

TIPS by Toppers

I believe that written part of CSS is not a test of knowledge of the candidates; Rather it is the test of their analytical skills. Most of the questions in the papers are of application level in which candidates are required to apply their knowledge. So in order to get good marks in written, the candidates need to improve their analytical and application skills by practising questions from the Past Papers after they have completed their preparation.

ASP Mufakhar Adeel
2nd Position, CSS-2006

English Essay is the only paper to evaluate writing skills of the candidate on any topic. Students must have good understanding and knowledge about societal issues like poverty, gender discrimination, social inequality, women empowerment; economic issues like tax reforms, budget, national finance commission award; religion like Islam and West, Islamophobia, Islam and terrorism, pluralism; scientific issues like global warming, pollution; national issues like democracy, military intervention, provincial autonomy , energy crisis, independence of judiciary, media; international issues like global terrorism, credit crunch, new world order.

-Syed Nadeem Abass
37 common, PSP

Two things play vital role: firstly, consultation of the original source helps you get the top position. Secondly, written tests, as many as you can, are very beneficial for getting highest marks. And I adopted the same strategy for topping written exam.

Abdullah Khuram Niazi
2nd Position
PMS Competitive examination 2009/10

I got 215 marks in interview and they are considered to be quite high. The main theme in interview is your confidence. In interview they are looking how well you communicate verbally. so you should speak good English with correct pronunciation. Next what matters are your regarding various national and international issues. You should have clear views which you should be able to support when called upon. One should not have extremist views- a moderate and balanced approach is preferable.

-Zeeshan Shafique Siddiqui
8th Position, CSS 2007, PSP

A candidate must consider his/her own ability to understand and grasp all those subjects which he/she thinks appropriate for selection. The second consideration must be based on choosing those subjects which can fetch good marks.

Hussain Sarder
Deputy Secretary (Finance)
Government of the Punjab.

Those who get proper guidance at the time of selecting their optional subjects, they remain very comfortable throughout their preparation and also get the desired result in the long run. So the subject selection must be given due consideration in the beginning.

ASP Mufakhar Adeel
2nd Position, CSS-2006

Key steps:

- . Excellent written expressions
- . Taking regular tests
- . Reading newspaper
- . Solving the past papers of all subjects
- . United and cohesive answers of all the questions
- . Proper paragraphing and length of answers must be same
- . Proper introduction and ending of a question

Muhammad Shahrukh Niazi
11th position PMS

I did masters in English and LLB. But I neither took English nor any subject of law as my optional. I went for entirely new subjects, the subjects in which I had the interest. My combination included Islamic history, Urdu, Sociology and journalism. It was mainly because of these subjects that I managed to score 76% marks in optional subjects and hence secured second position overall.

ASP Mufakhar Adeel
2nd Position, CSS-2006

The first and foremost requirement is good command of English language. Every candidate should be able to represent himself/herself. Actually, when one joins the Civil Service then the official language is English; so one has to communicate and interact with people in this language.

Ahmed Farooq FSP
28th common

Practise the basics of English grammar, the candidates should also start learning pair of words, idioms, GRE vocabulary, etc. It is a matter of fact that more than 70 percent candidates usually fail in English Essay or English Composition.

It is also very important that the candidates should opt for those subjects which are scoring. For this, they need to elect Islamic History and Culture, Geography, International Law, Punjabi, Journalism, Public Administration and Psychology. For such subjects, you do not need to have a background of these particular subjects.

Zahid Ashraf

It is handy to give a brief outline of every question before attempting full answer. This technique shows the checker that the student knows the answer and he/she is hitting it directly. Make intelligent use of blue pen and black marker to create a good impact. In my opinion, candidates should put more emphasis on preparing for those compulsory subjects where most of the students fail in those subjects.

