

BRIEFING ON THE ART OF ESSAY WRITING FOR CSS EXAM

Remember, the ESSAY paper holds key to success in CSS written exam. Most of the candidates fail in it_ even masters in English. Why? Because besides correct English it involves technique, skill and practice which a candidate cannot acquire without the help of a competent guide. We, at this Academy, have developed a strategy which enables you to learn merit oriented Art of Essay Writing. Getting just pass marks is not enough. The candidate must get highest possible marks to excel others in competition. Under this time tested strategy to write a high quality essay, simultaneous preparation for Current Affairs and Composition paper is vital.

The Strategy

Every CSS essay paper invariably contains one or two topics on Current Affairs. Select one of such topics for essay writing. Since you have to prepare Current Affairs paper in any case, such a common topic will be helpful for the essay as well. Preparation of Grammar paper will ensure writing of correct English for the essay.

After selecting the essay topic think hard to ascertain its true meanings. Incorrect meanings may lead you to write an irrelevant essay that may not get even pass marks. Lately determination of correct meanings has become all the more essential because the trend of the essay paper has changed. Instead of definite topics now statements are given which need to be interpreted. In view of this be definite about what actually is being asked for.

The Most Important Phase of the Strategy

Visualize to Actualize: It means_ fill up your mind with the structure of the essay from start to finish before you begin writing its text. The structure consists of three parts: Introduction, Main Body of the Essay and Conclusion. Enrich your mind with the relevant content material and ideas which you have acquired from the study material of the Current Affairs paper. Once ideas fill up your mind they will force you to put them on the paper. You will become anxious to write them out. Example is of a battery which would give current only when it is charged.

Outline of the Essay: Now you can yourself see that you have not written the essay as yet but you have visualized it from end to end with its contents mentioned in brief. This is time to make Outline of the Essay mentioning points in shorthand form.

Now you are ready to produce your essay. But hold on. Not yet. You are required to write an essay of 2500 to 3500 words for which you are short of vocabulary. With not enough vocabulary at your command you are likely to commit five blunders. One:- You will use the same word over and over again to fall victim of repetition. Two:- You will commit fault of incorrect use of words. Three: - You are like to become vague by moving in tailspin. Four:- Your narrative will become static_ the thought process will not move forward. Five:- You will violate the principle of economy of words, using far too many words for an idea that can be expressed in far too less words. Shakespeare says "Brevity is the soul of wit." For being witty and forceful expression you should be brief. So build up enough vocabulary before you start producing your text.

How you may build up your vocabulary? You may do so in two ways! One: - Read an

English daily newspaper for 15 to 20 minutes. Go through the headlines. Select difficult words and put them down in an exercise book with their dictionary meanings. Read one of the editorials closely. Take out unfamiliar words and put them in the vocabulary exercise book. The editorial will update you about one of the burning topics of the day. You will also learn how the editor criticizes and appreciates the problem and how he develops his point view on it. This is known as the art of critical appreciation which you must acquire and make part of your discussion habit. This is how you get good marks from the examiner. Also note down the idioms used by the editor and make use of them because good expression is always idiomatic. Example: If "War has started" is written as "The war has broken out" it will make world of difference in the quality of expression. Two:- Run through the package of Essays issued to you by this Academy. Underline the words unfamiliar to you. Add them to the vocabulary list of the exercise book with their dictionary meanings. Now you are in possession of enough vocabulary that will help you to write your essay without resorting to repetition of words.

Writing the Essay

Remember the essay has three parts: Introduction, Main Body and Conclusion. Each one has to be treated as per its exclusive requirements as under:

Introduction: It provides firm foundation on which the structure of the essay rests. It lays down thesis statement of the essay which in simple words means 'what the essay is all about.' It contains the central idea of the topic. Remain strictly to-the-point. If the topic is Population Problems of Pakistan, open the Introduction by saying "Pakistan is being over-populated....."

Main Body: Just as a book has one title and different chapters with their own sub-titles but relevant to the main title the essay topic too has its different sub-aspects which are visualized distinctly and discussed separately without mixing them up. The above topic, for instance, can be split into three aspects as under:

First: Growth of population ever since Independence.

Second: Problems created by over-population.

Third: How to solve these problems

Conclusion: It sums up all the important ideas contained in the essay but in a different language. Sentences are not to be repeated as they are. No new point is added.

