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# Mastering the Art of Essay Writing for CSS Exam in the Light of FPSC Examiners' Report

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In the world of competitive examinations, few challenges are as formidable as mastering the art of essay writing for the Central Superior Service (CSS) Exam. As the examiners' reports suggest, candidates often grapple with common issues such as lack of conceptual clarity, poor language skills, weak argumentation, and improper structure. These hurdles often act as roadblocks to their success. But with targeted strategies and a comprehensive understanding of what the examiners expect, you can excel in this crucial component of the CSS exam. In this article, we will delve into the examiners' reports, analyze the common pitfalls in essay writing, and provide you with practical tips and tricks to ace your CSS English Essay paper. Whether you are just starting your CSS journey or looking to improve your essay writing skills, this guide is tailored to help you achieve your goals.

Competitive examinations like the Central Superior Service (CSS) exam, conducted by the Federal Public Service Commission (FPSC) in Islamabad, offer ambitious individuals the opportunity to secure elite posts under the federal government. To succeed in such a rigorous test, it is critical to acquire comprehensive expertise in various areas, one of which is English Essay writing.

Unfortunately, performance in this section has been disappointing over the past few years, as many candidates have demonstrated weaknesses and made common mistakes. We shall analyze these issues and offer strategies to improve based on expert opinions and recommendations. Last few years performance of candidates in *English Essay* papers under CSS Competitive Examination has not been as satisfactory as in other papers. Some of the extracts from the [FPSC Examiners' Reports](#), highlighting the weaknesses and common mistakes in essay writing, are reproduced below for the general information and guidance of the candidates;

**CSS CE-2014:** Question paper was set to evaluate the performance of the candidates in terms

of their conceptual, linguistic and writing competencies, but common trends observed were lack of conceptual clarity, shallow knowledge of subject, grammatical mistakes, and inappropriate choice of vocabulary and stereotype answers. Majority of the candidates did not follow the norms of confrontational discourse and wrote isolated sentences rather than in cohesive paragraphs. The ability required in CSS is extensive reading, holistic and appreciable performance approach in the subject but majority lacked these characteristics.”

**CSS CE-2016:** The performance in English Essay was unsatisfactory. A significant majority failed in the subject. Ideas presented were random. The argument was without any logical reasoning or research based facts. There was neither coherence nor creativity. The candidates were neither able to build an argument from multiple angles nor substantiated it with facts. The outline of Essay was not properly structured. In many answer scripts, aspects mentioned in the outline were not discussed in the Essay.

**CSS CE-2017:** The standard Essay was examined on footing of argumentation, content, language and intellectual signifier. The quality and level of critical argumentation on the whole was very poor. Most of the candidates were unable to identify the dormant contention in topics. In most papers content were inadequate and irrelevant. Most worrying aspect of Essays was the wrong use of English language. The sentence structure was glaringly flawed. Moreover grammatical and spellings mistakes were rife. The intellectual level of essays was mediocre and candidates were unable to even grasp the topic of the essay.

**CSS CE-2018:** Candidates were at their best in topics involving critical and subjective approach i.e. in topics like Democracy in Pakistan: Hopes and Hurdles, Rule of Law, Safeguarding Human Rights & Civil Liberties during Fight against Terrorism and Corruption etc. On the other hand, in topics that were of objective nature (Global Warming / CPEC), reliance on crammed knowledge, dull monotony and repetition of stereotypical information was observed. A significant number of the candidates did not have a clear sense of the essentials of a comprehensive essay or the features which differentiate an essay from other forms of writing. Candidates must know about the qualities of a standard Essay and the standard expected by the Commission in the Competitive Exam.

For facilitation and guidance of the CSS aspirants, some highly reputed educationists/examiners were asked to share opinions regarding what is expected of a good essay and what mistakes are to be avoided. Some of the guidelines provided by these experts are reproduced in the next It should be noted that these observations/assertions are views of the individual educationists and not the official prescription of FPSC. It is the sole discretion of the candidate to follow these guidelines. The same cannot be quoted as a set of standard at any forum.