Ali Waseem

1st Position,
PMS Competitive Examination 2009/10

Regarding getting 2nd position in PMS Competitive Exams, I want to say that this is the exam of strategy and proper allocation of time. To spend 10 or 12 hours does not matter. Actually, to the point studies and productive studies matter a lot. As far as the strategy is concerned, the students ought not to rely on notes. They should consult original text books and extricate their own notes from those text books. These notes are beneficial for only those students who make their own efforts. In addition, reading quality newspapers are also lucrative for streamlining your concepts.

Abdullah Khurram Niazi
2nd Position,
PMS Competitive Examination 2009/10

I think, the best way to succeed in the competitive exams is will power. I suggest to the candidates that they should opt for a wise selection of optional subjects, work hard and keep in touch with the contemporary affairs. I urge the candidates to broaden their vision and approach and this thing will not only help them succeed in competitive exams but also in life.

Ameer Hasan Qureshi
3rd position,
PMS Competitive Examination 2009/10

The strategy for preparing any competitive exams includes the following tips; proper management including short and long term, choosing elective subjects according to one's interest and keeping in mind the scoring trends, preparation of notes in two fold manners consisting of comprehensive notes and short/brief notes, reading of journals and newspapers, time management, writing practice and performance during the exam. Frankly speaking, I believe in smart work but as far as the proposition of luck is concerned, God awards you when you show Him your commitment and perseverance.

Kaiser A. Rind
4th position,
PMS Competitive Examination 2009/10

Either it is a CSS or PMS, One should prepare it by allocating full time. First of all, the selection of subjects is very vital; go through the subjects and opt for those which are scoring. Secondly, after having completed the preparation, candidates should take tests for final touch. Finally, in the examination hall, while attempting the paper, one should solve those questions in priority which the candidates know the answer very well then second, third and fourth. Dividing the time of each question is a key to success.

Abdul Latif Khan
5th position,
PMS competitive examination 2009/10

Reason about failing in English Paper.

Reason is quite obvious, as there is no set syllabus and book that could cover these two subjects, so candidates put the preparation of this subject on the back burner. As you can't learn to play cricket just by watching it on TV, similar is the case with English, you can't master this subject just by reading books. Unless you improve the English written expression by practising it, you will not be able to master it. At least dedicate two days a week exclusively for the English preparation. Don't cram five or six essays but try to be at home in writing essays on any topic.

1st in Pakistan, CSS Exam-2011
Dr. Fahad Mumtaz

CSS is an exam which demands smart study rather than extensive study. Choose your optional subjects very intelligently depending on your aptitude and keeping in view their scoring potential. Do not read too many books for a single subject but select one or two quality books. Instead of cramming, just try to develop the general understanding of the issues. Compartmentalise your study plan and do not focus too much on one subject at the cost of others.

1st in Pakistan, CSS Exam-2011
Dr. Fahad Mumtaz

Check past papers first. Then go for "Text Books" that are recommended by the FPSC. Select any book which covers maximum of the questions or chapters that are repeated in the last 10 years. This gives an idea of what to prepare and what not to. Make long notes first and then (for the last night study before CSS papers) make shorter notes in the form of outlines of the notes which you made from the text book. No doubt, making notes is a time consuming process but at the end you are the one to be benefited.

Sahibzada Najeebullah,

PAS 1st position in Balochistan CSS 2011 To me it is the firm commitment, persistent hard work and consistent dedication to study. Higher the level of commitment, higher is the ratio of success. One must be clear in making up the decision and study wholeheartedly without bearing any 'ifs and buts' in mind. Once the decision is made, cling to it steadfastly, devote yourself to the studies, consult standard books written by the renowned authors, analysts and historians, seek guidance of competent teachers both for the compulsory and optional subjects and above all have faith in Allah and in your abilities. CSS exam is just like other exams that are conducted in Pakistan at various levels. It is neither super difficult nor impossible to qualify. But it does definitely test one's will power, levels of endurance, commitment and tireless efforts.

Quratulain Malik CSS 2010,

PAS (Pakistan Administrative Service) Former DMG

What makes you different from rest of the aspirants is paper presentation i.e. organized thoughts in a well mannered pattern that catches maximum attraction of the examiner. In fact, those three hours spent in examination hall make the difference because if you hold your nerves, you will become the winner as "CSS is the game of nerves testing."

