Saeed Rehman

38th Common, (FSP)

Kindly tell us about your educational background

I did MA in English Literature and Political Science. I worked as a lecturer for 14 months at Murray College, Sialkot, before joining the Civil Services Academy.

What are the pre-requisites for the CSS examination?

A second division at graduation level and determination are the foremost pre-requisites for the CSS. First of all, one should consciously select the optional subjects and in my opinion guidance is inevitable for subject selection because high score in one or two optional subjects will take you towards your desired group.

Secondly, one must improve one's writing skill in English because it is the fundamental requirement for written part of the CSS exam.

What are the steps for preparation, especially English essay and composition?

The first step is to start reading a wide range of books on diverse topics. The second step is to write and rewrite your ideas in the best possible way. The third step is to get help from your friends or a qualified teacher. In addition, daily reading of quality newspapers like daily Dawn is very helpful because it provides material for different types of essays on current as well as international issues.

Moreover, candidates must have a good collection of quotations on a wide range of topics that will adorn their written presentation. As far as précis, comprehension and expansion are concerned the best remedy for all is extensive practice.

What combination should the students opt for the optional subjects in order to get higher marks?

There is no set pattern or combination for the candidates of CSS. They can get very good marks by selecting any combination, provided they prepare the subjects well. One must choose optional subjects according to his or her basic qualification, aptitude and background. Suppose Psychology as a subject can fetch good marks for those only who already have its background.

What are the ways to get higher marks in the written and interview?

Getting information or knowledge from the books and giving answers in examination are two very different things. Each must be dealt with differently. The candidates have to learn the art of examinations by taking pre-exam tests.

In fact, for both written and interview, one should be very expressive. Your answers should not reflect a general or readymade opinion but your understanding and analysis of things along with your viewpoint. Candidates must write to the point. Don't go for unnecessary details and introductions. In addition, one must manage the time and his ability of writing that how much one can write on any particular topic in the given time. As far as interview is concerned, being original and acting as one's own self are the keys for good marks.

Moreover, in interview one must be confident even if one does not know the answer, simply say, "Sorry", instead of giving an illogical answer. Remember everyone does not know everything. Lastly, one must have good knowledge about their optional subjects and convincing arguments for the desired groups which they prioritised as top three.

How many months and daily hours are required for the CSS preparation?

I think seven to eight months are more than enough, so in a seven-month span of time 10 to 12 daily hours are sufficient for preparation of the CSS. Similarly, you have to take eight-hour sleep and couple of hours for watching TV or any other activity which can make your mind fresh. I personally utilised my time for preparation in the same way. Let me clear one thing, 10 to 12 hours daily study does not mean you have to study consecutively you can take small breaks and if you made proper timetable and act accordingly then it would be more comfortable for appropriate utilisation of your time.

What sort of written presentation an examiner wants to see of a 20-marks question?

No doubt, examiner is always impressed by the difference; in fact, he wants to see something new out of the box. So, it always depends on creation and how the candidate impresses the examiner. Same is the case with 20 marks question. It is the material and the style of writing, which brings good score for you. If the substance is strong but the expression is weak, then it means you lost one mark, and one mark per question means five marks per paper. In brief, relevant material and creative expression is the key to get higher marks in the written exam.

What are the general problems of a CSS candidate?

Generally, the candidates become dependent on notes and tailored books similarly, it causes problems. Sometimes, they do not have proper guidance about CSS – which resource to consult and how to prepare.

That's why most of the time candidates are misguided. For instance, they opt subjects by watching toppers instead of their own liking so, appropriate guidance are necessary but it is not available to everyone.

Any message

Work hard and manage your time, give every subject its importance and remember all subjects are important. Lastly, one must have strong faith in Almighty God, parents' prayers and your own efforts because efforts never go wasted. I wish all the best to all the upcoming candidates.