

How to get maximum marks from your examiner-2

The examiner's psyche is an amalgamation of two major interests. The first one is related to his personal interests while the other is about his interests in general.

Personal interests

Under personal interests fall the examiner's educational background and personal opinions. I have kept these two facts here prominently because of the questions asked in general studies almost 95% consist of questions related to humanities. Humanities subjects are different from science because they do not have the objective approach that scientific subjects do. But you should not consider this as a weakness of the humanities stream, instead take them as unique qualities of these subjects because this is where the student has the space to express his thoughts and analysis. It is obvious then that if we are being subjective even the examiner can be subjective about how he views your answer.

This means the examiner may consider whether your opinions match his. If the answer is yes, then you are lucky. However, if the answer is no, this doesn't mean that you are ruined. If you consider this as an adverse situation, the only thing you may lose out on is some extra benefit. That's it. But this is something that you have no control over, neither does anyone else. The only mantra to adopt here is the one that Lord Krishna said in Bhagvad Gita "Do not worry about this." Still it is better to be cautious and I would like to tell you three tricks here

- Whenever you need to give your opinion whether for or against something do not pick a side and be aggressive. You should ensure that the tone is soft. There must be some good aspects of the thought that you are rejecting. It is important that you keep mentioning these in between your answer. This will make your answer very balanced. But your thought process should be clear so that your answer does not appear confused.
- If you are presenting your views against a thought or fact do not do so unless you have strong reasons for it. Your counter arguments must be justified and the analysis believable. If you follow these you can get good marks even if the examiner's thought process does not match yours.

General interests

It should be a matter of happiness and satisfaction to you that in spite of personal interests an examiner's psyche is mostly made up of general interest. These are interests that are expected from an examiner. And UPSC tries its best to achieve this. The combined effect of these is such that personal interests take a backseat even if they are not eliminated completely. Let us know more about this.

a) If we leave out the optional subjects (to some extent you can include essays and subjects of interest in it) then the paper of general studies is mixed. This means that a single paper covers many subjects. For example the first paper in general studies has questions on history, geography and sociology. Generally the copies are checked by veteran teachers from colleges and universities who are expert in a particular subject. Does this mean that one copy which has three subjects is judged by three different professors?

This would be impractical. Actually even though a paper has many subjects, the knowledge required is at a general level and not at an expert level. The examiners are expected to know enough to make them worthy of checking the answer sheets. They are also trained on what the right answers are. This helps form an image of the correct answer in their minds. Consequently, their personal interests take a backseat. Here we should not forget that the examiner checking the copy is very experienced. This experience brings a natural patience and balance in their work. They know that knowledge is vast and has multiple angles. They get impressed by logical

arguments and facts. Somebody who likes roses does not dislike jasmine, similarly the examiner when checking the answers does not dismiss a good answer because "it is not like a rose". But it's true that if the answer were like a rose, it would have been better.

b) The civil service answer sheets are not sent to a professor's residence. They are evaluated at an identified centre. There are many professors checking copies there who end up discussing a lot of things. If somebody has a doubt, they discuss it and solve it immediately. This brings a certain balance to the process and keeps the marks on average.

c) The professors are not under pressure to check maximum copies in a day. They are given a certain number of copies which are less than the number of copies they have to check in college. They have ample time to read the answers carefully and award marks. This has a positive effect on your scores. Thus, you do not have much to doubt the examiner who will check your copies. I felt it important to bring these facts to your knowledge because examinees often worry about such things. This was to bring you out of that. Now let us talk about some facts which you can use to impress the examiner and to snatch some extra marks from them against your roll number.

1) Neat handwriting is not required. But it should be legible. In fact it is better if you can read it easily. A bad handwriting can discourage an examiner from reading your copy and spoil his mood.

2) The presentation of your answer matters. This means how neat your copy is and whether what ever you have written has an attractive structure. I'm not talking about facts here but their presentation. Appreciation of beauty is natural and has a positive effect on all of us.

3) Do not try to fool the examiner. You should know that he knows very much about the answer he is checking and much more than you do. Making a mistake is okay because it happens. The examiner with his alert mind and sharp focus will have no difficulty in understanding whether your information is wrong or you are trying to fool him. It could be risky to play smart here.

4) The smoothness of language has the ability to sweep away the examiner. Using good language can attract the examiner so do not use abusive and crass words in your answers. Avoid preaching and sloganeering. Also ensure that you do not make grammatical and other errors. If you do make mistakes they should be as little as salt in your meal. Errors in language can disappoint an examiner.

5) Make sure you change the paragraph when necessary. This will not only make your answer look better but also help the examiner catch facts and arguments that you have laid down. This way you are helping the examiner.

6) The last thing to consider is the commodity. This is regarding what you have written. Have you written what has been asked? Can you present your arguments logically? Etc etc. This topic is related to the art of writing and demands a separate chapter. I would like to tell you that I have written on this topic in the previous issue of this magazine before. So there is no point in repeating the same things. I would like to tell you here that a good answer is liked by everyone and presenting what you have to say with logic and facts is the easiest way to do so. If you are able to do so, do not worry about scoring well. On the contrary, if you are unable to do so then there is no other way to score well, in this exam at least.

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