

# MAINS 2017

## APPROACHING

*What to do, what not to do and quick tips*



The bugle to announce the race to UPSC Mains Examination was sounded when the Preliminary results were declared. With 45 Days left for Mains 2017 (the day this was written), let us go through the tricks of the trade, strategies to remove anxiety and learn what's needed to sail you through this arduous examination. This piece does not have any information pertaining to the syllabus, if you feel the clock ticking, you may move on!

If you are appearing this year, first-of-all congratulations! You must feel proud of the fact that you have successfully made it to the top 13000-odd candidates. This should give you all the more reason to study hard and achieve your dreams. If all goes well, you could soon be joining the India's most prestigious services working towards the progress of the nation.

### **A month to go**

To excel, it is important to think from an examination point of view. To conquer 9 papers in 5 days, there are two things that you need to achieve.

1. Completion of the Question Paper.
2. Retaining Quality.

Simply put, you must train yourself to write crisp and short sentences. However, acquiring this skill is easily said than done. What better time than the present to start honing your writing skills?

- ✓ Start writing answers to Questions. This is the only way you can get into the mindset of the examination.
- ✓ Start giving weekly mock tests. Many students underestimate their capabilities by doubting their knowledgebase. Relax, you already know quite a bit to write down 200-300 words. Attempting Question Papers would prevent you from wandering off topic. Rau's Test Compilations are good way to attempt and self-evaluate your answers using the scientifically

designed Indicative Answers. You may attempt any other prominent tests as well.

- ✓ Make sure to revise your Optional Subject. Though each examination paper has its own unique significance, ignoring the optional paper is a blunder score of students commit in their preparation stage.
- ✓ Continue Reading Newspaper. We can't stress this enough. However, be sure to be prudent. You do not want to spend hours of productive time on news that may have negligible relevance to the examination.
- ✓ Make notes. No matter what you study, the mind tends to forget unless forced with the sword of pen. Scribble! Write! Even while revising, make sure you jot down the key points.
- ✓ Concentrate on the books you have studied already rather than opting for new ones.
- ✓ Systemize your day. Human body is a bio-chemical engine and so it tends to develop habits. What good would your hard work be if your brain functions the best after 5 PM? If you are a night owl, slowly and steadily try to bring your study schedules in sync with the examination timings.
- ✓ Timetables do work and they work surprisingly well. Try and chalk out one for at least 3 days and be honest. You will soon see your tasks getting completed effectively. They have an added advantage of throwing anxiety and stress out of the window since your focus remains on the task at hand and not the end result.
- ✓ Revise. Unless and until you revise, no amount of reading can be used in the examination.
- ✓ Refrain from making divine predictions about your future based on the results of your mock tests, astrology or how much a friend studies.
- ✓ Try to maintain a healthy diet during the course of preparation as it keeps you physically fit and mentally

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calm. You can also practice meditation, yoga, listen to music or run if you feel like.

- ✓ Avoid late night excursions and Binge Watching (Yeah, avoid FRIENDS or Game of Thrones) for a few days. Though it may not hamper your preparations directly, such activities tend to divert your attention from the goal.

### Anxiety! What do I do?

Various research reveal that our brains perform optimally under moderate levels of stress. In fact, performance peaks under the heightened activation that comes with restrained levels of stress. I am sure everyone has been asked by their friends/family before an important occasion - "Nervous?"; and reassured almost instantly "It's a good thing."

However, if the stress prolongs giving way to anxiety, fear, panic, fretfulness, anger, frustration - all of which are emotional reactions to hypothetical and meaningless "What If?" questions pertaining to future - it suppresses the brain's cognitive performance.

Good thing is - the bulk of your stress is under your control. Live in the moment and be a positive person. Avoid Asking "What ifs?", Squash Negative Self-Talk, Breathe.

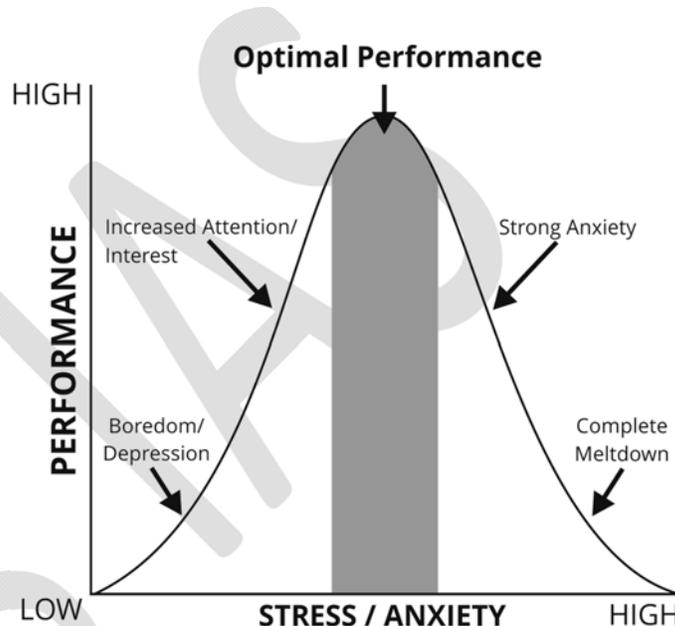
Whenever such thoughts cloud the mind, it is best to take a break from your studies. Talking to friends, family, a quick run in the park, listening to your favorite music will help. Concentrate on the moment. Study according to the plan and all will turn out fine.

### A week before the Exam

If you have practiced writing, attempted mock tests and read newspapers along with the conventional knowledge bases like NCERTs, you have nothing to worry.

- ✓ It is wise to avoid new sources, crash courses and last-minute mugging. UPSC Mains is test of analysis and interpretation rather than retention of facts and figures. Hence a comprehensive approach is the only way out.
- ✓ Have confidence. You have already done well! If you are facing Mains for the first time, feel excited. There is hardly any other examination that comes close to matching the length and depth of this one.

- ✓ Make sure you double-check the center and timings of the examination. Remember to take a printout of the Admit Card.
- ✓ Try to eat nutritional food as it expels laziness.
- ✓ Keep a calm and composed mind. After all you need to write over 4000 words in 3 hours.
- ✓ Revise! Revise! Revise! This is the only way you can retain whatever you have gathered till now.



### Night before the Exam

- ★ Make sure you have all you need like Pens, Admit-card, An Identity Card. Carry a bottle of water if you like.
- ★ Make sure you have visited the center once and keep time in hand when you leave. This would avoid last minute panic.
- ★ Believe in yourself. This is the most important aspect. Now is the time to make sure you give your best.
- ★ Ensure that you attempt all the questions in a neat and crisp fashion.
- ★ Do your best, Leave the Rest.
- ★ May the Force be with you.

*All the best*

*Rau's IAS Study Circle*