

**NEXT IAS**

# **ESSAY ESSENTIALS FOR CSE, 2024**

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**Essay Essentials**

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**Edition: 2024**

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*Director's  
Message*

Dear Aspirant,

Essay paper occupies a peculiar place in the UPSC Civil Services (Mains) Exam. This is the space where an aspirant's well-known understanding of various issues, conceptual clarity, critical thinking, writing skills, and organizational abilities are examined. To bridge the gap between what is needed and what is available, we are pleased to introduce our comprehensive essay handbook.

With a focus on improving knowledge base and understanding, the handbook provides aspirants with all the essential resources. It is equipped with fundamental concepts and detailed explanations of important topics relevant for the Essay paper. Theme-specific introductions, conclusions, examples and best practices are provided for all the major themes. These features help the aspirants to cover each topic in a comprehensive manner, enabling them to score high marks.

A key differentiator of the handbook is its particular emphasis on philosophical essays, which can be the game changers for the students. The handbook simplifies the process of brainstorming philosophical topics and generating mission-oriented essays. Each step of essay writing has been explained in detail with relevant examples.

Other distinguishing features of the book include relevant quotes and anecdotes on each topic. Anecdotes based on real life events, books and movies will help aspirants to write more creatively. Along with this, sample essays on each theme and many Previous Years' Questions have been provided, making it easy for students to produce an outstanding essay in the Mains exam.

The book also contains a section on Compulsory English language paper, which is relevant for both Civil Services and Indian Forest Services Examination. It contains solved Previous Year Questions of both the examinations. This section would help students in understanding the demand of the paper and score well in the exam.

We aim to help aspirants develop clarity of thought and expression by providing guidelines and examples.

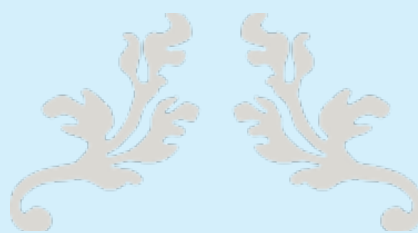
At NEXT IAS, we have a proven track record of hitting direct questions from our test series. The exact same questions have been asked by UPSC in recent years. Our team is constantly updating the study material after extensive research to meet the evolving trends and demands of the exam.

We hope our study material will make your life easier and help you achieve your goals.

Best wishes!

**B. Singh (Ex. IES)**

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# UNIT II

## CHAPTER 1

# LOGIC AND REASONING

### PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTIONS

Topics	Year
Mathematics is the music of reason	2023
Inspiration for creativity springs from the effort to look for the magical in the mundane.	2023
Thinking is like a game, it does not begin unless there is an opposite team.	2023
History is a series of victories won by the scientific man over the romantic man	2022
You cannot step twice in the same river	2022
Just because you have a choice, it does not mean that any of them has to be right	2022
History is a series of victories won by the scientific man over the romantic man	2022
Your perception of me is reflection of you; my reaction to you is an awareness of me	2021
The real is rational and the rational is real	2021
What is research, but a blind date with knowledge!	2021
There are better practices to 'best practices'	2020
Wisdom finds truth.	2019
A good life is one inspired by love and guided by knowledge.	2018
Reality does not conform to the ideal, but confirms it.	2018
There is nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so.	2003
If youth knew, if age could.	2002
Disinterested intellectual curiosity is the lifeblood of civilization.	1995
He would reign within himself and folds his passions and desires and fears is more than a king.	1993

#### Significance of Logic and Reasoning:

- Better and informed decision making with proper evaluation of the pros and cons.
- Helps to break down the problem to identify the essential elements and see for a solution.
- Assess credibility of information and form well-informed viewpoints.
- Analyse different perspectives and identify the common ground.

In essence, the significance of logic and reasoning in life lies in their capacity to foster thoughtful decision-making, facilitate effective problem-solving, enhance communication skills, and contribute to personal and intellectual growth. These skills are valuable assets that empower individuals to navigate the complexities of the world with clarity and purpose.

