

# CSAT: Beginning of a new chapter

## Only change is permanent

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**A**FTER years of dithering, the Government of India has finally agreed to change the format of the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) Civil Services Examination. The examination system of the **Union Public Service Commission (UPSC)** is updated from time to time to keep it in harmony with the changing environment. The present format had come under severe criticism from both members of the public as well as from parliamentary committees, and there had been tremendous pressure on the government to review it. **To begin with, the Preliminary examination, which consists of general studies and optional papers, may be replaced with an aptitude test, to be called the Civil Services Aptitude Test. The test will comprise two objective-type papers, which will be common for all candidates appearing for the examination.**

As per the press release of the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievance & Pension dated 18.10.2010; from the year 2011, Preliminary Examination (now CSAT) would consist of two papers- Paper I and Paper II. The syllabus and pattern of the Preliminary Examination would be as under: **of Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions**

**(Paper 1) (200 marks) - Duration: Two hrs.**

1. Current events of national and international importance
2. History of India and Indian national movement
3. Indian and World Geography- physical, social, economic geography of India and the world
4. Indian Polity and governance – constitution, political system, Panchayati raj, public policy, Rights issues, etc.
5. Economic and social development – sustainable development, poverty, inclusion, demographics, social sector initiatives etc.
6. General issues on environmental ecology, bio-diversity and climate change-that do not require subject specialization
7. General science.

**(Paper II) (200 marks) – Duration: Two hrs.**

1. Comprehension
2. Interpersonal skills including communication skills
3. Logical reasoning and analytical ability
4. Decision making and problem solving
5. General mental ability
6. Basic numeracy (numbers and their relations, orders of magnitude etc. (Class X level), Data interpretation (charts, graphs, tables, data sufficiency etc. –Class X level)
7. English language comprehension skills (Class X level).

The news of any change is an unnerving moment for any long term serious aspirant. Any amount of change has a psychological impact on the human mind. To some it is threatening because it means that things may get worse. To some it is encouraging because things may get better. To some it is inspiring because the challenge exists to make things better. However, if one is mentally prepared, the transition becomes easier. Currently the candidates appearing at the ICSP have to attempt two papers with a General Studies Paper (it has the weightage of 150 marks) and the other one is the Optional paper in which the candidate will have to select one subject among the 23 subjects listed by UPSC (this paper carries the weightage of 300 marks). After giving effect to the proposed change in the Preliminary examination in 2011, candidates will have to appear in two objective-type papers, which will be a General Studies Paper and the other one will be the General Aptitude Paper. The Aptitude paper will replace the previously existing Optional subject paper. On affecting this model, Civil Services Preliminary Examination will be called as Civil Services Aptitude Test (CSAT). If we go the UPSC civil services preliminary

question papers of the past few years we can easily notice that UPSC is giving less importance to conventional stuff and laying more stress on general awareness, applied science, maps, mental ability, and of course, current affairs.

Now first let us look at the degree of difference between the old scheme of the examination and the new scheme.

**A**fter having given the broad outline of the proposed changes in the pattern of the prestigious ICS examination we should better analyse the need or the reason which propelled the UPSC for bringing this drastic change.

**The reasons behind the changes:** -The proposed changes in the scheme of the ICS examination are not the result of over the night deliberations. Various committees including the second Administrative Reforms Commission, in their reports submitted over the years suggested the changes and laid greater emphasis on the 'aptitude' of candidates than their knowledge of a subject. The committees have argued that specialists or experts in any particular subject might not necessarily be good civil servants and it was thus found to be necessary that a level playing field must be created for the candidates of varied backgrounds to compete for the ICS. The preliminary exam has always been criticized for not disclosing the marks, (Cut off) to select the candidates for main exams or the method which is adopted by the UPSC to compare various optional subjects is repugnant to the Right to Information Act 2005. The current scheme of the examination is criticized by various quarters that it doesn't promote transparency. To overhaul the current process and create more transparency in the selection process, the General Aptitude paper is introduced in the place of the Optional Paper.

**What does Aptitude Test stands for:** -An aptitude is an innate, acquired or learned or developed component of a competency to do a certain kind of work at a certain level. Aptitude tests are designed to assess the logical reasoning or thinking performance of the candidates. The major Aptitude Test patterns are **1.** Verbal Aptitude

2. Quantitative Aptitude 3. Abstract Reasoning 4. Spatial Reasoning 5. Mechanical Reasoning 6. Data Checking 7. Fault Diagnosis. These are the general type of aptitude test patterns being followed in the major examinations but what the UPSC has decided for its Civil Service examination will be made known once the notification for the examination is out. The only hint received from the Government about the content of General Aptitude test is "Greater emphasis will be given to test the aptitude for civil services on the ethical and moral dimension of decision-making". The Aptitude test ensures to create a uniform ethical standard for the future generation of Civil Servants. General Aptitude test will check the candidates on the grounds of integrity and social responsibility.

