

IAS 2009 Topper Interview

Anurag Chaudhary (Rank 34)

“Work Hard and Success would be Yours”

During his younger days, he saw many things around himself which agitated him and he thought that he should do something about that. He has achieved. What he cherished for. Meet **Mr. Anurag Chaudhary** in a heart-to heart talk with **Competition Wizard**.

Q. To whom and to what do you credit your success?

A. I owe my success to God almighty, without whose grace I could not have achieved my aim. I also owe it to my parents, who constantly motivated me and supported me during all these years, teachers, friends and dear ones especially my younger brother Abhishek.

Q. Why did you choose Civil Services as a career?

A. It gives an opportunity to bring about a positive change in the lives of the masses. During my younger days, I saw many things around me which agitated me and I thought that I should do something about that, thus, I am here.

Q. How should one assess oneself before deciding to opt for Civil Services as a career?

A. If you feel that you want to make a positive difference in the system, have immense job satisfaction and get diverse experience, you should opt for it. However, preparation is not easy and requires hard work and constant motivation; so, you should be sure to not let small failure affect you adversely. For this, you may have an alternate career which will remove various insecurities that may creep in if you are faced with adverse result.

Q. When did you consciously start your preparation for this examination?

A. I started the preparation during the final year of my graduation. However, a wrong choice of optional subject caused me an unsuccessful first attempt. Here, I would like to thank

Mr. S Nagarajan (Rank-1, 2004) who helped me change my optional from Physics to Sociology and for helping me throughout the preparation with his valuable inputs.

Q. *When should one ideally start the preparation process?*

A. Ideally, one should utilize the graduation period to start the preparation process. One should also choose such graduation subject which, apart from providing job security, would be relevant for the preparation and the job ahead.

Q. *It is said that the Civil Services examination is one of the toughest nuts to crack. It requires constant and sustained hard work. How did you keep yourself constantly motivated? What was your source of inspiration?*

A. I, actually, enjoyed the process of preparation. My optional subjects were both, interesting and relevant to daily life. Also, my family was a big source of motivation and always supported me, even if I felt low and thought of quitting. A few seniors like S Nagarajan and others from IIT helped me too. I also spoke to my teachers like Shashank Sir, whenever I faced a dilemma. They were very

Q. *In your opinion, how crucial is the selection of Optional subject for success in the examination?*

A. Selection of optional subject is extremely crucial. I lost my first attempt because I didn't choose my option well.

Q. *What should be the criteria for selecting them and how should one go about it? Should one opt for the subjects studied at college or go for new ones?*

A. In this regard, you have to keep in mind some critical points:

1. *Your interest in the subject (I found Geography and Sociology extremely interesting).*
2. *Availability of proper material and the right guidance.*

3. *Compatibility between GS, Essay and Optional subjects (Geography and Sociology are very helpful in GS and essay preparation).*

It is better if your graduation subjects and optional is the same as it will help to reduce some effort. In my first attempt, I got only 75 marks in my interview because I could not answer many basic questions from my graduation. In retrospect, I would suggest everyone to give due attention to their academic background.

Q. *How should one prepare for Prelim, Main and Interview?*

A. *For Prelim:* Citing from my experience, as Physics was my optional subject in PT, I did not face any problem as I am from science background. However I thoroughly read all NCERT books, especially History, Geography and Biology from Class 6th to Class 12th, which helped me make my knowledge base broader. Apart from that, I was very regular with newspapers and Magazines.

For Main: The key to crack the Main Exams is clear understanding of concepts. For this, you can go through NCERT books. Additionally, taking guidance from teachers and consulting your seniors makes a big difference.

For Interview: In the interview, the panel looks for Honesty and Confidence. Confidence can only be gained by proper knowledge about your background, hobbies, current events, graduation subjects and optionals. Taking Mock interviews with friends and teachers also enhances your confidence.

Q. *How can one score well in Essay, GS and Interview?*

A. *Essay:* Pick the topic you are most comfortable with. Spend around 50 percent of the time formulating the essay in your mind before writing. A well structured essay always fetches more marks. Try to make your essay visible by bringing in various simple examples.

General Studies: One of the major reasons for low scoring in GS is time management. I used to attempt 50 marks in every 30 minutes, so, I didn't have to leave any topic unanswered. Further, attempt those questions first with which you are most comfortable.

Interview: Dress well, have enough number of mock interviews before the D-day, be confident and listen to all questions attentively before answering. Don't obsess over marks while in the interview hall, it would help you to be your natural self.

Q. What are the areas in GS Paper I and II in the Main examination in which the candidate can score marks easily?

A. GS I:

All the areas are scoring as long as you are well-prepared. Citing my experience, I did the following:

In preparation of 2 markers, attempt all the previous 10 years' questions and Wizard Current Corner questions.

Prepare social issues like gender issues, child labour, corruption, casteism and regionalism etc from Wizard Social Issues and 11th and 12th NCERT books (Political Science).