## A. RATIONALISM

### Core principles:

- **Mind has innate knowledge:** Rationalists believe the mind possesses certain fundamental truths or principles at birth, independent of experience. (Think of mathematical axioms like  $1 + 1 = 2$ )
- **Reason is the path to truth:** Logical deduction and analysis are seen as the most reliable ways to arrive at true knowledge.
- **Universal truths exist:** Rationalists believe there are universal and objective truths that can be discovered through reason, independent of individual perception.

### Opposition to Empiricism:

- Rationalism stands in contrast to empiricism, which emphasizes sensory experience as the foundation of knowledge.
- Empiricists like John Locke argued that the mind is a blank slate at birth (*tabula rasa*) and all knowledge comes from experience.

### Quotes:

- To be rational is to think in accordance with logic; to think in accordance with logic is to be rational. - *Ayn Rand*
- I would rather have questions that can't be answered than answers that can't be questioned. - *Richard Feynman*
- Reason is the only oracle of man. - *Thomas Jefferson*
- A rationalist is simply someone for whom it is more important to learn than to be proved right; someone who is willing to learn from others. - *B. R. Ambedkar*
- Science is the great antidote to the poison of enthusiasm and superstition. - *Adam Smith*
- I do not feel obliged to believe that the same God who has endowed us with sense, reason, and intellect has intended us to forgo their use. - *Galileo Galilei*
- The essence of the independent mind lies not in what it thinks, but in how it thinks. - *Christopher Hitchens*

### Anecdotes/Examples:

- **The Tale of the Flat Earth Society:** The Flat Earth Society, though often considered an eccentric outlier, serves as a modern-day anecdote illustrating the clash between rationalism and entrenched beliefs. Despite overwhelming evidence supporting the Earth's spherical shape, members of the Flat Earth Society cling to their conviction that the Earth is flat. This anecdote underscores the challenges of rational discourse when faced with deeply held beliefs that contradict empirical evidence.
- **The Blind Men and the Elephant:** This ancient parable illustrates the importance of perspective and rational inquiry. In the story, several blind men encounter an elephant for the first time. Each man touches a different part of the elephant (such as the trunk, tail, or legs) and forms a different interpretation of what an elephant is like based on their limited experience. The moral of the story is that one must consider multiple perspectives and use rational thought to understand the truth fully.
- **The Charvaka School of Philosophy:** The Charvaka (also known as Lokayata) school of philosophy, which originated in ancient India, was known for its materialistic and rationalistic views.

- **Economic Reforms of 1991:** In response to a balance of payments crisis, the Indian government, led by then-Finance Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh, initiated a series of economic reforms in 1991. These reforms aimed to liberalize the economy, remove bureaucratic hurdles, and encourage private investment. The decision to implement these reforms was based on a rational assessment of the economic situation and the recognition of the need for structural changes to spur growth. While there was resistance from some quarters within the bureaucracy, the rational approach to policymaking ultimately prevailed, leading to significant economic transformation.
- Rationalism offers a valuable perspective on the power of reason in understanding the world. While pure reason might not hold all the answers, it remains a crucial tool in our quest for knowledge.

### Movie/Book References:

- **The Matrix (1999):** This science fiction film explores the nature of reality and perception. The main character, Neo, is presented with two choices: a red pill representing the harsh truth of a simulated reality, and a blue pill representing blissful ignorance. Choosing the red pill reflects a rational approach, seeking knowledge and understanding even if it's uncomfortable.
- **A Beautiful Mind (2001):** This biographical drama portrays the life of John Nash, a brilliant mathematician who struggles with schizophrenia. The film explores the tension between reason and logic (which Nash embodies) and subjective experience (represented by his hallucinations). While the film doesn't strictly endorse rationalism, it highlights its importance in navigating complex realities.

