

Analysing your Answers-3

Let me explain to you how to evaluate an answer that you have written -

1) After reading the question, write the answer patiently. Now read what you have written. After reading your answer read the question again. Now read the answer again. This may seem boring to you, but this is important. Now think whether you have got the answer to what you asked? Try to understand this in a behavioral context. When you ask somebody a question they answer it. How satisfied you are with that answer is revealed by the questions you ask to clarify their answer further. If you have to ask further questions you can assume that the answer that was given was not complete.

There are two situations here, first is that you heard the answer and then asked a new question. If this is the case, it means that you were satisfied with the answer. But if your next question is related to the first question, it means you were not satisfied. I have repeated this because I want you to be clear on this. You must have written many answers and must have also given oral answers. But ponder over my question: Have you ever thought about the quality and exhaustiveness of your answer? Have you ever looked at it with a critical eye and thought I should have said this or written this? After exiting an examination hall we say, "Oh, I missed this. I couldn't remember it. If I had written it, my answer would have been so much better." But we hardly ever think that we should not have written a particular something. We also do not think that we should have written something in place of something. We do not think that we wrote something irrelevant to what was asked. Unless we make a glaring mistake we do not think about these things. There are some vague questions that are asked in civil service exam. This is why students are unable to catch these mistakes because they do not think critically. They are not taught to do this while studying.

2) You have to not only read your answer, but also match it to the topic. Now think whether you could have written it in a better way. I do not want to get into the details of this. I have already explained this earlier in the article when I was talking about practising. But I don't want to say that if you practice writing, it will make you shine so much that you will get the ability to evaluate your copy.

3) Do you recall the incident about the student that was mentioned earlier? It will help you come up with another principle to check your answer. The idea is that after writing the answer you suggest a question for it just like I told you in that incident to write the headline for the essay. Apply this rule to the answer. Now compare the question that you have come up with to the question that was originally asked. You will immediately realize how relevant your answer is.

4) You will need a bit of psychological help for this. I have said this before, "Students do not write what is asked. They write what they know. "Now check your answer keeping this in mind. Have you also written what you knew? You will know immediately whether you have done this or not. If you have done this your answer cannot be good.

5) Now the last option is to ask someone else to check your answer. But who will that someone be? I cannot provide you with a list of those others. But I can suggest that the person should have two qualities. First, the person should have some knowledge of the subject for which you have written the answer. Secondly, the person should have some experience of civil services exam. I know that it is very difficult for you to find someone who possesses the second quality. What will you do then? Honestly, even I cannot answer that. There are some problems which have a solution but not for an individual. I think this is a similar problem. But I can tell you that

if you find an experienced professor of the same subject, it will help you a lot. At least, you will get an idea of the level of your answer.

6) There is another possibility. In every district, there are a few young officers who have recently qualified civil services exam. If you have the courage to take your problems to them, they might be able to help you. I have used the word courage deliberately. I should not have used it because you do not actually require courage. But when you decide to approach them, your mind will need it. This is why I have already warned you about such a situation. But the truth is that you do not need courage. You just need to overcome your hesitation. You also have to put aside your ego. I want to tell you that these young officers enjoy helping others at least in the beginning. But you do have to give them space and understand that they are busy. If they reschedule once or twice, do not lose hope. Try again and keep trying until they get annoyed and tell you a clear no. But in most cases you will be successful.

Friends, I have written this chapter in great detail. I hope that after reading this your outlook towards studying for civil services exam will change and you will be inspired to write answers. You will soon find that the practice of writing answers has filled you with confidence. This confidence will act like the herb Sanjeevani to ensure your success. Let me tell you another truth before we arrive at the end of this chapter. Let us assume that you practised writing 30 answers. Of these five questions were asked in the exams. It is these five questions that will make the difference. This was one thing. Another thing, which is no less important, is that if you have chosen correct answers related to the topic then they will help you in a different way. You must have experienced that when you write an answer the entire topic flows into your mind. You can also say that you mentally revise that topic. The question asked in the exam may not be the one that you practised but it addresses the same topic. So when you write this answer, the practice sessions will guide you and this will put you ahead of others. You know that in competitive exams the outcome of the game, or the battle, is decided by who is the first to reach.

NOTE: This article by Dr. Vijay Agrawal was first published in 'Civil Services Chronicle'.