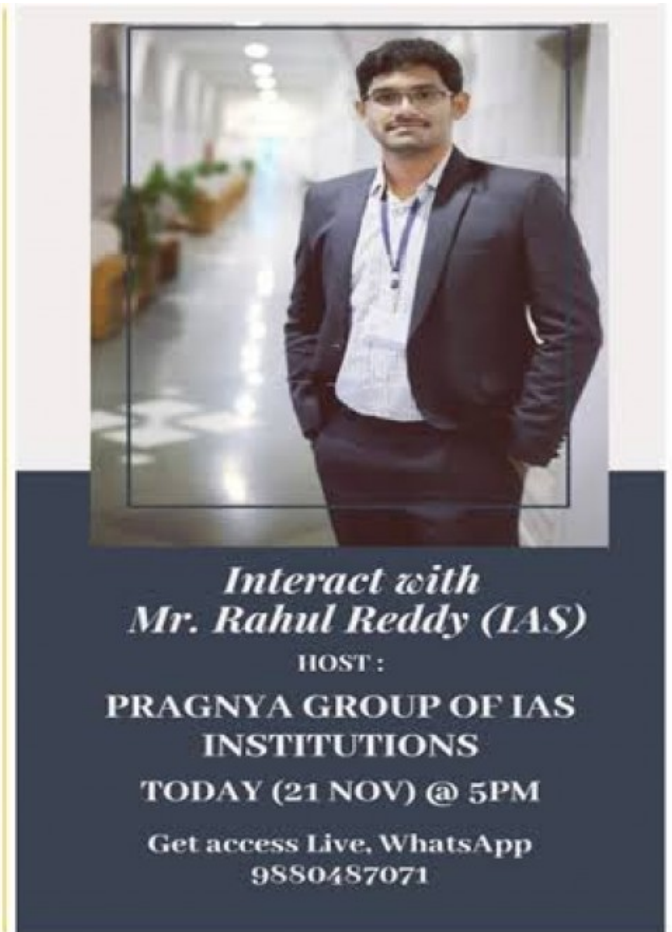


The subtle elements of UPSC Interview - Insights from Praagnya IAS Academy

The detailed coverage of what UPSC Board members expect from the candidates as explained by Praagnya IAS director Thejaswaroop and Ex UPSC Chairman Prof DP Agrawal



Hyderabad, Telangana Sep 5, 2022 ([Issuewire.com](https://www.issuewire.com)) - Positive Attitude: The Key to Success

Having cleared Mains, you are both delighted and frightened as to what the interview would be like! What [preparation](#) will help you crack the interview and post a winning score? Speculations abound and there seems no definite clue. You reel under confusion and grow further uncertain. Just don't worry. That's something very natural. Hold your breath. Relax. Read on. You have nothing to lose and everything to gain.

The object of this interview is to assess your personal suitability for a career in Public Service by a board of competent and unbiased observers. The test is intended to judge your mental calibre. In broad terms, it is really an assessment of not only the intellectual qualities but also the social traits and interest in current affairs. Some of the qualities to be judged are mental alertness. Critical powers of assimilation. [Pragnya IAS Academy](#) **Clear and logical exposition. Balance of judgement. Variety and depth of interest. The ability for social cohesion and leadership. And intellectual and moral integrity.**

Having pointed out the object of the interview it would certainly be pertinent to provide some hints about

facing the Board. I know, giving advice is easy, but acting upon them is rather difficult. Remember, the interview is a test of personality that you build over the years, not over days or months. To me, guiding for the interview is like guiding somebody to prepare for life. Obviously, there can be no shortcuts, at least I don't know of one. Remember again! There is no magic wand for success in life as also in the interview. It's the lifetime preparation that pays in the ultimate run.

You will be interviewed by a Board who will have before them a record of your career. You'll be asked questions on matters of general interest. The technique of the interview is not that of a strict cross-examination but of a natural, though directed and purposive conversation, intended to reveal your mental qualities. It is not intended to be a test either of the specialised or general knowledge which has already been tested through the written examination. You are expected to have taken an intelligent interest not only in your special subjects of academic study but also in the events which are happening around you both within and outside the country. You are also expected to be aware of the modern currents of thought and new discoveries which rouse the curiosity of every well-educated youth.

What the Board members are looking for?

In this context, I am reminded of an anecdote from Shiv Khhera's best-seller, *You Can Win*. "There was a man who made a living selling balloons at a fair. He had all colors of balloons, including red, yellow, blue, and green. Whenever business was slow, he would release a helium-filled balloon into the air and when the children saw it go up, they all wanted to buy one. They would come up to him, buy a balloon, and his sales would go up again. He continued this process all day. One day he felt someone tugging at his jacket. He turned around and saw a little boy who asked, 'If you release a black balloon, would that also fly?' Moved by the boy's concern, the man replied with empathy, 'Son, it is not the color of the balloon, it is what is inside that makes it go up.'"

It is what is 'inside' that matters. The thing inside of us that makes us go up in life is our attitude. If we can build a positive attitude towards life and anything that we do, it provides a solid foundation for success. That is precisely what the country needs: Officers with the right attitude to take up the challenge of nation-building and fight the evils of corruption, poverty, ignorance, communalism, casteism, and nepotism. Today, great value is attached to upholding the fundamental premises of democratic polity as secularism, social justice, and human rights, upon which the survival and sustenance of India as a nation rests.

What constitutes a positive attitude?