Polity Go through previous 10 years' question papers.

Geography: Read 6th to 12th NCERT books thoroughly.

History: Read NCERT books and go through previous 10 years' question papers.

GS II:

Science-Tech: Coaching Material + Hindu S & T Section + last 2-3 years' Nobel Prizes + last 10 years' S & T questions.

Internal affairs: I relied on my coaching material only and supplemented it with Hindu editorials.

Statistics: Solved last 10 years' questions papers.

Economics: I relied on my coaching notes.

Q. Did you commit any mistake during your preparations?

A. In the first attempt, I did not choose my optional subjects well. In the second attempt, I took the interview very casually and in the third attempt, I did not prepare well in Geography map pointing. I could have done better there. In this attempt, I did not revise questions that came last year. In Sociology Paper I, three questions from last year were repeated.

Q. How many hours should one devote for the preparations regularly?

A. It is very subjective. During exams, after the PT result, I used to study around 12-13 hours. However, along with quantity, quality of preparation also matters. Whatever you study it should be reinforced by revision.

Q. Could you please give the aspirants a list of reference for essay/GS/Optional I/Optional II and Interview?

A. GS:

1. Wizard special issues on Essays, Social issues, Polity, S & T, Economy and International material.
2. 6th to 12th Class NCERT books
3. The Hindu
4. Competition Wizard
5. Previous 10 years' solved question papers
6. Economic Survey (especially Box items)

Geography: NCERT books (old + new) from 6th to 12th, ALS class notes and printed study material, last 10 years' questions papers, some portions from Khullar, Majid Hussain's book on Models and Theories.

For map: All the places which were in news and last 10 years' map entries.

Sociology: I mostly relied on class notes and printed material. I supplemented it with M Haralambos, George Ritzer (for thinkers), amartya Sen's India: Development and Participation and IGNOU notes (only where books were unavailable).

Interview: Prepare your bio-data well and follow at least two national dailies.

Q. *Besides text books what newspapers, magazines, novels and books of general interest should one read?*

A. Basically, you must try to consistently build your knowledge base and utilize this preparation time to add depth to your personality. Extensive reading really helps; one should try to follow at least one national daily (I followed Hindu throughout and also read Economic times editorials whenever I could). Additionally, I read many books like *The Argumentative Indian*, *The Monk Who Sold his Ferrary*, *White Tiger*, *Inheritance of Loss*, Hindi short stories especially Premchand and Renu whenever I found time. I also tried to follow magazines like Frontline and Outlook.

Q. *How one should read newspaper?*

A. One can read newspaper the following way:

1. 1 hour is sufficient (do not give more than that).
2. Try to read it in parts throughout the day.
3. Focus on editorials (centre page article can be ignored unless it is of much relevance), follow S & T and Main Page.
4. Keep the editorials, It will help in Main.

Q. *How did the Competition Wizard helps you in the preparation of the Civil Services examination?*

A. I have followed the magazine since I started my preparation. I liked the Topper's interviews, updates and current affairs Q and A page.

Q. What is more important for this exam, intelligence or hard work?

A. Without hard work, no amount of intelligence can help you. With extraordinary intelligence, you may require less time to understand concepts, but, with perseverance and hard work anyone can achieve their goal.

Q. Do candidates with a technical background have an advantage over general students?

A. This exam provides a level playing field for all.

Q. Where did you prepare for the examination (at what place)? Does the place of preparation matter?

A. I came to Delhi, exclusively for coaching. Afterwards, I returned to Lucknow and wrote the exams from there. However, one should be in touch with friends from coaching so that you are abreast with latest happenings and study materials. In this regard, I am thankful to my peers who provided me with study material from Delhi whenever I needed.

Q. In the course of preparation one is faced with many problems, queries and difficulties. Where should one go for help, especially the students staying in remote areas?

A. Read Topper's Talk -- I have been following this since the time I decided to prepare. I knew what books they were reading, what mistakes they made and I learned from their experience.

Talk to seniors – There can be someone from your town or college who would have cleared the exam. Try to get in touch with them and seek their help. People are very generous and share things with you and you should not hesitate to ask them. I asked help from innumerable seniors and friends and was fortunate to get their guidance.

Try to talk to your friends who have scored high in any subject, get to know what they have done. In this way, your preparation would be evaluated and reinforced. In this way,

Q. Do coaching institutes help? If yes, how should one select, when there are so many of them?

A. I joined ALS for Geography. In my case I benefitted from my coaching institutes --- because firstly I joined them after consultation with my seniors and secondly I completely

followed my teachers without questioning their judgment. However many of friends were not as lucky as me either due to wrong selection of coaching's or following 4-5 coaching at the same time. So choose your coaching institute carefully, a wrong choice can make you suffer (It is better to prepare on your own than joining a wrong coaching).

