



An Institute for Civil Services

**IAS INTERVIEW
GUIDANCE
SERIES**

#02

**PROBABLE
QUESTIONS
& HOW TO
TACKLE THEM**

S. B. Singh



An Institute for Civil Services

INTERVIEW GUIDANCE PROGRAMME 2022

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PROBABLE QUESTIONS & HOW TO TACKLE THEM

S. B. Singh

Any interview, more so an IAS interview, is mainly about questions being raised by board members and answers being offered by the candidates. Thus, anticipating questions and formulating their answers is an important part of the interview preparation. After acquainting oneself with the purpose and technique of the interview, one must turn one's attention on creating a pool of probable questions on a variety of topics and formulate their answers, explanations that sound logical and acceptable to the interview board. This exercise will minimise the surprise element during the interview session in that most of the questions will appear to have been asked on expected topics.

Area wise analysis of questions

1. Educational Background

In this section, questions will pertain to the name of school, college, subjects studied there and performance in terms of marks or grades obtained. You must know what is the significance

of the name of your school/college, when and by whom it was established, any alumni you can recall from the institution you have studied in etc. Say for example, if you have studied in a school called ' Navodaya Vidyalaya' you should know the objectives of such schools, your personal experience about it, values inculcated by you from your association with the school.

2. Parental Background

In some cases, they will also take interest in your parents occupation by asking you as to what you have learnt from their professional experience, and if your parents are role models for you.

3. Work Experience

If you have worked in private sector or under government, they will definitely ask you couple of questions related to your job description. You are expected to know what your organisation is all about, details of tasks performed by you, why you want to leave that job and want to join civil services, how your job experience can help you in your career in civil services.

4. State to which you belong

A wide range of questions will be raised on your state. Its cultural, historical importance, law and order situation, governance , performance on various economic indicators, state of agriculture, industrialisation, resources available and solutions to various problems of your state, will constitute areas on which questions will be asked.

5. Hobbies, Extra curricular activities

On your hobbies, questions are meant to assess your genuine interest in what you pursue as your hobby. If reading is your hobby, whether you read fiction or non fiction, who is your favourite author, which books you have read recently, are going to be likely questions. Similarly, if watching documentaries or

photography is your hobby, they will delve deep in the subject to find out your level of commitment and interest in the stated hobby. Say for example, you have mentioned watching wildlife documentaries as your hobby, you will be asked to name a few famous Indian and foreign documentary makers, whether you have watched their documentaries or not. If you are not able to recall any famous wild life documentary maker's name, then it is going to leave a poor impression before the board. Similarly, if you have mentioned yoga or meditation as your hobby, expect both theoretical and practical questions on these hobbies. For example, what is the underlying philosophy of yoga, who was its main proponent, what books you have read on yoga, who are leading yoga experts, will be areas of interest for the board members to ask questions. This way, you should frame likely questions on your different hobbies and fortify your knowledge on them.

6. Why you want to join Civil Services

During the interview session, the common refrain is - "Why you want to join civil services." Almost every candidate is asked this question by one or another member of the board. Though this question is common, it does not mean answer to it should be common too. Rather than sounding idealistic, you should offer a realistic answer to this question. Answers like - I want to serve the nation, or I want to serve the society, or, It offers a diverse, challenging career, looks like an old, repetitive cliché used by every candidate. A more realistic answer to this should be: "I want to join civil services for a number of reasons. First, it offers job security. Second, it offers some of the most coveted jobs under the government. Third, I will derive higher job satisfaction in civil services because of its diverse nature. Fourth, I consider civil services not just a job but a service with a deep public interface. Finally, it will provide me an opportunity to be a part of the governing architecture of the country which will allow me to contribute meaningfully to public service. If you phrase your answer like this, you will sound more realistic about the civil services."

Another related question here can be: how your knowledge of your discipline of study (engineering, medicine, agriculture, botany etc.), can be used in administration. To this, you should say that such domain knowledge will help you understand the issues better and will be handy to make better policies and decisions. You can substantiate this answer with some examples. For example, If you are from medical background, you can say that it will help you formulate more practical health policies with your first hand knowledge of medical issues. Like this, find relevance of your educational discipline in civil services before you face the interview board.

Similarly, there will be some questions whose answers you may not know. There are two ways to tackle them . First, if you don't know anything about the question, just politely accept it and say you don't know the answer. Second, if you have some vague idea about the question, ask the board if you can try to attempt it with some guess. If allowed, make an intelligent guess and answer it.

7. Situation based questions

Not always, but in many cases, one of the board members may raise situation based questions. This can be either on a real situation that has appeared in news, or a hypothetical one. In both types of situations, real or hypothetical, your answer must weigh in all factors and then provide a solution that sounds implementable on ground, beneficial to the country or citizens and innovative in thinking.

For example, consider this situation: A conflict situation is getting out of hand among two countries in some part of the world. The country's interest is firmly embedded in both the conflicting parties involving multiple dimensions like economy, defence, diaspora etc. You as part of The Ministry of External Affairs team have been asked to draft a statement explaining India's position. Now, as part of the team, your yardstick to draft a statement should be India's interest. In a situation like this, the first thing is the need to co-ordinate with both the parties to safely evacuate

non-combatants. Hence, favouring one over other is outrightly out of question, at least publically, no matter question of human rights and aggressions are still there. The larger picture involves defense co-operation on one hand, which is vital as India is placed in a hostile neighbourhood, and economy is important for growth and development. Hence, a balanced response is needed which calls for dialogue over conflict and use of India's effort to build a humanitarian corridor.

8. Current Affairs

Since Ukraine-Russia conflict is in the news along with the United Nations, its relevance, European union, zone of influence, etc along with topics related to geopolitics like quad, rules-based order, are issues at hand now that can be framed as questions. The conflict has laid bare the effect of sanctions on the global order. So, questions on new global order, etc are likely, to touch on various dimensions of globalization.

As regards international issues, India's G20 Presidency and Opportunities, India's balancing act with the West viz-a-viz East and especially among P5, India's disputes with neighbors like China, China's Wolf-Warrior Diplomacy, India's Advancement in Defence Technology and its Impact on "Act East Policy", NATO and India's strategic autonomy, War crimes and the rules of war will surface during the interview. Quad, Indo-Pacific policy, and India's relations with China, Russia, USA could be areas of interest to the interview board. In particular, read in detail about the recent development between India and China and the expected impacts.

The best way to prepare for these topics is to read the editorial comments on related issues in good newspapers and formulate your answers.

9. Questions on Social Issues

There are a host of issues that relate to our society, for example, nutritional issues in children, women and the poor, inequality

in online education , issues of mental health of citizens during the pandemic, rising domestic violence during lockdown and so on. You must embrace these topics with compassion and offer solutions from both your heart and mind.

10. Controversial Questions

There are many sensitive issues on which taking the right stand may look difficult to a candidate without guidance. My suggestion here would be not to take an extreme stand on them. You should present both sides of the argument, assess their respective merits and present a middle ground. You should not take a stand that sounds anti government. But you are free to point out to failures of the government and suggest better policy measures. Some criticism is always welcome, but you need not appear like an opposition party or like a newspaper article in criticizing government vehemently. To take an example, on the controversial Hijab row, rather than opposing or defending the issue, take a stand that encapsulates both perspectives, that of the legal and religious. Then, suggest a conciliatory approach to solve the issue.

Thus, by following the above advice, you can reasonably hope to get many questions on expected lines with prior preparation so that you are not taken by surprise during your interview.
