

Comprehension for UPSC - Know Important Tips to Excel

Reading Comprehension for UPSC is an important element of the exam. It evaluates your ability to understand and reason. It assesses your capacity to comprehend the main concepts in a text, connect different ideas presented in the passage, and draw inferences and conclusions. To excel in this, you need to build a strong vocabulary and enhance your reading skills. UPSC doesn't provide a specific syllabus for reading comprehension, so candidates must rely on their acquired skills to effectively tackle unfamiliar passages.



[Source: KD Live]

This section typically presents a passage followed by questions. Many UPSC aspirants find this challenging, especially when it comes to comprehending the passage effectively. If you're among those who struggle with this aspect, we have brought some valuable tips and suggestions to help you maximize your score in this area.

Importance of Comprehension for UPSC

The UPSC civil services exam consists of nine papers, with the English language paper, known as Paper B, being mandatory. This paper is of a qualifying nature, meaning the marks obtained in it won't contribute to the final ranking. However, passing it is a prerequisite to progress to the final stage, which is the personality test/interview round. The compulsory English Paper in the UPSC Civil Service Main Exam carries a weightage of 300 marks, and candidates must secure at least 75 marks to pass this paper.



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[Source: KD Live]

For additional knowledge about reading comprehension for UPSC exam, let's learn about the pattern.

Pattern of Reading Comprehension for UPSC

The pattern of the reading comprehension for UPSC Civil Services Examination typically consists of a passage or multiple passages followed by a series of questions.

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[Source: KD Live]

- 1. Passage(s):** You will be presented with one or more passages that can cover a range of topics, including literature, science, social issues, or current events. The number of passages can vary. It could be a single long passage or multiple shorter passages.
- 2. Types of Questions:** Following the passage(s), you will encounter questions that test your understanding of the content. The questions can be of various types, including:
 - Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs)
 - True/False Questions
 - Fill in the Blanks
 - Matching
 - Explanatory
- 3. Scoring:** Reading comprehension for UPSC typically carries a specific weightage in the English language paper. It may contribute to a portion of the overall marks allocated to the paper. To qualify the English language paper, you need to secure a minimum number of marks, usually around 75 out of 300.
- 4. Time Limit:** You'll have a limited time to read the passage(s) and answer the associated questions. Time management is crucial.



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Reading Comprehension for UPSC: Crucial Skills

Solving the reading comprehension section of UPSC exams can be challenging, but with the right strategies, you can improve your performance. Here are some effective strategies for tackling reading comprehension for UPSC.



[Source: KD Live]

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- 1. Active Reading:** Read the passage carefully and attentively. As you read, underline key points, important details, and unfamiliar words. This will help you stay focused and retain critical information. Pay attention to the main ideas, supporting details, and the author's tone or perspective. Take your time to grasp the content.
- 2. Preview the Questions:** Before you start reading the passage, take a quick look at the questions related to it. This will give you a sense of what to look for in the text and help you save time by focusing on relevant information.
- 3. Summarize the Passage:** After reading the passage, create a brief summary in your mind. This can help solidify your understanding and make it easier to answer questions.
- 4. Emphasizing Keywords:** Consider omitting extraneous words and sentences and concentrate on recognizing and highlighting the keywords. It is important to note that you don't necessarily need to grasp every single word within the passage. Instead, your goal is to identify the passage's main points and summary.
- 5. Answer Direct Questions First:** Start by answering the questions that directly reference specific lines or information in the passage. These questions are usually more straightforward.
- 6. Eliminate Wrong Answers:** If you're unsure about an answer, eliminate options that are clearly incorrect. This increases your chances of selecting the right answer, even if you're not entirely sure.
- 7. Vocabulary:** If you come across unfamiliar words in the passage, try to understand their meanings based on the context. A strong vocabulary can be an asset in understanding the text.

By using these strategies into your preparation and exam strategy, you can enhance your ability to tackle reading comprehension for UPSC exams.

Comprehension for UPSC: Previous Year Question

Now that you know about the importance and strategies to solve comprehension for UPSC, let's move ahead to a sample question to apply what we have understood.

Read carefully the passage given below and write your answers to the questions that follow in clear, correct and concise language.

