy	19	47.5	EASY-MODERATE
Decision Making & Problem Solving	6	15	MODERATE
Analytical Ability & Logical Reasoning	24	60	MODERATE
General Mental Ability			
Interpersonal Skills including Communication Skills	-	-	-
English Language Comprehension Skills	8	20	EASY
TOTAL	80	200	MODERATE

The table below gives the number of questions (difficulty level wise) with respect to each test area.

Test Area	Number of Questions (Level of Difficulty wise)			
	Easy	Medium	Difficult	Total
Comprehension	13	3	7	23
Basic Numeracy	12	4	3	19
Decision Making & Problem Solving	4	1	1	6
Analytical Ability & Logical Reasoning	15	4	5	24
General Mental Ability				
Interpersonal Skills including Communication Skills	-	-	-	-
English Language Comprehension Skills	7	1	0	8
Total	51	13	16	80

Let us analyze the different types of questions from each of the test area, number of doable questions in each of the test area, and a good net score.

COMPREHENSION

No. of Questions: 23

The paper had 23 questions from a total of nine passages. This test area had some of the questions, for which the answers cannot simply be obtained by just scanning through the passage. One has to read through the passage, get the essence of it and then look for applying those points in arriving at the answer for the questions. These questions demanded good application of logic, and inference and hence clearly were more analytical. However, there were many other questions which were easy in nature. One of the key highlights, here, was that out of 23 questions, there were 11 questions, where each of these questions was followed by two to four statements. In such questions, you have to identify the correct/incorrect statement(s)/assumption(s)/inference(s). This format is exactly in line with the question types as given by UPSC in the earlier years exam-CSAT2011, 2012 -Paper II. In 40 mins, a good candidate can attempt at least 16 questions with at least 80% accuracy. Thus, a good score in this test area, alone, will be 26+ marks.

BASIC NUMERACY

No. of Questions: 19
The number of questions pertaining to Basic Numeracy was 19. The questions were from different topics (Numbers, Equations, Ratio, Proportion, Time & Work, Time & Distance, Data Interpretation). A good student should in a position to answer at least 12 questions, with at least 80% accuracy in less than 25 minutes.

DECISION MAKING & PROBLEM SOLVING

No. of Questions: 6
This test area comprises questions from *Situation Analysis.* Answering these questions will not take much of time, as these types of questions do not demand much of your calculation skills, as what is required in case of Basic Numeracy. However, in order to answer these questions, an active critical reading is required. For each of these six questions, there was no negative marking. At least four of these questions were doable. A good time allocation strategy would have to attempt all of these questions within 12 minutes.

ANALYTICAL ABILITY & LOGICAL REASONING, GENERAL MENTAL ABILITY

No. of Questions:24
This test area comprises questions from topics like *Number Series, Sequencing*, *Distribution, Routes & Networks, Cubes etc.* Most of these questions were easy in nature and a good student would not have faced much difficulty in marking the right answers for a majority of these questions. There were 15 easy and doable questions (out of 24). By doing these questions with at least 80% accuracy, one can score 32+ marks. A good time allocation strategy will be 25 minutes for these questions.

Conclusion:

More or less every year the paper seems to be emphasizing on English Reading Comprehension & Reasoning. Though Arithmetic questions seem to be varying every year, an aspirant is supposed to learn this area to maximize his score in CSAT paper. Looking at the results of Prelims exam, those who score high in CSAT has an advantage in qualifying. At the same time Paper –I General Studies has got its own importance as it carries more weightage in Mains. In view of this aspirant has to concentrate on both the papers to succeed in this exam.

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