

Essay Writing for CSS/PCS Exam

This article is purely for students appearing in CSS/PCS exam and is majorly focused on the attributes of essay writing for CSS exam.

A good essay is a comprehensive composition on a particular topic; beneficial, convincing and easily comprehensible for a reader. Essay writing is a skill of formulating your ideas about a topic in an adequate manner with the aid of rational arguments which convince the reader about what is discoursed in the essay.

If you are a beginner, don't worry because essay writing is not an inborn quality but it is a skill that is developed by learning and practice.

QUESTION FORMAT (CSS Exam): Make an outline and write a COMPREHENSIVE ESSAY (2500 – 3500 words) on any one on the given topics. Make sure you use different forms of discourse e.g. description, narration, illustration etc.

Essay writing can be divided into following four parts on the basis of marking in CSS Exam.

1. Discourse/ideas and thoughts presented in an essay
2. Structure of essay
3. Making Outline
4. Principles and Qualities of a good essay
5. Proficiency and competency in writing in English

Discourse/ideas and thoughts presented in an essay

The first and foremost thing that ensures your success in essay writing for CSS exam is what you present in your essay, your ideas and thoughts. They expect from you a great deal of knowledge about the topic, maturity in your thoughts and ideas, thoughts based on facts supporting or opposing the topic, widely accepted thoughts, multi-dimensional approach to explain about the topic and proper way of expressing your ideas and thoughts. All these aspects as a whole depends upon following factors

- How much have you done general study about various topics like different issues, personalities, aspects of society, political issues and events, science, religion, art, literature, history, current problems and challenges, etc.

- How do you observe, analyze and compare or contrast various things (like above topics etc) while you study, learn or hear them.
- Your cognitive approach to various things (like above topics etc), the way you make your personal view about a thing.
- The way you select facts or ideas about a topic that can easily convince a reader about what is said relating the topic and which look appealing and worth reading to the reader.

All of the above aspects contribute to generate good ideas, maturity in your thoughts and multi-dimensional approach to explain about a topic. You should have the habit of general reading because it is what you learn that you present in your essay. General study as more as possible is quite helpful. Observe and analyze whatever you learn as well as have your own perspective about it to explore it.

Structure of an essay

An essay has three parts, **1. Introduction, 2. Body, 3. Conclusion**

Introduction

An essay always starts with an introduction to the topic or subject-matter of the essay. The first paragraph (paragraphs) serves as an introductory paragraph, where you have to write the about what the topic means or explain about the subject-matter in a way to provide the basic understanding of the topic. The old way is to start an essay with a definition, literal meaning of the topic or widely accepted interpretation of the topic. The modern essayist though starts an essay with a general explanation by writing the main attributes of the topic to introduce the topic. Choosing either ways to write the introduction to the topic depends upon the subject matter of essay. Some of the essays given in CSS exam may not be directly introduced with the help a definition or quotation where you can start with widely accepted interpretation of topic or by converging its basic attributes to write its introduction. The introduction should be appealing and fascinating to the reader because it exhibits your first impression on reader and reflects overall beauty of essay.

Body

It is the middle part of essay which initiates after introduction. It can consist of as many paragraphs as you can write or required to write. It is the larger part of essay including all the argumentation, elaboration of ideas, reasoning and all necessary explanation about the topic. All what you need for this part is to learn how to write a paragraph. Each paragraph comprises elaboration of a similar idea relating the subject matter. The first sentence of each paragraph again serves as introductory sentence to what is discussed in the paragraph. The first line of each paragraph is indented a little to right making it distinct from other paragraph.

Moreover, the order of paragraphs should be in a proper sequence. Which idea should be written first and which idea should be written next needs to be developed.

Conclusion

The last part of essay, conclusion, is to sum up your all ideas (whatever you have written in body part) to derive a conclusion. You are supposed to write a short theme to the all discourse made about the topic, considering the main ideas (remember, the theme, not the all main ideas) and write some lines as a conclusion to overall discourse. It should be a satisfactory end for the reader.

Making an Outline

Making an outline for an essay means to make a sketch for the entire essay by writing the basic and main ideas which are to be elaborated to write the essay. Making an outline is important for two reasons, firstly it is the part of your answer as asked in the question (CSS 2009) and secondly it helps you to write an essay with perfection.

Before starting to write the essay, think over the topic to collect the main ideas which you will elaborate to the essay. Write down all these main ideas in the form of lines having numbers or bullets. You can give a name or a title to each main idea while making the outline or you can also write each main idea in a sentence form but all the ideas should be in proper order.

Principles and Qualities of a Good Essay

An essay is never written haphazardly but always written according to certain principles. Besides, a good essay has certain qualities which make the essay interesting, appealing and influential.

Unity: An essay, written on a particular topic, should have uniformity. All the ideas and thoughts expressed in the essay should be related to the topic. Similarly each paragraph should have unity. Unity means that each paragraph should be about ONLY ONE idea. Different paragraphs have different ideas relating to the topic but each paragraph is confined to one idea. Never embed a different idea in a paragraph which explains a particular idea.

Coherence and Order: The ideas should be expressed in a logical continuity. Coherence means that ideas flow smoothly from one sentence to the next sentence. Order is the logical sequence of ideas presented in the essay. Order of ideas means what should be written first and what should be written next. Ideas should be expressed in a proper order of importance or events.

Avoid repetition of a same idea. Don't reproduce a same idea again and again which you have already narrated once in your essay. Repetition reveals a very bad impression on the reader. Similarly it is better to use different words (noun, verbs etc) for a same meaning if it is repeated again and again.

Avoid unnecessary details and explanations. Always be focused on the subject matter and try to write to the point. Don't try to elongate your explanation by giving unnecessary and irrelevant details. Your explanation may be neither too long nor too short but should be comprehensive and sufficient in knowledge about the topic.

The way of presenting ideas and thoughts should be appropriate. The way you describe, explain, elaborate or discuss about an idea counts a lot for writing a good essay. Always try to write in a simple, clear and easily comprehensible manner. Never write ideas in a convoluted manner. Write short and simple sentences instead writing very long sentences containing many clauses. Writing on different dimensions of the subject matter should be in a way that each aspect should be fully unveiled so that there may be no room for ambiguity for the reader.

Proficiency and competency in writing in English

It is an open secret that writing standard English and grammatical accuracy play a vital role in success in essay writing for CSS Exam. You should know the art of literary and scholarly writing. It needs a long discussion to expatiate about improving written English but let me give you some rudimentary tips. A basic attribute which is to learn idiomatic usage in writing an essay should be developed. For earning grammatical accuracy in your writing, study English grammar thoroughly (not cursorily) to learn the correct usage of grammatical units i.e. verbs, adverbs, adjective, coordination, subordination, subject-verb agreement, phrasal verbs etc.