Q. *In which stage should one ideally opt for coaching?*

A. When you are new to the subject you have to know the basics. Once this is done, you can go for coaching. I joined all my coaching's at the beginning, when I was new to the subject.

Q. *Why did you choose ALS in the first place?*

A. I joined ALS because it had the reputation of Shashank Sir and Jojo Sir. Apart from that many of my seniors had joined this and succeeded.

Q. *What is so special about ALS?*

A. I benefitted primarily because with ALS, you can prepare well ahead of the examination. Due to an organized class time-table, I could plan my studies well. Personally, I would say Magic Moments gave me the right starting point on what to study and how to go about it, so, I was never in doubt regarding my preparation.

Q. *Do you think that with increasing levels of competition, the preparation for Civil Services is getting too expensive?*

A. If one is preparing in Delhi then it is indeed, a litter expensive.

Q. *Could you suggest some ways of cutting down on expenses?*

A. You can save money by staying in Delhi only as long as it is needed.

Q. *Seeing the stiffness of the competition, is this exam meant for everyone who takes it?*

A. I don't think it is a very difficult exam. As I see it, nor more than three-four thousand people prepare seriously. I believe that if someone is hard-working, has the right guidance and is constantly motivated, he would succeed sooner or later.

Q. *Is UPSC really unpredictable?*

A. To some degree, it is. However, with the right approach and proper guidance it can be minimized.

Q. *What all do you think is needed to make it to the top?*

A. Only perseverance and the right approach.

Q. *How would you rate luck as far as success in Civil Services is concerned?*

A. Some amount of luck is definitely needed, but we cannot control the luck factor. So we must concentrate our energy on our studies because without hard work, no amount of luck will help you.

Q. *How was the atmosphere during your Interview?*

A. It was a little tense this time, in comparison to my earlier attempts. In fact, after my interview I was not completely satisfied with my performance. Many of my friends and teachers said that it was a pressure interview to check performance under pressure.

Q. *What do you think is the right way to face Interview Board confidently?*

A. Be honest and don't obsess over the outcome, only then would you be able to perform naturally in your interview.

Q. What types of questions did the Board ask?

A. It was mostly a bio-data based interview.

Q. What is the most important thing one should keep in mind while facing the Interview Board?

A. Do not question their judgment and always tell yourself that you got the best board to bring out the best in you.

Q. During the Interview, did the board member(s) ask you any tricky question(s)?

A. My interview lasted around 30 minutes. Most of the questions pertained to my reasons for leaving IRS and why should they select me. They asked me that if so many people in the past could not change the system, how would I.

Q. How do you foresee your future as an administrator?

A. I foresee myself working to make a difference in the lives of many. I would like to ask for God's blessings that my zeal to work doesn't change and it can be an instrument to guide me for devoting my life to help others.

Q. Would you have a final word for the student community?

A. I would only say that give everything you have in preparation of the exam, have a backup career. It will help you in case of a negative result. Don't run after coaching's and before joining them randomly, ask your seniors and have faith in yourself. Don't be deterred by small failures. You have chosen a right career. Have confidence in your efforts and your talent, Work hard and success would be yours.

CURRICULUM-VITAE:

Name : **Anurag Chaudhary**

Sex : Male

Date of Birth : 15 September 1983

Father's Name : Dr R K Chaudhary
Father's Occupation : Doctor
Medium of Exam : English
Optionals : Geography & Sociology
Rank : 34th

Education Qualifications:

<u>Exam</u>	<u>Institution</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>%</u>
Xth	Mahanagar Boys' Inter College, Lucknow	1999	83
XIIth	Mahanagar Boys' Inter College, Lucknow	2001	71
	BTech (Civil Engg.) IIT Kanpur	2006	7.5/10

Number of Attempts : Four

Service Preferences : IAS only

Earlier Selections : CSE-2008 (495th Rank), India Engg. Service-2008 (4th Rank), CAT-2007 (99.69%)

Prizes, Medals,

Scholarships : 8th Rank Regional Mathematics Olympiad, 1st prize in Hindi Creative writing (IIT Kanpur), Merit Scholarship by U.P Board

Games, Sports &

Extra-curricular activities : Delivered a lecture on awareness against AIDS (during NCC), Completed a study of Delhi Slums during project in IIT Kanpur, Mess Secretary (IIT Kanpur)

Hobbies/Interests : Reading, Travelling, Interacting with People, Writing Skits

MY INTERVIEW

I faced Ms Shashi Uban Tripathi's Board which lasted for around 30 minutes. The first question I was asked was why I wanted to leave the IRS and I was interrupted many times in between my answer. In fact that question took about five minutes. Then I was questioned on what changes I would like to bring about in the system and why should I be selected over others. Then there were few questions from my optional subjects (Geography and Sociology) and some questions on my background (Civil Engineering), NCC program and other extracurricular activities that I participated in.

Courtesy: Competition Wizard

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