How to get High Marks

Your essay can get highest possible marks from the examiner if your Exposition is comprehensive, Argumentation is forceful, Narration is progressive and Organization is logical as explained below:

- (i) **Exposition:** means every relevant aspect of the topic should be discussed. Nothing important should be left out.
- (ii) **Argumentation:** You should be reasonable where ever you have to prove a point or express an opinion.
- (iii) **Narration:** Every next sentence should take the discussion forward. Don't explain the same point repeatedly in different words just to fill up pages. Don't be vague. Be clear.
- (iv) **Organization:** Be proportionate and logical. Build up the essay from start to finish progressively. It should not be a haphazard written work. Its different parts should join to form a beautiful structure. Be relevant. Irrelevant stuff should be avoided.

BUILDING BLOCKS OF ENGLISH ESSAY AND COMPOSITION

Quite often even Masters in English fail in CSS's Essay and Composition papers. Essay-writing, Précis- making etc is a matter of technique and skill. Unless these are learnt from a competent guide and practiced hard by the student, he is unlikely to produce a merit- making essay/précis etc

The Essay

For an essay, the first wise step is to select a topic that relates to the subject of the Current Affairs. It is so because:

One: Topics on all other subjects are thousands in number. It becomes impossible to visualize the topic that is likely to be set in the paper. But it is not so in case of Current Affairs where every year only two to four topics emerge as important and it becomes easier to determine the most-likely topic from examination point of view.

Two: Subject matter for current affairs related topics is easy to get from newspapers, television, radio, libraries and mutual discussions etc.

Three: Candidate prepares for essay and current affairs simultaneously.

Four: Current Affairs reflects itself in almost all Compulsory and all Optional papers in one way or the other.

Five: Knowledge of current affairs acquired in depth as such helps the candidate in the final viva voce interviews.

Structure of the Essay

Next to be considered is the structure of the essay. An essay has three main parts:

- Introduction
- Main Body
- Conclusion

Visualize in Your Mind the Span of the Essay from Start to Finish before You Start Writing

This is the most critical phase of essay writing. Before starting to write spend some time to think hard what points you have to include in Introduction. Jot them down. Next take up the Main Body. Every topic is composed of some important aspects. Determine what main aspects the topic has. Put hem down. In Conclusion most important points of the essay discussed above are summed up but in different vocabulary. Repetition of words and sentences is to be avoided. Ideas remain the same. Their diction changes. No new ideas are to be added.

Introduction: Remember irrespective of the length of the essay the Introduction consists of

only one paragraph. However, it is pithy and jam-packed with the important points of the subject matter. It serves as the foundational layout on which the structure of his essay is raised. In brief it reflects what is called the 'thesis statement' of the essay.

Example

Suppose the essay topic is 'Population Problems of Pakistan.' Its Introduction could be somewhat as follows;

"Pakistan is at the verge of population explosion. Population is both an asset for a country as well a liability. It is an asset when its human and physical resources develop in proportion to the rate of growth of population. Development of human resources means the spread of education and skills to make the population 100% literate. Development of physical resources means the growth of industry, agriculture, water and power, mining etc. Unfortunately during the last many decades neither country's human nor its physical resources have shown development comparable to the growth of population. Half of our population is still illiterate. The nation suffers from serious shortages of water, gas and electricity which has stalled progress in almost every industrial sector. Had their growth matched the growth of population it would have absorbed the surplus population. Since country's resources have failed to develop while population has increased relentlessly therefore Pakistan has become overpopulated with serious economic, social and political repercussions.

Main Body

Think hard to determine the main aspects of the essay. These could be only three under this topic.

- (a) Growth of population ever since Independence which made Pakistan overpopulated. Points to be discussed: In 1947 population was 3.25 crores. Now it has crossed 18 crores__ causes__ why it could not be controlled__ discussion in detail.
- (b) Problems created by over-population: increase in poverty__ social vices__ murders, suicides__ a few rich families grabbed social, economic and political power leaving vast population asset-less.
- (c) How to overcome these problems. Make the whole nation 100% educated__ Create jobs to increase the income of the poor__ stop the brain drain etc

Education is a powerful population controlling factor. It can put an end to the economic and political power of the rich.

Outline

Now make an outline of all points that you have thought about the essay topic. Improve further.