One should devise a timetable that suits the mood. Remember whatever schedule is followed for preparation; make sure that the optional subjects will give you an edge over rest of the candidates

Sahibzada Najeebullah,
PAS 1st position in Balochistan CSS 2011

I think presentation of the paper is the most important element for getting higher marks. There are a number of techniques, but one must try to present oneself different from others. For the best presentation, I would suggest that:

- .Draw maps and charts, if needed
- .Do incorporate relevant data, facts, and figures in the answers
- .Do give brief outline answer with a marker
- .Do add as much quotations as possible and always write quotations with markers
- .One should not deviate from the statement of the question(what is asked)
- .Always write effective paragraphs

Dildar Ali Abro Foreign Service of Pakistan,
(FSP) CSS-2009

How should a candidate answer a question when asked by the FPSC members?

The first step is to acknowledge the question - to give the panel a signal that you have understood their question. Then the candidate should be candid and honest in his reply. He should neither get emotional nor get swept away by the topic. His points should be pertinent, brief and concise. Usually, the panel doesn't let candidates go on a long rant and in trying to do so the candidates fail to hit the nail and end up just beating about the bush. The candidates must know that dropping a question is not an embarrassing thing to do.

Husham Ahmed Cheema
Interview Topper
Foreign Service of Pakistan 38th Common

Following are essential steps to qualify CSS:

1. Right combination of optional subjects
2. Knowing the art of attempting paper
3. Knowing the art of studying i-e taking maximum output from minimum time and recourses.
4. Proper assessment of progress of study
5. Proper and professional assessment of essays and answers of other papers.
6. Last minute quick reversion notes.

ASP SYED FIDA HUSSAIN
CSS TOPPER 2006

I would like to suggest all the aspirants of CSS that they should:

- .Write in clean and correct language
- .Avoid spelling and grammar mistakes
- .Analysis in the correct dimension pays good marks
- .Try to get access to foreign books and do quote them while giving answer
- .Please do not misuse the paper, use it properly because it creates negative impact

Zain-ul-Abideen Ansari

English essay and composition are two crucial papers of CSS because majority of the candidates flung in these two papers. Here, I want to share some points by which I prepared my essay and composition papers, these are as follows:

Requirements of essay

- Good in English grammar
- Usage of simple English words
- Correct usage of punctuation marks
- Mature thoughts
- Extraction of material for essay from multiple resources
- Daily practice of writing at least three hours should be reserved for essay writing and get it checked by a subject specialist.

Requirements of composition paper

- Good at grammar
- Grip on English words, idioms and phrases.
- Daily practice of précis writing
- Mature and attractive sentences of pair of words and idioms
- Do solve the previous papers

Continuous writing practice not only enabled me to express my thoughts in a clear way but also improved my English. Hence, writing on different topics taught me how to impress the examiner.

Abdullah Memon
(PSP) – 1st in Sindh CSS-2010

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.

Foreign Service of Pakistan (FSP) 38th Common, CSS-2009
Saeed Rehman

Compulsory paper of 'English' in PCS exam is easier than CSS because there is only one paper which includes both essay and composition. If one is weak in essay than composition part can be helpful and vice versa. Candidates should work out effectively on sentence structure, punctuation and technique of essay writing for this paper along with extensive practice of précis writing.

Dr Mohammad Yasir Bazai
First position in PCS-2010, (Balochistan)

Give proper and equal time to each question. First thoroughly read the question and divide it in parts then attempt it accordingly.

It is handy to give a brief outline of every question before attempting full answer. This technique shows the examiner that the student knows the answer and he/she is hitting it directly. Make intelligent use of blue pen and black marker to create a good impact.

Ali Waseem
1st Position
PMS Competitive Examination 2009/10

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.

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.