## **CSS English Essay Paper 2024: Important Topics, Examiner's Perspective & Essay Writing Techniques**

### **Subject Expert/Examiner - I**

1. Proper beginning with a compact and elaborated topic sentence that must reflect the candidates clear understanding of the
2. Correct and flawless
3. Use of appropriate vocabulary
4. Literacy and idiomatic expression
5. Use of relevant terminology if needed
6. Selection of relevant thoughts
7. Logical organization of
8. Coherence in arrangement of material/paragraphs
9. Cohesion in development of argument reaching the conclusion
10. Clarity in language, ideas, debate and
11. Comprehensiveness
12. Logical presentation of the argument
13. Standard sizing as per requirement
14. Avoidance of too much scholarship
15. Through acquaintance with the nature of question i.e topic
16. Quotation, when used, must be well placed and relevant
17. Impressive finish

### **Subject Expert/Examiner - II**

1. A good essay is not supposed to reflect crammed information or bookish knowledge about the topic. It should rather tell us about the writer's personal feelings or thoughts about it, and his ability to convert these feelings and thoughts into arguments for convincing the
2. It should be self-contained and self-explanatory: not depending on any outside source for its essential
3. Its basic stance should be creative, critical and analytical rather than narrative or
4. It should contain a unified and coherent discussion on a particular topic (strictly in accordance with the wording of the title), with no digression or overshadowing.

5. It should work through establishing the writer's personal stand about the subject, and substantiating that stand with convincing
6. It should be compact and concise, with no loose constructions or unnecessary attachments.
7. It should have a balanced body, with a beginning, middle and end-each one serving its own distinct
8. It should work as a unit of impression in the sense that the impact of the beginning is still fresh when the reader reaches the
9. It should be a fluent text with natural linkage among parts and paragraphs, with no disjointed or segregated

### **Subject Expert/Examiner III**

1. Relevance
2. Structure
3. How to handle an argument or to be argumentative
4. Counter-viewing the argument
5. Avoid superfluity
6. English – figurative and metaphoric
7. How to pitch your bias
8. How to avoid spurious ideas
9. How to show difference between specific and general ideas
10. Paragraph transition (most important)

### **Subject Expert/Examiner IV**

1. Answer the exact inquiry set, instead of displaying data that is comprehensively important to the
2. Have a reasonable contention or point of view, so the examiner knows from the start what the candidate means to state, and can follow the advancement of his/her contention all through the
3. Be critical and analytical clarifying why something is critical, instead of basically depicting what scholars have
4. Provide reasons, in view of sound proof, to help the primary
5. Have good paragraphing: the primary concern of each passage is presented unmistakably, and sections pursue sensibly from one
6. Evaluate alternate point of view: it weighs up the relative worth or importance of various perspectives or speculations, assessing the key contentions and proof for these, and clarifying why one lot of contentions, reasons or proof is more persuading than

7. Refer to speculations and ways of thinking important to the inquiry, showing a comprehension of the criticalness of these to the
8. Include references: where applicable, careful references (names and dates).
9. Be particular: it incorporates only the data and detail that is most applicable to responding to the inquiry, and forgets about less important
10. Be composed unmistakably and to the point, without waffle, reiteration, stupendous speculations, bombastic language, superfluous language, or individual

## The Recurring Challenges of CSS English Essay Writing figured out by Examiners

Addressing the repeated challenges that CSS aspirants encounter when writing essays can significantly enhance their performance in the exam. An in-depth analysis of examiner reports over the years has revealed the following major issues & problematic areas. Together, they constitute the top 10 challenges faced by candidates, there are following:

1. **Lack of Conceptual Clarity:** Candidates frequently struggle to grasp the essence and broader implications of essay topics, leading to a superficial treatment of the subject. This often results from inadequate research or shallow understanding of the issue at hand.
2. **Poor Language and Vocabulary Skills:** Numerous candidates face difficulty in crafting grammatically correct sentences and choosing suitable vocabulary. This problem hampers their ability to convey complex thoughts clearly and compellingly.
3. **Weak Argumentation and Analysis:** Many essays lack strong, persuasive arguments backed by logical reasoning and research-based facts. A shortage of critical analysis and innovative perspectives on the subject matter is common, reducing the essays' overall quality and impact.
4. **Inadequate Structure and Organization:** Candidates often exhibit a lack of understanding of the difference between an essay and other forms of writing. As a result, essays often lack a well-defined structure and flow, reducing clarity and coherence.
5. **Insufficient Understanding of Different Perspectives:** Candidates sometimes fail to appreciate the multifaceted nature of topics, focusing only on a single perspective. This leads to unbalanced essays that do not explore issues from multiple angles.
6. **Overuse of Stereotypical Information:** Especially in topics that are objective in nature, candidates tend to fall back on clichéd and often repeated facts or viewpoints. Such over-reliance on conventional wisdom can undermine the originality and depth of the essay.