This is how you mentally capture the entire essay from start to finish. Now it is so easy for you to write it out. But wait. If you start writing at this stage you might find yourself short of vocabulary. How to acquire the required vocabulary? There are two ways:

Firstly read a newspaper daily for about 15 minutes. Read only headlines that prepare you for MCQ question of the current affairs paper. However, read one of the editorials of the paper

with a marker in your hand. Underline the words that are new to you. Make a list of those words and put their dictionary meanings against them. Other multiple advantages of reading the editorial are: You are updated on the most important topic of the day. You learn how to criticize, how to appreciate and how to develop your own point of view on the topic under discussion.

Secondly run through the essays written by good writers. Underline the unfamiliar vocabulary, writing dictionary meanings on the sidelines.

This is How you Collect the Required Vocabulary

Having done this much spade work you are well set to write the essay on your own.

Now You have to be careful about the expression aspect of your writing. You should:

- (a) Avoid repetition of words, sentences, ideas and paragraphs. This gives flow and readability to your writing.
- (b) Economy of words. Use minimum words that are absolutely essential to express your ideas.
- (c) Your writing should be idiomatic that would give depth of meanings to your writing. For example when you have to say "the war has started" it should be expressed as "the war has broken out." Then it becomes more powerful, lively giving it depth of meanings.

To become master-essayist, you should be in possession of good essays written by writers of high caliber.

Last Word

In case of an essay, in particular, when you have written its first draft, try to improve it yourself. Fair it and improve it again. Do this exercise for at least five times and then show the final draft to your guide for assessment. You will yourself be surprised to see having written such a nice essay.

ESSENTIALS OF GOOD ESSAY WRITING

Always make outline of the essay, whether asked or not.

The Examiner awards marks for good Exposition, Logical Argumentation, Vivid Description, Flowing Narration, Planned Organization of the contents, Relevance to the topic and Clarity of Thought, simple and Idiomatic expression etc. These requirements are explained as below:

Good Exposition: The narrative of the essay should cover all important aspects of the topic.

Logical Argumentation: Your arguments in support of a point of view should be reasonable.

Vivid Description: It should be clear, definite and expressive. It should leave no doubt in the mind of the reader about what you want to convey. It should give him a sense of satisfaction. (This cannot happen unless you are yourself absolutely clear in your mind about what you intend to say).

Flowing Narration: Your narrative should be smooth and un-interrupted. The reader should not come across any road blocks.

Planned Organization: Arrange your thought content in a planned manner. It should not be haphazard.

Relevance to the Topic: Your thought content should be relevant to the topic. Don't ever go off the mark.

Clarity of Thought: Don't be vague and farfetched.

Have Enough Vocabulary: For an essay of 3 to 4 thousand words you should acquire enough vocabulary.

No Repetition of Vocabulary.

Use of Right Word for the Right Idea.

Economy of words: Remember "Brevity is the soul of wit." Use as few words as possible to express an idea.

Expression: It should be simple but idiomatic.

UNDERSTANDING THE TOPICS TAKEN FROM CSS ESSAY PAPERS

THE TOPIC IS

1. Literature as a Great Cultural Artifact

It means literature is the index and criticism of the culture of a people. Both continuously interact with each other. This is the basic theme, the central idea, the thesis statement on which you have to write your essay.

2. Language is Fit Data for Research in Humanities and Social Sciences

Under this topic you have to highlight the importance and significance of a particular language with a view to carry out research work with its help in subjects of humanities and social sciences i.e. How competence in that language helps in doing your research work in these subjects.

3. Privatizing Higher Education-Generating Knowledge or making more Money for the Opulent

It means if higher educational institutions are given over to private sector they will become commercialized i.e. they will not generate knowledge but mint money for the rich who will own them.

4. Women Sportspersons as New Ambassadors of Soft Image of Pakistan

You are required to discuss whether sports should be promoted for Pakistani women in order to give to the world soft image of Pakistan. Presently Pakistan is known for terrorism, illiteracy, backward social set up etc. Its sports are dominated by males. If women enter into the sports field, will it make any difference in making Pakistan's image softer?

5. Post Modern Ethos - A Challenge to the West

The distinctive character of the era that is coming after the modern age will pose a challenge to the western civilization of today. Explain the cultural values of the West of today. What kind of changes their cultural values are likely to undergo.