Foreign Service of Pakistan (FSP) 38th Common, CSS-2009
Saeed Rehman

Candidates should practice as much as they can and be well read. Since writing expression matters it would be beneficial for the candidates to work on that.

Looking broadly at the CSS exam, over time, it has evolved and candidates should too. It is no longer an exam of how good you are at rote learning; instead, it is an exam of your personality and nerves. Those who have given the exam recently can vouch for that. So most importantly, in order to be differentiated, candidates should work towards being informed, critical, and opinionated.

Mir Reza Ozgen 2nd Position,
in CSS-2011.

Passing a CSS exam is a big achievement. Preparation must be initiated with utmost motivation and dedication particularly by those candidates who do not possess strong academic background. Performance judgment through self-assessment and accomplishment of little tasks in time always proves positive. Similarly, command over English language, grip on analytical writing and art of presenting the thoughts nicely in oral exam will lead you to the excellence. In fact, three-hour paper time carries more weightage than three years of preparation. Thus, CSS needs passion and perseverance.

*Ameer Fazal (PAS)
2nd Position in Sindh, 2011*

I strongly recommend taking coaching classes from professional senior English teachers who have vast experience in teaching CSS candidates. I don't recommend taking guidelines even from CSP fellows because no one has complete command over English like the English teachers have. Extensive writing and reading can improve your English skills as there is no short-cut to it.

Dr. Zeeshan, PAS,
20th Position CSS-2011

Writing crammed sentences may not create much difference. Aspirants more or less consult same sources/books/notes for preparation and if they just write the crammed wording, examiner might not get impressed as many other candidates would be writing the same. Aspirants should remember the main points/ideas of the question and try to write this in their own words. Presentation also does matter. Aspirants should facilitate the examiner by writing neatly with appropriate space between the words and lines. Do include important statistics/facts and figures, quotations etc. wherever applicable.

*Muhammad Usman Khalid
(PAS) 22nd CSS-2011*

Work hard; because it does not mean taking more books beyond your capacity to read; it means selecting one or maximum two good books for each subject is enough. Go through and then revise them as well. I think every hopeful should first of all choose the optional subjects wisely, instead of just running after "scoring" subjects as the trend changes every year. In fact, they should opt subjects in which they have a genuine interest. I took psychology but then I took IR as well and neither of the choices was made because of scoring trends since everybody knows that IR is not scoring at all and I even did not know that psychology was a scoring subject then. Secondly please do go through from past papers since I found them the most useful guide in my preparation for the CSS.

Saba Asghar Ali CSS
3rd, 2011 (PAS)

The best strategy to make a difference is the effective time management and three P's i.e. preparation, practice and precision. Careful selection of optional subjects, constant evaluation of writing standard, guidance and suggestions from seniors and determination coupled with self-confidence are imperative as well. Just focus on your goal and don't care of the competition.

Javed Nabi Khoso

3rd in Sindh
(Rural) CSS-2011

Proper guidance is always needed but the candidate has to be self-reliant. The aspirant should not indulge in intricate details; instead they should focus on major aspects related to the exam. Jahangir's World Times is a very good source of first-hand knowledge for CSS and it plays the role of a guide. It has few unique features which make it suitable for the aspirants, like easy language, elucidation of ideas, credibility and relevance of the material with the main area in focus.

Dr Anoosh Masood Chaudhry
PSP 34th-2011

For essay, you should spend 15 to 20 minutes for selecting the topic, it will save you from disaster, once you have selected the right topic, there will be no issue of time at least for managing your essay in 2.5 hours, and this is sufficient time for attempting essay. After selecting the topic, make outline, it should be logical, sequential, well-managed, self-speaking so that examiner don't find any difficulty in understanding it. From your outline, examiner will have an idea that you are able to pass the paper or not so be careful while writing outline, following points should be kept in mind.