7. **Lack of Creativity:** Many essays are descriptive rather than analytical or reflective. They fail to demonstrate the writer's personal viewpoint or innovative ideas, which are key to crafting a compelling narrative.
8. **Failure to Develop a Cohesive Narrative:** An effective essay should seamlessly transition from one point to another, creating a coherent narrative. Many candidates struggle with this, resulting in essays that seem disjointed and lack cohesion.
9. **Inadequate Referencing:** A well-referenced essay showcases a breadth of research and a nuanced understanding of the topic. However, many candidates either overlook this aspect or do not do it correctly, weakening their essays' credibility.
10. **Ineffective Conclusion:** Often, candidates fail to wrap up their essays effectively. An impactful conclusion is as vital as a strong introduction since it ties together all arguments and provides a resonating final thought. However, this is an area where many candidates fall short.

Each of these challenges can be overcome with dedicated practice, guided learning, and meticulous preparation. By recognizing and addressing these issues, candidates can significantly improve their essay writing skills for the CSS exam.

If you have ever analyzed the English Essay paper for the CSS, you might have read that the Examiner says in the instructions above which states

**“Make sure you use different forms of discourses,  
e.g. <sup>1</sup>exposition, <sup>2</sup>argumentation, <sup>3</sup>description and <sup>4</sup>narration.  
Credit will be given for <sup>1</sup>organization, <sup>2</sup>relevance and <sup>3</sup>clarity.”**

The instructions provided by the examiner refer to the four traditional modes of discourse in writing, which are exposition, argumentation, description, and narration. Each of these modes has a unique purpose and characteristics. Using a combination of these modes can make an essay more engaging and comprehensive. Here's a breakdown of each mode:

#### 1. **Exposition:**

The purpose of expository writing is to explain, inform, or clarify. It presents a balanced analysis of a topic using facts, statistics, and examples. For instance, if a candidate is writing about “the rise of digital currencies,” they may use exposition to explain what digital currencies are, how they work, and their prevalence in the current economy. This is like giving a simple, clear explanation about something. Imagine your friend has never seen a pineapple before. You would describe it as a fruit with a spiky green top and



rough, patterned skin that's yellow inside and very sweet. That's an exposition.

**2. Argumentation:**

Argumentative writing presents a claim or a stance and provides evidence to support this position. It is persuasive in nature and requires logical reasoning. For instance, in an essay discussing "ethical consumerism," a candidate might argue for or against its feasibility, providing relevant evidence and arguments to support their stance. This is when you firmly believe in something and want to convince others about it. For example, you think that video games are not bad for kids. You'd argue that they can help improve hand-eye coordination and problem-solving skills. You would provide evidence, like statements from experts or results from scientific studies, to make your point stronger.

**3. Description:**

Descriptive writing aims to paint a picture using words. It involves detailed observations and descriptions. While typically less prevalent in essay writing, it can be used effectively to illustrate a point. For example, in an essay on "climate diplomacy," a candidate could use descriptive writing to vividly explain the impacts of climate change in specific regions. This is like painting a picture with words. Let's say you just went to a fun fair. You might describe the bright lights of the Ferris wheel, the smell of popcorn in the air, the sound of children laughing, and the feel of cotton candy melting in your mouth.

**4. Narration:**

Narrative writing tells a story. It involves characters, a plot, and a distinct narrative voice. In an essay, this could take the form of a brief anecdote or personal experience to provide context or support a point. For instance, in an essay about "the transformation of education in the AI era," a candidate might include a narrative about their personal experience with online learning. This is telling a story. It could be about an adventure you had, like the time you went camping and saw a shooting star, or it could be a made-up story, like a tale of a brave knight saving a kingdom.

**The examiner also emphasizes the importance of organization, relevance, and clarity in the essay:**

**1. Organization:**

This refers to the logical and effective structuring of the essay. It involves having a clear introduction, body, and conclusion, and ensuring ideas flow logically from one to another. Just like when you tidy your room and put everything where it belongs, your essay should also be tidy. You should have a clear beginning, middle, and end, and your ideas should be grouped in a logical way.