6. Look to the East for a Holistic Progress

The significance of a part cannot be understood without understanding the significance of its whole. Human being as a whole is composed of spirit and matter. Study of his material side only will give a partial view of his position in life. The picture of his comprehensive accomplishment in life emerges if the study of his spiritual life is also given due consideration. Discuss why one has to look to the East for this purpose, What the West lacks that will be provided by the East.

7. Great Nations Win without Fighting

Examples from world history. British people built up an empire around the world. They won India not without fighting wars. Mughals fought wars to establish their own empire. Similar is the case with Ottomen Empire and Roman empires etc. Discuss the diplomatic, administrative and cultural, religious factors responsible for those successes or vice versa.

8. Can Meaning be Fixed?

Difference of opinion is part of the human nature. Problems of human life are multiple in character. A matter under reference would look different from different angles. But, meanings of universal truths, scientific laws are what they are. There are no two opinions about them. Numerous examples can be quoted for each category of the above statements.

9. The Character of a Nation can be Judged by its Symbolic Narratives

Under this topic narratives of Hindu Mythology, Greek Mythology, Egyptian Mythology and narrations related to the totems and taboos of lesser civilizations, the tribes and sub-tribes of pre-historic age which are still alive, are to be discussed. Santa Clause is symbol of happiness that brings gifts for the Christian children. For Muslims Kaaba is home of God.

10. Violence is the Last Refuge of the Incompetent

When two persons are locked up in a serious discussion the competent one has the ability to convince the other party to his point of view. The exchange of views will turn into a quarrel if one of the two being comparatively incompetent fails to carry the day. In that case he gets annoyed may resort to violence.

HOW TO TREAT ONE OF THE ABOVE TOPICS FOR PRODUCING RELATED ESSAY

LITERATURE AS A GREAT CULTURAL ARTIFACT

It means literature is a tool, an index and a critic of the culture of the people, both interacting continuously with each other. This is the basic theme, the central idea, the thesis statement of your essay.

Introduction

The world is divided into regions. People living in one region are different in many ways from the people of other regions. Their cultures i.e. their ways of living differ from each other. Therefore literature produced by each of them is also different. It grows out of the soil of the respective culture and in turn influences the concerned cultures. Backward cultures get enlightened, progressive and sophisticated because literature is produced by a very small class of its gifted people who highlight the important aspects of their cultures and criticize weaknesses for improvement.

Main Body of the Essay

The topic is broken into its important aspects just as a book has different chapters each dealing with exclusive but inter-connected aspects.

(a) The Process of the Growth of Literature Out of the Related Culture

Literature consists of poetry, songs, short stories, novels, essays, critiques, reportage etc. Language is the medium through which literature is expressed. The first essential, therefore, of this process is command over the language which very few people are blessed with. The second is high and acute creativity of the writers. This rare gift in combination with command over the language helps them to produce works of arts. The third component of these arts is the subject matter which is provided by the culture of the society. Since these three components are interconnected therefore they influence each other in a variety of ways__ Expand

(b) Literature Produced by the Genius of the People

Folk songs, folk tales, folk short stories etc are passed on from generation to generation. No one knows names of their authors because no particular person ever produced them. They cropped up like wild growth. Command over the language was not essential for them to come into being. Those were expressed in the mother tongue of the people. They were produced in written form much later. They represent the real culture of the region. The scholarly literature produced by the intelligentsia was not for the sake of the common man. But the folk literature was closer to his heart because it portrayed his intimate environments.

(c) Transformation of Cultures through Exchange of Literature

Prominent example is of English language that has not only changed regional cultures but has created a culture that is world-wide. People dress up like English people. Their eating habits have changed. In fact their overall behaviour has become English. World history is replete with examples pertaining to influence cast by literature of one nation over the culture of others. Persian influence came to India with the advent of the Mughals. Before their arrival Sufism was not widespread. Pop music of the West became popular in the East. Karate of the East and Yoga of India traveled to other parts of the world through English translations of local languages. Democracy of the Greeks spread all over the world through English translations of various languages. Expand.

Conclusion

Culture of a people and their literature are two interconnected entities. The literature is of two types. First is the one that is produced by the scholar of a language who is also gifted with creative qualities. The second type of literature is that grows out of the genius of the common man called folk literature. Various cultures interact with each other. They give and accept each others values.