### Sample Approach: The real is rational and the rational is real. (UPSC CSE 2021)

- The above phrase indicates the relationship between reality and rationalism. The essay can be interpreted mainly in two ways. One, where the idealistic approach can be taken to represent that the rational ideas are the foundation of reality. Second, the significance of rationalism in understanding reality.
- The real is rational- Reason and logic impact our perception of reality. Anything that can be comprehended and clarified by reason is what we consider to be real.
- The rational is real- Ideas that are logically sound and consistent with reason have a kind of reality, even if they haven't been directly observed in the physical world. For example, mathematical concepts like infinity exist as ideas within our system of logic.
- The second part of the essay can be focused on the significance of rationalism in the world of reality. This has been discussed above already.
- The essay can be substantiated with anecdotes where rationalism has been seen to take the centre stage in life. Different angles of thoughts and approaches can be incorporated to give the essay a holistic view. For example, how rationalism has been used in the field of politics, economy or scientific discoveries.
- The conclusion can be formed with an anti-thesis approach, where sometimes, overemphasis on rationalism can downplay the significance of experience (empiricism). Logic and reasoning are subjective at times where our cultural bias and ethnocentric approach can affect our reasoning.

## B. WISDOM

- Wisdom is a multifaceted concept that has been pondered by philosophers and everyday people for millennia. It encompasses a variety of qualities that allow us to navigate life's complexities with understanding, judgment, and compassion.

**Core principles:**

- **Knowledge and Experience:** Wisdom is built upon a foundation of knowledge acquired through learning and experience.
- **Good Judgement:** Wisdom is the capacity to distinguish right from wrong, good from bad, and make wise choices when faced with uncertainty. It entails assessing many viewpoints, thinking through the repercussions, and taking proactive measures.
- **Insight and Understanding:** Wise people see beyond the surface of things. They have a deep understanding of human nature, the complexities of life, and the interconnectedness of the world.
- **Compassion and Empathy:** Wisdom encompasses the ability to see things from other people's perspectives, feel their emotions, and act with compassion.

**Quotes:**

- Wisdom is not a product of schooling but of the lifelong attempt to acquire it. - *Albert Einstein*
- Knowing yourself is the beginning of all wisdom. - *Aristotle*
- The invariable mark of wisdom is to see the miraculous in the common. - *Ralph Waldo Emerson*
- The art of being wise is the art of knowing what to overlook. - *William James*
- The function of wisdom is to discriminate between good and evil. - *Marcus Tullius Cicero*

**Anecdotes/Examples:**

- **The Wise Old Sage and the Disciple:** In this classic tale, a young disciple seeks wisdom from an old sage. The disciple approaches the sage and asks, "What is the secret of acquiring the wisdom?" The sage responds by leading the disciple to a nearby river. He instructs the disciple to wade into the water with him. As they enter deeper, the sage suddenly pushes the disciple's head underwater. After a few moments, he releases him and they both emerge gasping for air. The disciple, confused and angry, demands an explanation. The sage calmly responds, "When you desire wisdom as intensely as you desired air just now, then you will find it." This anecdote illustrates that true wisdom often comes from a deep thirst for knowledge and understanding.
- **Mahatma Gandhi's Wisdom in Conflict Resolution:** During India's struggle for independence, Mahatma Gandhi demonstrated remarkable wisdom in his approach to conflict resolution. One notable example is the Dandi March, also known as the Salt Satyagraha, where Gandhi led a peaceful protest against the British salt tax by walking over 240 miles to the coastal village of Dandi to produce salt from seawater. Gandhi's nonviolent resistance and civil disobedience not only captured the attention of the world but also showcased his wisdom in confronting oppression with moral courage and strategic nonviolence.
- **Chanakya:** An ancient Indian scholar and advisor to Emperor Chandragupta Maurya, Chanakya's wisdom is evident in his strategic and diplomatic expertise showcased in the Arthashastra, a treatise on statecraft.
- **Nelson Mandela:** Nelson Mandela, a prominent figure in South Africa, recognized the significance of truth and reconciliation in fostering national unity. Upon his release from prison, he promoted forgiveness rather than seeking retribution. A sharply divided country was brought back together by this strategy, which was based on wisdom and a thorough understanding of justice and truth. Because of his knowledge, Mandela was able to look beyond and seek for the truth that would bring about lasting peace.

