

Target:

Its realistic to target something around 120. Whatever one gets above this is a bonus.

What is expected:

If one goes through the essay question paper properly, esp. the instructions, it's easy to realise that

- Content relevance
- Logical presentation
- Concise format
- Effective language

are the key requirements.

Do not use any hi-fi language. Just plain, school student English would be good enough. The essay needs to be interesting.

How to choose a topic:

- Don't have any mindsets. At that point of time, inside the exam hall, we have to choose that topic which we really feel like writing. That one we would enjoy thinking and writing about. No other criterion to choose a topic.
- One way of making a quick decision is to firstly eliminate those topics that we are averse to. Of what remains take the one closest to your hearts.
- Also ensure that you choose a topic that you understand well – that you know the meaning of all the words in the topic.

How to go about it:

- Read the topic chosen 4-5 time thoroughly. Underline the key words. Read again. Get the actual meaning of what's asked for very clearly. If you have doubts about the meaning of even a single word in the topic, just leave the topic. Choose something else. Or one has to be contended with the scores around 60.
- Go to the last page of your answer sheets and just do a random brainstorming of the topic chosen. Random points - issues / events / definitions / narrations / quotes / news items etc. Whatever comes to the mind.
- After doing this for about 30-40 mins, Cluster the similar points together.
- Then sequence the clusters simply in a logical manner. Have around 11-12 clusters.
- An idea/para should just naturally flow out of the preceding one. The essay needs to be smooth.
- Now start writing the essay. It can be done in about 2 hours' time.
- It's just the expansion of each of the clusters. Make it around one page each. We'll end up with about 13 pages. That's it!
- But while expanding, and after ever page of writing go back to the essay topic again. Just to ensure you are writing on what's asked for. Else it's quite easy for one to drift away from the topic, landing-up around 60 marks.

Introduction/ Conclusion:

Crucial. The intro needs to be appealing. The reader should feel like reading more and more! It can be done in a few ways:

- Use of quotes
- An interesting narration
- Some event invokes attention
- After that initial para, the introduction needs to set the framework for the whole essay. It needs to be of one page, about 100 words. It needs to say what's in store - areas explored in the essay / issues addressed. It's like an abstract of a report or a cinema trailer.
- Conclusion is the climax where one presents his/her own view point. It needs to be futuristic/positive and original. Quotes can be used here too, just to make one's point get across.

Don'ts:

- Don't write the essay too technically. This usually happens when one chooses a topic related to his/her option. Be careful. The essay needs to be a very general one, a XII-class school student reading the essay should understand it, like it.
- Do not use many quotations. 2-3 max will do.
- Do not underline.
- Don't stretch the essay till the last minute. Finish it off 5-10 mins ahead of time and just have a reading. Nor finish it too early.
- Don't make the essay too lengthy. 1300 - 1600 words is ideal.
- Don't scribble. Write legibly.
- Don't make any grammar mistakes. Make short sentences and use common words.

Preparation:

Just take about an hour to think on some famous topics like :

- Women empowerment, Culture/Religion, Globalization, Democracy, Vision for India, Environment, Science / Space etc.

Look at the old essay topics. Keep a watch on the newspapers etc with this perspective also. Just jot down some interesting issues / quotes on some of these topics.

Practice:

Just write 2 essays max before the exam. Time it well. Exam conditions.