**Getting ready to face the challenge No 1:- The CSAT**

The Indian Civil Services Examination is still a three stage dream for anyone. Though, the Government proposes to bring changes in the first stage of the examination by bringing a Civil Services Aptitude Test in place of the erstwhile Civil Services Preliminary Examination, the other two stages namely the Mains and the Interview remain unchanged for the time being. It's the right time that all the candidates start the process of appearing in the ICS exam 2011. The CSAT will take place for the first time and a new and novel strategy has to be adopted by the candidates to get through to the next level of the prestigious ICS. The following pages give a bird's eye view of the strategy to be adopted that can prove to be a master guide for the success.

**PAPER I**

If we give a glimpse at the Paper I of the proposed CSAT then a careful study will reveal that there is no major change in the table of contents if compared with the GS Paper of the erstwhile Preliminary examination. The list of topics to be covered under the Paper I includes; -

**1. Current Affairs of National and international importance:-** Under this section the focus of the issues will be more or less same as previous years.

However it should be expected that there will be less emphasis on data based questions such as personalities, books, years, institution etc. Candidate should look a little deeper like root cause, impacts and associated details of important current issues.

**Suggested Links:**

**One national newspaper, Manorama Year Book, India Year Book of Publication Division, CST Year Book (forthcoming)**

**2. History of India and Indian national movement:** -The nature of questions from **Indian History is expected** to remain more or less the same. Questions from History section may include Ancient, Medieval and Modern History of India. Analysing from the current trend Modern India (1957 uprising to 1947 Independence) should be given priority and especially the **Indian national movement. However one must be ready to face questions from contemporary history (till 1960 or 1990) as well.**

**Suggested Links**

**NCERT (class IX to XII), Bipan Chandra and others— India's Struggle for Independence; Grover and Mehta - Modern India; for movements and mass movements consult Sumit Sarkar's Modern India.**

**3. Indian and World Geography:** - Under the chapter of Geography same question pattern may remain however more emphasis may be on Indian geography (Human) and geographical issues related to current affairs.

**Suggested Links**

**NCERT: Physical Geography of India for X - XII Std A Good School Atlas, Khullar: India - A Comprehensive Geography, R. C . Tewari's Indian Geography; G. C Leong Physical Geography**

**4. Indian Polity and governance;** - Under Indian Polity, **constitutional, legal, administrative and other issues emerging from the politico-administrative system prevalent in the country can be asked.**

**Suggested Links**

**D.D. Basu—Indian Constitution, Kashyap—Constitution of India, P.M. Bakshi—Indian Constitution;**

**Subhas C Kashyap's Our Constitution and Our Parliament**

**5. Economic and social development:**

- The economy portion can emerge as the most prominent section under the CSAT. Earlier candidates were tend to neglect economy altogether as there were few questions have been asked in exam. On seeing the new syllabus it can be said that besides economic development, questions related to National policies and social issues can also be asked. Also its scope is not restricted within Indian economy; one may expect questions from India's economic relation with world (Bilateral trade and International Institutions such as WTO IMF etc.). However emphasis would be Indian Economy.

**Suggested Links**

**NCERT: Evolution of Indian Economy (I C Dhingra) Mishra and Puri or Dutt and Sundaram—Indian Economy or even Uma Kapila's Indian Economy Economic Survey The Economic Times Yojna and Kurukshetra**

**6. General issues on environmental ecology** Regarding the General issues on environmental ecology, biodiversity and climate change, questions have been asked in previous year exams under topics of geography and Current affairs. **However special mention made in the new syllabus illustrates its importance in current global politics and policies. So candidates must go into the current issues related to environment, Ecology, Bio-diversity and climate change.**

**7. General science** Questions under General Science are expected to remain in the same format as in the previous year trend. General Science includes Physics, Chemistry and Biology. Non science background candidates should put greater emphasis on Biology especially like Human physiology, Nutrition and Diseases.

**Suggested Links** NCERT: (10 level): Science, (+2 level)

**PAPER II**

If we carefully analyse the format of the proposed CSAT, as released in the press, it becomes clear that the mental ability portion of the old format is

separated into a full Aptitude Test paper and this replaces the optional subject. In this paper besides Logical reasoning & analytical ability, the scope has been widened to include Interpersonal skills, English comprehension, Logical reasoning and analytical ability to check the decision making and problem solving abilities of the candidates. Thus now the UPSC will give greater emphasis on testing the aptitude for civil services as well as on ethical and moral dimension of decision-making.