**Movie/Book References:**

- **Star Wars (Original Trilogy, 1977-1983):** While Yoda isn't technically human, his persona in Star Wars is a quintessential example of wisdom. Yoda teaches Luke Skywalker patience, wisdom, and the value of comprehending the Force (a metaphor for a universal energy field).



- **The Shawshank Redemption (1994):** Through the character of Andy Dufresne, this movie portrays wisdom as a form of resilience and perseverance. Despite facing hardship, Andy uses his wisdom and presence of mind to navigate the prison system to finally attain freedom.
- **The Godfather (1972):** The character of Vito Corleone, the patriarch of the Corleone family, offers a detailed picture of wisdom. His decisions are based on reason, experience, and a deep understanding of power dynamics. However, the film also showcases the moral consequences of such choices, depicting the aspects of true wisdom.

### Sample Approach: Wisdom finds truth (UPSC CSE 2019)

- In this essay, there can be two sub-parts. The first part can be used to bring out the essence of wisdom and truth individually. The second part can delve into the co-relation between wisdom and truth and how wisdom helps in finding the truth.
- In the first part, the interpretation of wisdom can be done in different ways. It can be seen as the ability to implement our knowledge and experience in a constructive manner to navigate our ways through life. It is the understanding that we collect as we sail through the ups and downs of life.
- Similarly, truth can be expanded through different perspectives- personal truth, universal principles, objective facts, etc.
- In the second part, the intertwining of wisdom and truth needs to be focused on. How, through wisdom and understanding, one can identify the truth in the ocean of lies.
- The essay can be substantiated with anecdotes from different spheres of the world, involving important events and personalities.
- For example, when Mahatma Gandhi returned to India after his Satyagraha movement in South Africa, he was able to implement his learnings and experience in seeking the truth in the national freedom movement of India.
- Finally, the essay can be concluded on a positive note by summarising all the points mentioned.

## C. PASSION

### Core principles:

- **Intrinsic desire:** Passion stems from a genuine internal motivation and fuels the urge to pursue something.
- **Sense of fulfilment:** Passion is often connected to a sense of purpose, a belief about the significance of something.
- **Engagement and Focus:** Passion keeps people focused and helps them to overcome any challenge with determination.
- **Growth Mindset:** Passion thrives on a willingness to learn and grow. It involves embracing challenges as opportunities to improve, persisting through setbacks, and constantly seeking knowledge and new experiences.

### Quotes:

- There is no passion to be found playing small - in settling for a life that is less than the one you are capable of living. - *Nelson Mandela*
- Passion is the fire that drives us to express who we really are. - *Simon Sinek*
- Passion is the genesis of genius. - *Tony Robbins*

- Nothing great in the world has ever been accomplished without passion. - *Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel*
- The only way to do great work is to love what you do. If you haven't found it yet, keep looking. Don't settle. - *Steve Jobs*
- Nothing is as important as passion. No matter what you want to do with your life, be passionate. - *Jon Krakauer*

#### Anecdotes/Examples:

- **Havergal Beacham**, a woman who did not begin programming until she was 81 years old. She enrolled in a computer programming course at her local senior centre because she has always been interested in technology and wants to learn new things. Despite difficulties with memory and vision, her enthusiasm for coding drove her determination.
- **Dashrath Manjhi's** strong love for his wife, Falguni Devi, drove him to accomplish his passion of carving a path through a mountain. When she tragically died as a result of a lack of prompt medical assistance caused by the difficult terrain, his grief and love spurred his ambition to remove the impediment for good. Armed with only a hammer, chisel, and crowbar, he worked alone for almost 20 years, demonstrating the power of passion.

#### Movie/Book References:

- **Black Swan (2010):** A ballerina becomes consumed by her desire to land the lead role in a ballet production. This movie explores the psychological intensity and vulnerability that can come with passionate pursuits.
- **The Joy Luck Club (1993):** Four Chinese-American families work through the complexities of their cultural heritage. This film shows passion as a way of connecting with one's identity and traditions.
- **The Alchemist by Paulo Coelho:** This allegorical novel follows a shepherd boy on his journey to fulfill his personal legend, a metaphor for pursuing one's dreams and passions.

