

CONTENT

1. How to make Notes for Learning?
2. How to Understand the Questions?
3. Handling Essay type answers.
4. Time Management for 3 hour essay type question paper
5. XYX strategy for essay type answers.
6. For developing Reading skills
7. For strengthening one's listening capability:
8. The importance of Vocabulary
9. Time Management Framework for studies and preparation.

Learning to make Notes

1. Making your own Notes is **the best way to 'learn'**. This is different from 'mugging' or study 'to pass the exam by rote'. Mugged up material is forgotten soon after the exam is over. Note making **style is unique to each student**.
2. Notes are **the main points** discussed in a Chapter, or a poem or any topic. **They are interlinked to weave a pattern** of information. They answer five key questions on What? When? Where? How? Why? Good Notes include all these five aspects.
 - a) **What** is being said in this chapter or this poem or lecture?
 - b) **Who** is the author or poet?
 - c) **Where** is the topic located in the detailed syllabus of the subject?
 - d) **How** is it connected to other chapters? Or other subjects?
 - e) **When** and how does it happen?
 - f) **Why** is it important or significant?

3. 80% (per cent) learning is visual, and 20% is audio or reading. Therefore, in class, try to map the points by making geometrical or ‘connect the dots’ like designs. Fill in the details at home. This method is very useful. Alternatively, you could have your very own 6 Questions Table based on (a) to (f) above, in which points could be noted during the class or lecture, or a discussion on radio or television.

4. Remember that a person’s full attention span for learning or study, at one stretch, is for 30 minutes only. Full attention starts 10 minutes after the beginning of the lecture, and ends 10 minutes before it. $10+30+10 = 50$ minutes is your attention span for which Points are to be noted. This is also the reason why lectures / classes are of 45 to 50 minutes duration.

2. How to Understand the Questions?

3. First be clear about what is asked in the Question.

- a) What is the question about?
- b) Is it asking to ‘Explain’?
- c) or Evaluate,
- d) or Compare and contrast
- e) or Summarize,
- f) or What? How? Where? Why?
- g) Or Comment?

Each of the above listed forms of question needs a different structure and focus in the answer, in order to get higher Marks / Grades. If the question itself has not been understood, the answer can never be effective or focussed.

4. If the Question is asking to :

On next page

If the Question is asking to :

1. 'EXPLAIN' : Then, give the reasons why the event in the question happened, or what is it about. For such questions , stick to reasons , and sequence them logically, with an introduction and conclusion.

Why ?

What? How?



2. 'EVALUATE' questions, need the candidate's deeper knowledge about the issue, and ranking of the issue among other similar event. Here, what, how , when and where are all have to be answered.

a) Why will come after stating your reasons for ranking the issue, in the context it is placed

b) Conclusion should answer the question why You are defending or not defending the aspect as given in the Question.



3. COMPARE and CONTRAST : For such questions, in Board or Under Graduation exams, it is best to draw two column. In higher level or competitive examinations, do not use the two columns. Instead, introduce in first paragraph, Compare in next, Contrast in third and Conclude in fourth paragraph.

a) All points of COMPARISON in first half of answer or in one column.

All points of CONTRAST in second half or in second column.

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8

If the Question is asking to:

4. **SUMMARISE** : you have only to state briefly, all the important points on the topic, in your own words , in simple language. The points should follow from most important at the top, to the least important at the end.
5. **WHAT?** This question is only asking to give the name, nature, or form.
6. **HOW?** In such questions, give the step by step process for doing the thing or action asked.
7. **WHERE?** Give the place and time of the event or the issue asked.
8. **WHY?** Give reasons in the main answer, and your own assessment in the conclusion.
9. **COMMENT.** The question is asking for your personal opinion on the issue or topic. State your comment, and list your reasons for each comment. You can also give your reasons along with each comment. This will make an integrated paragraph for each comment.
10. **GIVE REASONS:** For such questions, simply list out the reasons for the event, in sequence. In the opening statement mention that you are going to give 2 or 3 reasons, that are as follows and then number the reasons as (a) (b) (c).

5. Handling the essay type answers

For getting higher marks, answer to the point :

- a) Avoid broad generalizations. These are vague and cannot be explained in the answer. They also convey your lack of preparation .

- b) Always illustrate with two or three examples, or extracts from the text. This provides the evidence of first hand reading.
- c) Always re-read the answer before writing the conclusion. This helps in summing up, correcting spellings and including any left out point in the conclusion.