1. Relevance of content with the topic
2. Language (sentences with correct grammar, so it is always preferred to write short sentences, as there will be a few chances of mistakes.)
3. Handwriting; should be neat and legible as paper's cosmetic value also has its own importance.
4. Argumentation
5. Additional/ Supplementary content including examples, verses, quotes, facts and figures if needed (particularly in factual essays), make your essay unique with these colours.
6. Introduction should be the best, as the examiner will judge your essay and make an impression in the very beginning, directly hit the topic without going into the irrelevant details.
7. Essay should be well-arranged, all the content should be presented in a sequence, for example background can't come prior to examples or solutions, coherence in the arrangement of facts is necessary.
8. In conclusion, don't introduce any new idea, justify the given content in conclusion by explaining in a few sentences.

Try to create a unique impact among thousands of essays. Learning tricks and tips and then practising will give you more benefit, instead of making directionless efforts.

Amna Rafique,
PAS, 51st CSS-2011

Passing a CSS exam is a big achievement. Preparation must be initiated with utmost motivation and dedication particularly by those candidates who do not possess strong academic background. Performance judgment through self-assessment and accomplishment of little tasks in time always proves positive. Similarly, command over English language, grip on analytical writing and art of presenting the thoughts nicely in oral exam will lead you to the excellence. In fact, three-hour paper time carries more weightage than three years of preparation. Thus, CSS needs passion and perseverance.

Ameer Fazal (PAS)
2nd Position in Sindh, 2011

It is usually observed that students having rural background mostly fail the essay paper because they are not acquainted with the art of creative writing and they mostly rely on crammed material. Scoring good marks in English requires better understanding of grammar. I would sum up it in an adage, "Practice makes a man perfect". General knowledge is another important paper in PMS. I divided the world map into different regions and portions and then studied all the necessary information related to these regions and countries. For example, geographical locations, neighbouring countries, personalities related to these regions, issues, political parties, news agencies, capitals, weather conditions, agriculture products, history and current issues.

Nazia Mohal, PMS
1st Position 2012

Books are an essential part of preparation and one must consult them because they not only boost your knowledge but develop your expression as well. While making selection, always prefer the books which cover the syllabus to the maximum extent. One may prepare notes out of them for quick revision.

Muhammad Tayyab Tahir
2nd Position PMS-2012

English Essay and Composition

There is always a technique to solve these papers. Both demand lot of practice. In essay writing, ideas should be clear and written with a flow. Evidences should be added to support your arguments. In English Composition paper, précis and composition should be practised as many times as possible and got checked by some expert.

Dr Anoosh Masood Chaudhry
PSP 34th-2011

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Dr Anoosh Masood Chaudhry
PSP 34th-2011

Strategy:

In fact, this phenomenon varies from person to person. To me one can make a difference by enhancing one's writing skills. The prospective candidates should always remember that

effective presentation of relevant facts coupled with comprehensive critical views of different authors and experts of the concerned subject and a compact summary of the question at the end is a recipe for making a difference.

Muhammad Tayyab Tahir
2nd Position PMS-2012

First of all, one must always have the perception before him/her that CSS is a test of abilities and skills. This is a sort of exam in which one is in a cut-throat competition with others.

Secondly, one should seek proper guideline from a qualified CSP, especially a fresh CSP officer, who is also well-aware of latest paper pattern and scoring trends.

Last but not least, moral and financial support and prayers of parents coupled with good wishes of your dears and friends count a lot, at least, it did in my case.

Hassan Afzal
2nd Position
CSS-2012

Build vocabulary from Barron's GRE. Focus on grammar and sentence structure. Learn special techniques from a qualified talented CSP to score high in Essay, Précis, Comprehension and Expansion. Always remember that practice makes a man perfect, so make it a must for you.

Hassan Afzal
2nd Position
CSS-2012

I don't think that one can make difference only by studying difficult or different books. More or less, all the candidates consult same books. I think the real difference lies in the way you actually present your thoughts. Presentation of material needs a lot of acumen coupled with abilities to discourse. Make your paper more and more attractive with flowcharts, graphs, relevant diagrams, tables, headings, etc.

Sayyed Muhammad Abbas Shah
—3rd in CSS-2012