### D. OBJECTIVITY

- Objectivity is the ability to see beyond bias and preconceived notions to understand the truth of a situation.

#### Quotes:

- In questions of science, the authority of a thousand is not worth the humble reasoning of a single individual. - *Galileo Galilei*
- Objectivity comes from a disciplined balance between skepticism and openness; from a profound recognition that the universe is inherently plural and that whatever we take to be real is but one interpretation. - *Jimena Canales*
- Objectivity is not the absence of subjectivity, but a balance between the two. - *Howard Gardner*
- Objectivity is the cure for uncertainty. - *Seth Godin*

#### Anecdotes/Examples:

- **D Subbarao: (Aptitude, Reformist, Objectivity, Integrity):** Subbarao, a 1972 IAS officer, served as the RBI's 22nd governor. As RBI Governor, he implemented measures to improve financial inclusion and literacy, as well as organized local outreach programs. He even proposed a theory on the New Trilemma of Central Bankers known as the 'Holy Trinity' in contrast to Robert Mundell and Marcus Fleming's 'Impossible Trinity'. He was the first to evaluate Stephen Hawking's well-known book, 'A Brief History of Time'.

- **Socrates and the Oracle of Delphi-** In ancient Greece, Socrates was renowned for his wisdom and philosophical insights. According to legend, he once visited the Oracle of Delphi and asked if anyone was wiser than him. The Oracle replied that no one was wiser than Socrates because he alone recognized the limits of his own knowledge.
- In 2015, a photo of a dress went viral online. The debate centred on whether the dress was blue and black or gold and white. People argued about the “true” colour of the dress. Science explains the phenomenon as a result of how our individual brains process colour based on lighting conditions. This anecdote highlights how even something seemingly objective – the colour of a dress in a photo – can be perceived differently by different people.

### Movie/Book References:

- **The Social Network (2010):** The film tells the story of the creation of Facebook and the consequent legal battles, presenting different viewpoints of the stakeholders involved. By presenting the contrasting viewpoints of everyone, the movie portrays the complexity of truth and the challenges of achieving an objective narrative.
- **All the President’s Men (1976):** This classic film chronicles the investigation of the Watergate scandal. The movie emphasizes the importance of fact-checking, corroborating sources, and remaining objective in their pursuit of the truth.

### Sample Approach: Objectivity is the summation of subjectivity

- The above phrase is a metaphor that tries to explain the inter-connectedness of objectivity and subjectivity.
- On one hand, most of the times, both the concepts are seen as in direct opposition to each other, however, sometimes, objectivity can be informed by subjectivity.
- In the first part, both terms can be vividly explained with adequate examples.
- In the second part, their inter-relation can be discussed from different approaches by taking up examples, preferable from real events.
- Objectivity strives to present a neutral and unbiased view. However, true neutrality can seldom be achieved. By incorporating several subjective perspectives, we can gain a more well-rounded understanding and minimize the influence of any single bias. In a way, objectivity can be seen as the sum of many subjective perspectives.

## E. CRITICAL THINKING

- Critical thinking is the ability to analyse, evaluate, and synthesize information in a logical and systematic manner to form reasoned judgments and make informed decisions.

### Core Principles:

- ♦ **Analysis:** Breaking down information into its component parts, identifying relationships, and recognizing patterns.
- ♦ **Evaluation:** Assessing the credibility of sources, the strength of evidence, and the logic of arguments.
- ♦ **Inference:** Drawing reasonable conclusions based on available information, considering different possibilities.
- ♦ **Problem-solving:** Identifying problems clearly, generating creative solutions, and evaluating their effectiveness.

- ♦ **Open-mindedness:** Being receptive to new ideas and perspectives, even if they challenge your existing beliefs.
- ♦ **Self-Regulation:** Monitoring and reflecting on one's own thought processes, biases, and assumptions, actively seeking out feedback and revising one's beliefs or perspectives when necessary.