**2. Relevance:**

This means that everything included in the essay should be pertinent to the topic at hand. Irrelevant information or tangents should be avoided. This means you should stay on topic. If the topic is about dogs, don't start talking about cats or fish. Stick to the subject of dogs only.

**3. Clarity:**

This refers to the readability and comprehensibility of the essay. Sentences should be clear and concise, and ideas should be expressed in a way that is easy to understand. This means that you should write so others can easily understand. Don't use very big words or complex sentences. Think about it like explaining the rules of a game to your friend. You want them to understand so you can start playing right away.

**[Tips for Writing an Effective English Essay for CSS & PMS Exam](#)**

## Strategies for Success in CSS Essay Writing

Drawing from expert opinions, we have compiled a list of strategies that can help you improve your essay writing skills for the CSS exam.

- 1. Clear Understanding and Conceptual Clarity:** Before you begin writing, it's essential to fully understand your topic. Spend ample time researching and gathering data, arguments, and viewpoints related to your topic. Understanding the nuances of your topic will not only enable you to create a comprehensive outline but also add depth and credibility to your essay.
- 2. Language Proficiency:** Mastering the language is crucial for conveying your ideas effectively. Regular reading can greatly enhance your vocabulary and understanding of grammar. Practice writing daily, focusing on clarity and simplicity. Use an advanced grammar checking tool to identify and correct potential errors in your writing.
- 3. Strong Argumentation and Critical Analysis:** An impressive essay is marked by robust, logical arguments backed by strong evidence. Each claim you make should be supported with appropriate examples or facts. Instead of simply stating ideas, explain them thoroughly and provide an analysis from multiple perspectives.
- 4. Effective Structure and Organization:** Organizing your essay effectively is key to maintaining a logical flow of ideas. Start with an outline and categorize your ideas into introduction, body, and conclusion. Each paragraph should represent a unique idea that supports your main argument. Transition words and phrases can help maintain coherence and guide the reader through your arguments.



5. **Relevance and Precision:** Keep your writing focused and on-topic. Each sentence should add value to your argument and support your main thesis. Remove any information that doesn't directly contribute to your argument or explain your viewpoint.
6. **Balanced Approach:** A balanced essay discusses all relevant perspectives. Don't hesitate to explore counter-arguments and provide reasons why you agree or disagree with them. This shows the examiner that you have considered all sides of an issue and have a thorough understanding of the topic.
7. **Creativity and Originality:** Stand out from other candidates by adding a touch of creativity to your essay. Use metaphors, analogies, and original insights to make your essay more engaging. Avoid cliches and strive to present a fresh perspective on the topic.
8. **Practice and Feedback:** Writing is a skill that improves with practice. Write essays on various topics regularly and seek feedback from teachers or peers. This will help you identify your strengths and areas for improvement. Remember to revise and refine your essay based on the feedback received.
9. **Time Management:** Efficient time management is crucial during the exam. Allocate specific time slots for understanding the topic, outlining the essay, writing, and reviewing. This ensures that you have adequate time to develop your ideas and review your essay for potential improvements.
10. **Review and Polish:** Lastly, never underestimate the power of revision. Review your essay thoroughly for coherence, grammatical errors, punctuation mistakes, and content relevance. Ensure that your essay is polished and refined before submission. This will not only enhance the readability of your essay but also leave a positive impression on the examiner.

In conclusion, the ability to excel in essay writing is an essential tool in the arsenal of every CSS aspirant. Navigating the complexities of this task is no small feat; however, the FPSC examiners' reports illuminate the path to mastering this art. By leveraging these insights and implementing the ten strategic steps outlined above, candidates can significantly elevate their writing prowess. It's crucial to remember that skillful essay writing isn't achieved overnight, but rather is the culmination of consistent practice, profound understanding, and methodical structuring of thoughts and arguments. So, let your CSS exam preparation journey commence now. Embrace the learnings from the past, remain dedicated to improving, and relentlessly strive for excellence in essay writing. It is this unwavering commitment to personal growth and mastery that will ultimately steer you toward achieving success in the CSS examination. So start your preparation now and leave no stone unturned in your quest for excellence in CSS English Essay Writing.



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