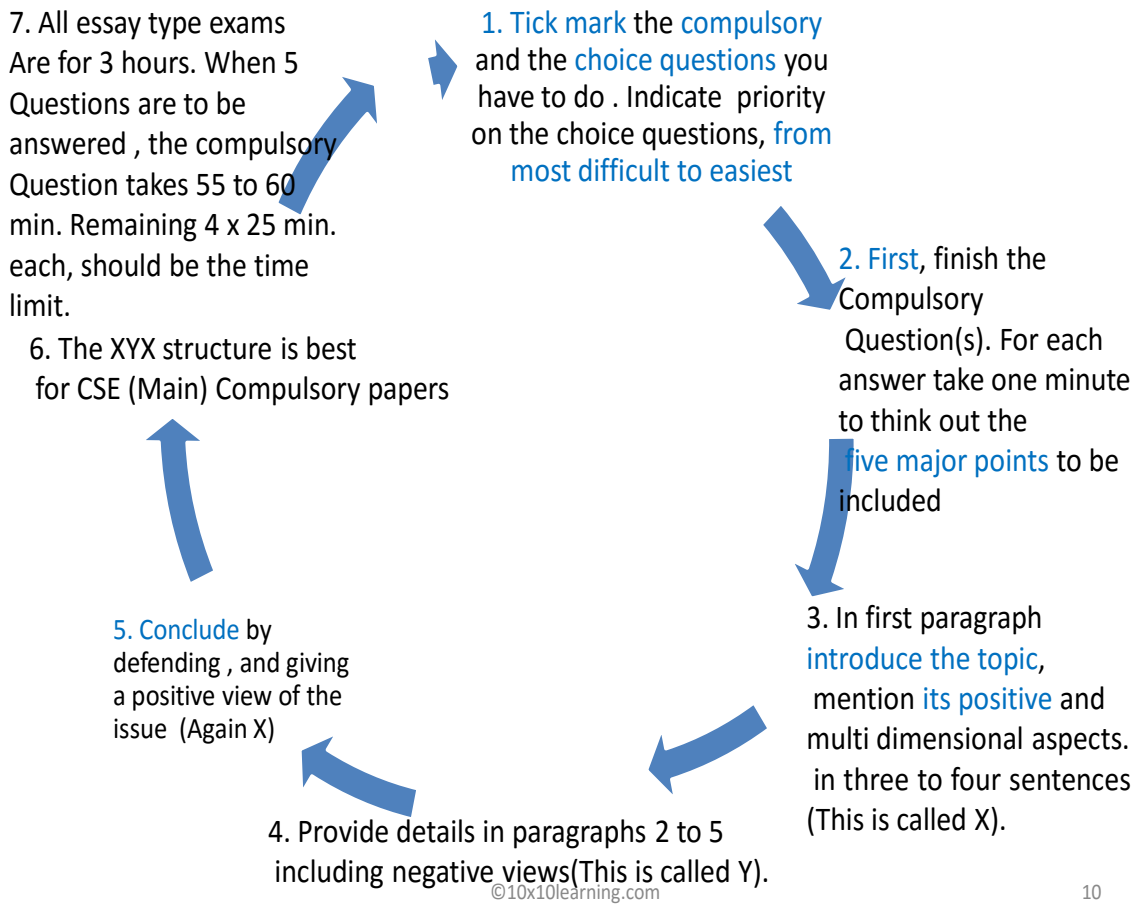
4. Time Management for 3 hour essay type question paper

- a) Keep the first two minutes for reading the Questions, marking the compulsory and optional questions to be attempted.
- b) Normally, five questions are required to be answered . The compulsory question takes 55 to 60 minutes. This leaves 120 minutes for the remaining 4 optional questions. Keep target of 25 minutes writing time for each. Within this first two minutes go in mentally noting the main points to be included, and last two minutes for re- reading for corrections of spelling .
- c) Always to stick to the 25 minute time limit for each answer. Remember, all the questions required HAVE to be completed.
- d) **DO NOT leave any question unanswered**, or half done. In a competitive examination, this will convey a major loss. This is because assuming that each of the questions is of 20 marks, and you have completed only 4 instead of 5, then you get 15 out of 20 marks, meaning the total will be 60 out of 100, instead of 75 out of 100, which you would have got if all 5 questions had been completed.
- e) In competitions, **just one mark decides**, whether you qualify or not. This is the difference between University exam and Competitive exam.
In University, getting the pass marks is sufficient to move on to the next year. In competition, to qualify, one has to be among the top highest scorers, above the cut off point in the list of candidates

who have qualified the Main Examination. For this reason, each mark counts.

f) See **XYX** strategy for essay type answers on next page.

XYX outline to answer all essay type question papers



10

5. For developing Reading skills

STEP ONE

1. Stand before a medium size or a full length mirror. Read out aloud, one editorial from any newspaper. Clock the time taken from start to finish. Note the time taken as the Starting Time. After one month of practice, you should be taking less time

and that will indicate improvement. Normally, a standard editorial of an English newspaper should not take more than five minutes.

2. In addition to improving confidence, the exercise will **show how much you fidget**, while standing and reading. **Shifting of weight** from one leg to the other, or movement of body, will **indicate your nervousness and lack of confidence**.
3. Develop confidence by **standing straight, looking relaxed** and not shaking or shifting any part of your body. Treat your own reflection the mirror, as your audience, staring at you. Look at your reflection from time to time.
4. Confidence comes from practice, and from the awareness that you are not making any unnecessary movements or error.