History has a great variety of definitions and applications. In the broadest sense, it considers every action and every thought that man has had since his first appearance and records every significant advance or recession. It attempts to evaluate all the developments in science, in art, in literature, in philosophy, in architecture, in sociology, in politics, in war, in religion, and in law. It sketches as complete a picture as possible of everything that has influenced man directly or indirectly.

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History, more than any other subject, has been enslaved and distorted for selfish purposes. Members of the clergy have used it to glorify and to promote the interests of the church, statesmen have utilized it to sway masses, and writers have distorted facts to substantiate their conclusions. War spirit has been kindled through undue emphasis upon facts, if not falsification of them. The historian is likely to exaggerate the history of his own country sometimes unintentionally because of his environment, and sometimes in order to facilitate the sale of his book. In all countries, there are zealots in responsible positions who cannot bear to have their fatherland criticized. Truth is frequently sacrificed at the altar of patriotism. Henry C. Lea, an outstanding American historian, declared that history should be "a serious attempt to ascertain the severest truth as to the past and set it forth without fear or favour." Michelet, a famous French historian, believed that "sacrilege and the mocking of false gods are the historian's first duty, his indispensable instrument for re-establishing the truth."

The slight progress that we have made in the direction indicated by Lea and Michelet is rather discouraging, but there is a trend toward a broader and more inclusive point of view in the writing and teaching of history. World history, correctly interpreted, puts the individual state in the proper perspective and lessens the dangers of excessive nationalism. History has become more than war and politics. To make the story complete, the historian of the new school makes use of the work of the ethnologist, the anthropologist, the geographer, the archaeologist, the geologist, the psychologist, the astronomer, the zoologist, the biologist, the chemist, the sociologist, and the economist. He is concerned with man's cultural advances and his society, as well as with charters, constitutions, and wars.

There are dangers, as well as virtues, in the vast scope of the "new history". Overpopularization and underspecialization tend to cheapen history and to destroy some of its qualities as a basic and sober study. There are decided advantages in the comprehension of the broad scope of history, but, in addition, the student should be able to appreciate the depth of the subject. Years of research have been spent and volumes have been written on a single topic. Without these specialized works, surveys would be of no particular value. However, some of the historians of the "new history" have sacrificed important fundamental facts in order to make a chronicle of heroic persons and romantic occurrences. They have overstepped the point where history and fiction should meet. The historian should make his description of the past lifelike, hence, he should include grim realities as well as romantic incidents.

One of the important aspects of the "new history" is the emphasis upon man's cultural developments, popularly termed civilization. Civilization is difficult to define and evaluate. Just where it began and where man's actions and thoughts became human is impossible to determine. Man, like animals, has senses but some are less acutely developed; man has emotions, most of which are present, but latent, in animals. Comfort seems to be the chief goal of the lower forms of animal life, but man pushes beyond that toward something that he has difficulty in defining. This intangible something may be called civilization. Professor Lynn Thorndike believes that civilization "is the product of our higher qualities as exercised first by original and superior individuals and then accepted or followed by a sufficient number of human beings to make civilization. Emerson believed that civilization is progress, and Bertrand Russell, a modern philosopher, thinks that it is the progress and predominance of science. Perhaps we can agree that knowledge of nature, progress in art, an ethical code, a government, and a degree of material prosperity are essential in any form of civilized society. Civilization became possible when chaos and insecurity were minimized. Curiosity and constructiveness were encouraged when fear was overcome and man turned his attention toward the understanding and embellishment of life.



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Questions:

- (a) Why does the author consider history an all-inclusive area of study?
- (b) According to the author, how has history suffered distortions and why?
- (e) How does the author describe the new school of historians?
- (d) What are the dangers associated with "new history"?
- (e) Why is it difficult to define and evaluate civilization?

[Source: UPSC Main Exam 2019 English Compulsory Paper]

In conclusion, reading comprehension is a crucial element in the UPSC exams, testing your ability to understand, analyze, and interpret complex passages. We have uncovered the significance, pattern, and effective strategies to conquer this section. By following these tips and practicing regularly, you can enhance your comprehension skills and improve your performance in UPSC exams. Remember, preparation and persistence are the keys to success in this challenging yet rewarding endeavor.

Do you have any additional strategies or questions related to reading comprehension that you'd like to share? Your feedbacks are essential as they help us create content that aligns with your needs. So, please leave your questions and suggestions in the comments below. Visit [KD Live](https://www.kd-live.com) to engage with more of such informative content.