

How To Prepare Notes-2

2) The truth is that making notes does not simply mean collecting facts scattered here and there. It includes much more. If somebody is embarking on this journey they should understand that they would have to go through a lot of mental excitement. When we make notes we not only study but also analyse facts. First we study various books. After reading them we decide which facts are important and which ones are exclusive. We underline the important bits to include them in our notes.

Let's assume that you are reading four books on a topic. After reading all four you will think about them simultaneously. This will help create a structure in your head. And then you start writing. When you actually get down to writing the mental struggle starts. These are the points of mental excitement and this is when you have to think over which facts are in which books. This means that you are not only studying or collecting what you are studying but also honing the material which is different to get coherence. To be honest, this is an unpleasant time. This is why most students hesitate from making notes. They think that it would be best if they can get material that is ready. Unfortunately, they are unable to realise that this is not the correct method. The only thing they will get is all facts in one place. But they will be deprived of the real benefit of making notes.

3) you have to read various books to write. I have already told you that this phase will be a struggle. The struggle is at many levels. The mind has to figure out where the useful material is. It then has to decide how to copy that material. There are two ways to go about this. You can jot down the material verbatim or understand it and write it in your own style. The latter is the better way of doing it. If we copy from other books the consistency of language will be destroyed. Every writer has a different language. If there is no consistency in language then the rhythm of the notes would be hampered. It will take away from the joy of studying. If you enjoy studying less your brain will also absorb less. This is why it is so important to write down facts in our own language. This allows our brain to think in our language. This helps our language and vocabulary and allows the brain to express itself better. This is a very good thing even if you are forced to do so. In other examinations you do not get the opportunity to write except in the examination hall. Preparing notes is giving you that opportunity.

4) I do not know if you feel the same way but when I make notes I attach sentimental value to them. Since I have worked hard on them I have a certain attachment to the material. We are closer to things we are attached to. Do not think that it is not possible to get attached to notes. One can get attached to rocks, soil and trees. And these are things we have not worked hard for. It is just that they are in proximity. But notes are something we have struggled for. It includes our creativity. We have devoted time to them. So it is obvious to get attached. It is simple that if you attach yourself to something and consider it your own then the difficulties associated with it vanish. It becomes easier for us. This is what happens when you make notes.

5) Maybe in your experience you prepare notes on a topic. The question asked in the examination is from that topic. You will realise that while writing down the answer you can picturize your notes. In fact, when you are done writing a page from your memory, your brain will form the reflection of the next page. This will allow you to write your answer in a short time. Your brain will work faster because it has imbibed the notes.

6) When we write while making notes it is not just an analysis but also handwriting practice. The practice helps us form legible words and also increases our speed of writing. Both are important in civil services. It is true that a neat handwriting does not matter as much as speed. You have 180 minutes to write 4000 words in answer to 20 questions. If you are slow you will miss out on a few questions and this could be the deciding factor.

7) To conclude, don't you think that when you are preparing notes you are in a sense preparing the topic as well? In my experience, I have no hesitation in saying that preparing notes mean completing preparation of the topic, and that too, nicely. I feel that preparing notes is akin to preparing for the exam in black and white. Friends, if you agree with what I have to say, I leave it to you to decide whether you should make your own notes or by them. I'm assuming that you do think you require notes.

Should you make notes?

Friends, I have not discussed the benefits of making notes under 'meaning of notes'. I have not worried about what the demerits of making notes are. The truth is we may not be able to benefit from it but there would be no harm in doing so. The benefit that each one derives from the activity may depend on that person.

I have also not discussed whether there is an alternative to this. It is important to think of alternatives because making notes is not an easy task. If you want to make good notes they demand time and diligence. I will talk about these alternatives in my next and final article. Right now I want you to focus on two aspects that will help you decide whether you should make notes or not. These include 1) habit and 2) type of questions.

- **Habit:** Please forgive me for saying that I feel writing notes is more of a psychological demand. Since childhood our teachers just tell us to make notes and we do so. We do this more than required. In fact, teachers make us write notes even in classes. In a way it has become a criteria of hard work. If you do not prepare notes you may be gripped by a complex and feel incomplete. Obviously, this happens because we feel that we should make notes. Whether this will benefit us we have not pondered over. We believe that this will definitely help us. This idea has been put into our heads since childhood.
- **Type of notes:** The most important thing to consider is how this will help us achieve our goal. See the type of questions asked and think about what I said. Think whether the kind of notes you are making will help you answer questions asked in the examination hall. Is it possible for you to predict the kind of questions that will be asked and prepare notes accordingly? If you do decide to make notes do you want to make them the conventional way or try something new? Think about these things. In my next article I will share my opinion with you.

To be continued.....

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