### Essentiality in life:

- **Academic pursuits:** Evaluating research papers, constructing arguments for essays, and analysing complex topics.
- **Workplace:** Solving problems, making data-driven decisions, and collaborating effectively.
- **Citizenship:** Engaging in informed political discussions, evaluating media reports, and forming your own opinions on important issues.

### Quotes:

- The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. Intelligence plus character - that is the goal of true education. - *Martin Luther King Jr.*
- Education is not the learning of facts, but the training of the mind to think. - *Albert Einstein*
- It is the mark of an educated mind to be able to entertain a thought without accepting it. - *Aristotle*
- The essence of the independent mind lies not in what it thinks, but in how it thinks. - *Christopher Hitchens*

### Anecdotes/Examples:

- **Albert Einstein's Thought Experiments:** Albert Einstein, one of the greatest physicists of all time, was known for his ground-breaking theories and remarkable ability to think critically. One anecdote that showcases Einstein's critical thinking involves his famous "thought experiments," where he traced his realization of light's finite speed—the core idea of special relativity—to his teenage daydreams about riding beams of light.
- **Marie Curie's Discovery of Radioactivity:** Marie Curie, the pioneering physicist and chemist, exemplified critical thinking in her ground-breaking research on radioactivity. She conducted meticulous experiments, analysed data with precision, and drew logical conclusions based on empirical evidence. Through her innovative research methods and critical inquiry, Curie not only discovered two new elements but also laid the foundation for future advances in nuclear physics and medicine.
- **Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam's Approach to Missile Technology:** Dr. Kalam's critical thinking and innovative mindset led to the development of indigenous missile technologies that significantly enhanced India's defence capabilities. His ability to analyse complex problems, challenge conventional wisdom, and inspire his team to think outside the box played a pivotal role in the success of India's missile program.
- **Epictetus and the Slave Master-** Epictetus was a Stoic philosopher who was born into slavery. Despite his lowly status, he became renowned for his wisdom and teachings. Once, his slave master was berating him for teaching philosophy to others. Epictetus calmly replied, "You may fetter my leg, but not even Jupiter himself can control my thinking."
- **Descartes' Dream Argument-** In his "**Meditations on First Philosophy**," the French philosopher René Descartes questions whether we can trust our senses, arguing that it is possible that all our experiences are just a dream or an illusion. This argument highlights the role of scepticism and critical thinking in philosophy.

**Movie/Book References:**

- **The Usual Suspects (1995):** This crime film keeps the audience guessing through brilliant narration and hidden clues. To understand the truth, viewers need to critically evaluate the evidence presented by different characters and draw their own conclusions.
- **The Truman Show (1998):** Truman Burbank, a character in the film, unknowingly, lives his entire life on a giant TV set. As he starts questioning the reality around him, viewers are pushed to think critically about their own perceptions and consider alternative explanations for what they see.

**Sample Approach: Thinking is like a game; it does not begin unless there is an opposite team. (UPSC CSE 2023)**

- The above phrase depicts a metaphor to capture the essence of how rational thinking works.
- It intends to emphasize the importance of an opposition side to bring rationality in thought process.
- In the essay, there are two aspects that need to be delved into. One, how thinking is analogous to a game where there are two sides opposite to each other. Second, how the opposite team helps in creating a balanced and critical approach. The essay can, thus, be structured into two parts accordingly.
- In the first part, the comparison of thinking with a game needs to be substantiated. In this part, anecdotes and quotations can be used to validate the points. For example, renowned for his ground-breaking ideas of relativity, Albert Einstein was a master of thought experiments. In these studies, complicated topics were explored through the creation of hypothetical scenarios. He was, as it were, creating a mental “game” in which the laws of physics were the adversary. Through the manipulation of these thought experiments, Einstein was able to question accepted wisdom and come up with novel solutions.
- In the second part, the emphasis should be laid on the significance of an opponent in a game. Just like a good opponent in a game push one to improve one’s strategy, encountering opposing viewpoints challenges one’s own assumptions. This forces you to re-evaluate your position and potentially refine your thinking.
- Both parts can be approached from different perspectives, for instance, political, economic decisions, social policies, etc.
- The concluding part can be used to summarize the entire essay with additional quotations.