**A. Comprehension:** Comprehension skills are the ability to use context and prior knowledge to aid reading and to make sense of what one reads and hears.

**Comprehension is based on:**

► Knowledge that reading makes sense

► Readers' prior knowledge

► Information presented in the text, and

► The use of context to assist recognition of words and meaning.

Here are some suggestions to improve the Comprehension power:-

**1. Develop a broad background:** Broaden your background knowledge by reading newspapers, magazines and books. Become interested in world events.

**2. Know the structure of paragraphs:** Good writers construct paragraphs that have a beginning, middle and end. Often, the first sentence will give an overview that helps provide a framework for adding details. Also, look for transitional words, phrases or paragraphs that change the topic.

**3. Identify the type of reasoning**

**4. Anticipate and predict:** - Try to anticipate the author and predict future ideas and questions. If you're right, this reinforces your understanding. If you're wrong, you make adjustments quicker.

**5. Build a good vocabulary:** - The best way to improve your vocabulary is to use a dictionary regularly. You might carry around a pocket dictionary and use it to look up new words.

**Suggested Links**

**1. Wren and Martin English Grammar**

**2. Word Power Made Easy by Norman Lewis**

**3. Verbal Ability by Arun Sharma**

**4. English Proficiency IMS India**

**5.A Communicative Grammar of English By: Geoffrey Leech**

**6. How to Prepare for Verbal Ability and Reading Comprehension by Arun Sharma and Meenakshi Upadhyay.**

**B. Interpersonal skills including communication skills:** - Interpersonal skills are the skills that a person uses to interact with other people. Good communication skills are skills that facilitate people to communicate effectively with one another. This topic in the syllabus is purely related to the psychology aspect and it requires continuous communication and interaction and then a candidate can learn the traits of this segment of the syllabus.

**C. Logical reasoning and analytical ability:** - Reasoning, both mathematical and analytical, probes deep into our logical mind and our ability to comprehend and synthesize the given information. Evaluating various possibilities out of the given information is also essential to derive necessary conclusions. For this part of the Paper II following books can prove to be useful. Candidates should be ready to face some psycho-analytical questions from 2011 IAS CSAT. UPSC can ask some situational questions that tests the overall personality and decision making ability of the candidates.

**Suggested Links**

**1. A Modern Approach To Logical Reasoning by R. S. Aggarwal**

**2. How To Prepare For Data Interpretation And Logical Reasoning by Arun Sharma**

**3. Handbook of Reasoning by P.K. Aggarwal**

**4. Quantitative Aptitude by Arun Sharma (TMH)**

**5. Quantitative Aptitude For Competitive Exams by Abhijit Guha**

**6. Tips and Techniques and short cut methods by Abhijit Guha**

**7. Quantitative Aptitude by Thorpes**

**8. 'Analytical and Logical Reasoning' by B.S. Sijwali**

**D. General mental ability:** This section of the Paper II was also mentioned in the erstwhile GS paper of the Preliminary Examination. The candidates are expected to be well versed with this section and it is highly advisable that a fair amount of

time should be allotted to solve the previous year's papers as this section can prove to be quite marks fetching in the coming exams. For GMA there are various guides available and candidates can choose any one from them and the basic mantra to get good marks in this section is regular practice which is expected from the candidates.

**Suggest Links:** -1.Course in General Mental Ability and Quantitative Aptitude by Thorpe and Edgar.

**E. Basic numeracy:** In this section it is expected that the questions will be asked regarding the numbers and their relations from the level of Class X NCERT and an in-depth knowledge of data interpretation like charts, tables graphs etc. up to the level of Class X Statistics portion is also expected from the candidates.

**Suggested Links**

**1. How To Prepare For The Data Interpretation And Logical Reasoning For The CAT 3rd Edition by Arun Sharma.**

**2. The Trachtenberg speed system of Basic Maths by Ann Cutler and Mcshane.**

The above guidelines make it clear that the aptitude test is going to be heavily leaned towards the Psychometric Testing pattern. This kind of Aptitude test will help in creating a uniform ethical standard for the Civil Servants. General Aptitude test aims to check that the candidate is having integrity and a strong sense of social responsibility also willing to reflect on and learn from their actions. The above given aptitude test pattern can act as a guiding principles till UPSC gives any details about the content of the aptitude test. Hence we cannot conclude that the General Aptitude paper may contain the above-mentioned format. The only hint received from the Government about the content of General Aptitude test is "Greater emphasis will give to test the aptitude for civil services as well as on ethical and moral dimension of decision-making". Till the notification of the UPSC comes out all the Civil Services aspirant fraternity should concentrate on the preparation on the general guidelines issues by the government and which has been worked upon for your help in this bulletin.