STEP TWO

- a) After finishing reading, sit down and **tick mark the main points** in the editorial in the newspaper itself. (How? See below)
- b) Get these checked by an elder or a friend, if possible, and make a note of which point you left out.
- c) As your speed and confidence develops cover the second editorial as well.
- d) By the time you are in class 10th you should be able to read, make points and think about the topics in both the editorials within 30 minutes.
- e) Compare the two topics in the editorials? Ask yourself :
 - a) Why was this topic chosen for the lead editorial?
 - b) How is it more important than the issue discussed in the second editorial?
 - c) What is its significance in that day's context?
 - d) Why is it less important than the first topic?
- f) Note the new words coming in the editorial and check the dictionary.
- g) Also Clock your Reading time and Point Making time. This helps in time management during examinations. On School days this exercise is best done after returning from school, or late in the evening.

6. For strengthening one's listening capability:

- h) Regularly listen to the 15 minutes news bulletin on Radio only, so that concentration is only on audio and not the video as in TV news. Mentally note the major news items, and link them to any previous development in the last few months. **Is there a trend?**
Do not write them but mentally compare, what the news bulletin said, with what the editorial said on that particular news issue.
- i) On television, select a one discussion programme that has experts analyzing the day's current event. Prefer an economic channel, as those discussions are objective and less noisy. Note down important points, made by the experts. Fill in the details of the points, during commercial breaks.
- j)
This gives practice **for note making, speedy writing, listening, and often helps to develop objective thinking**. This is because it is easier to take a balanced view on economic matters, than on political and social matters.
- k) The above should be both for one English editorial and one Hindi editorial. In 10th class add one economic newspaper also for the third editorial. If you are planning to compete for Civil Services, reading one Economic newspaper is a must, while you pursuing your Under Graduation.

7. The importance of Vocabulary:

Using the right word in daily conversations is the best of habits one can develop. This can happen only when you learn new words, and use them on a daily basis. This capability clearly distinguishes a student who has converted his knowledge in to learning, from one who has mugged up the lessons for passing the exam.

As your vocabulary increases, so will your thinking capacity. Words are needed to describe thoughts, and to convert thoughts into action. Clarity in thinking, writing and effective writing, comes only through choice of the right word. For example, see the

words for different emotions given below. If you use 'happiness', it will be too general, and will not provide an effective description or clarity. What degree of happiness do you mean? For bringing the effect, you need to use the right word, from the many words that describe happiness.

List of Primary, Secondary and Tertiary emotions:

1. **Love** : Affection, adoration, fondness, liking, attraction, caring, tenderness, compassion, sentimentality, longing.
2. **Happiness**: Cheerfulness, amusement, bliss, gaiety, glee, jolliness, joviality, joy, delight, enjoyment, gladness, happiness, jubilation, enthusiasm, elation, satisfaction, ecstasy, euphoria, zest, zeal, zest, excitement, thrill, exhilaration, contentment, pleasure, pride, triumph, optimism, eagerness, hope, optimism, enthrallment, rapture, relief.
3. **Surprise**: Amazement, surprise, astonishment
4. **Fear** : alarm, shock, fear, fright, horror, terror, panic, hysteria, mortification, nervousness, anxiety, nervousness, tenseness, uneasiness, apprehension, worry, distress, dread, horror.
5. **Anger** : Irritation, aggravation, agitation, annoyance, grouchiness, grumpiness, exasperation, frustration, rage, outrage, fury, wrath, hostility, ferocity, bitterness, hate, loathing, scorn, spite, vengefulness, dislike, resentment, disgust, revulsion, contempt, envy, jealousy, torment.

6. **Sadness:** Suffering, agony, hurt, anguish, depression, despair, hopelessness, gloom, glumness, unhappiness, grief, sorrow, woe, misery, melancholy disappointment, dismay, disappointment, displeasure, shame guilt, regret, remorse , neglect , alienation, isolation, neglect, loneliness, rejection, homesickness, defeat, dejection, insecurity, embarrassment, humiliation, insult , sympathy, pity.

8. Time Management Framework for Studies and Preparations:

1. Group your daily activities under four areas and review your progress daily or weekly. Clear the backlog every weekend, or on alternate days, otherwise, clearing the backlog itself will become an ‘ additional activity’.
 - a) **Urgent and Important:** These are to be done on that day itself. All studies and practice work needs to come here, including reviewing the day’s work and preparing for the next day. **Maximum time** should be given to this slot.
 - b) **Important but NOT urgent:** daily hygiene (bath etc. 1hour) , food and fruit intake 4 times (2 hours), walk and exercise (30 minutes to 1 hour), adequate sleep **at night** (5 to 6 hours) These are critical for health and wellbeing, and for continued sustainability, alertness and memory, in the long run.
 - c) **Urgent but NOT important:** such as attending phone calls and guests. This can be **kept to the minimum by announcing** to all concerned, your ‘Study or Work hours’ and ‘Do Not Disturb’ hours / Days for ‘No Social functions’.
 - d) **Neither urgent nor important:** TV, social networking and similar timewasters. These need not be included in the plan with a ready check list’. Check lists are helpful as they provide daily visibility to your progress, when each time you tick mark all the activities. This in due course, becomes motivating.