People with a positive attitude are honest. Upright. Sincere. Hardworking. Committed. Enthusiastic. Confident. Tolerant. Optimistic. Innovative. Patient. Humble. Generous. Courteous. Polite. Sensitive. Open to ideas. Willing to own up to mistakes. And learn from them. They do what they enjoy. And enjoy what must be done. They have a clear vision of things to come.

There are no quick-fix methods of developing these qualities and traits. But they are the ones that lay the foundation of a strong character and a powerful personality. And only conscious effort can help build them. If you don't have these, they will show up on your face. If you don't feel for the stand that you take, the interviewers can smell it. If you lack conviction they can sense. So, never pretend to know what you don't. Never lie. Never be arrogant. Never get into arguments with the Board members. Never appear casual. And never-ever lose your temper. They each carry a hundred negative marks!!

Remember! The Board members are people with tremendous experience. They would be at least double your age. The amount of their experience is unfathomable. You just can't dodge them. The only

key to success is to be your natural self.

How do they test you?

In the preceeding paragraphs, I tried outlining the basic traits that are likely to be probed in the interview. Now one must think and anticipate how this probe is likely to be operationalised. The process is analogous to what is called reverse engineering, where a finished product is disassembled step-by-step in order to ascertain the process of assembly of the end product. During the interview, this process is carried out on the basis of information available to the board members.

The basic source of the information available to them is the Mains application form filled in by you, containing the details of your family background, domicile, subjects of study, academic performance, institutions attended, awards won, hobbies, interests, extra-curricular activities, service preferences, job experience, etc. Remember to keep a copy of the form. If you haven't, try reconstructing. The personal details furnished by you in the form, provide the initial stimulus to the interview. These also provide vital clues to the personality traits they are looking for. Your past performance and record of career are believed to be a reasonably good predictor of the future, though not the only one.

As I see it, the process of unveiling personality traits is in four stages. The Board usually begins by asking questions on what you would be most comfortable with, i.e. about yourself. Gradually they widen the net and put questions relating to your special subjects of study. Further, they test your higher faculties of analysis and decision-making by putting questions on matters of general interest, especially current social, political, and economic issues. Finally, they pin you down by asking some critical questions to test your balance of judgement and intellectual and moral integrity. All this while, the Board continuously evaluates your personality and assesses your suitability for the job without you realising it.

The initial moments are extremely crucial and could well steer the latter course of the interview. It is absolutely imperative to remember your bio-data and know everything thoroughly well about yourself, to be able to answer any question related to you with great ease. Any mistake or even hesitation here could amount to a blunder. It would be viewed with great suspicion and guess what could happen hereafter. Yes, you guessed it right! The interview could end even before it began! On your part, you can ensure that this does not happen by being honest in filling up your bio-data. Every small detail counts!

Most candidates tend to cook up their hobbies and interests at the last moment. It could prove to be a blunder in situations such as Your hobby is 'gardening' and you can't even recognize any of the indoor plants there in the Board room! Your hobby is 'reading' but you never read anything except newspapers! Your hobby is 'bird watching' and you can't name some common birds. And you can't even identify a male sparrow! Your hobby is 'cooking' and you never cooked anything except Rice and Dal! One-day Cricket is an area of interest and you don't know who started it! You play chess and you have to struggle hard to explain what castling is all about!!

As for your academic background, more emphasis is generally placed on your Honours and Masters level subjects. For those pursuing their Doctorate, the topic of research will form a very important subject for discussion. Questions may also be put on your optional papers in the Civil Services examination. You are not expected to know everything under the sun or remember all that you learned since your childhood. The Board does not expect you to know the minute details of all that you studied so far but it does surely expect you to have a broad understanding of the subjects studied. And a capacity to use the knowledge so gained. So, just dont waste your time revising all the books. And more importantly, don't ever panic. The questions will usually be of applied nature. The contemporary issues,

especially those finding mentioned in the Paper II of respective Optionals, are a good indicator of what may be needed to be brushed up.

At times the [Board members](#) may start quizzing and firing seemingly trivial questions and you may not be given sufficient time to respond. Don't lose your calm. Don't Panic. They are trying to test your poise and composure. Try to answer as many questions as possible and feel free to tell them that you don't know the rest. Never commit the blunder of telling them that you are not supposed to know them all. Remember, it carries a hundred negative marks! To explain the importance of what I said, you must develop a sense of judgement of what is relevant and what irrelevant. You could be asked some such questions as How many tremors were experienced during the Gujarat earthquake? What are the dimensions of the Siachin glacier? Which are the polyandrous tribes of the Melanesian Islands? How do we delimit the boundaries of the Indian Ocean? How many islands are there in India? And the like. If you can't answer a hundred such questions, never mind, for you'll not lose even a single mark.

However, you must make sure that you don't cut a sorry figure when asked about the problem in Kashmir, Indo-Pak and Sino-Indian relations and the related developments, or the issue of religious conversion, political instability, India's stand on CTBT, and so on. Your inability to answer such questions will be viewed as sheer negligence and insensitivity. You must keep abreast of all such issues and developments in India and the world all through your preparation for the examination. After the Mains, you should make an exhaustive list of topics of current interest, especially the controversial ones, which possibly could form a part of the final showdown- what I call **critical questions**

The critical questions are put mainly to those candidates who have carried themselves well through the rest of the interview. The final score could swing by as much as 30 percent (or 90 marks) depending on how well or how badly they have been answered. They could make or mar! These critical questions could come to you, disguised either as too simple or too trivial ones. Normally they will be asked towards the end of the interview. However, nothing prevents the Board from putting them to you in the midst of the interview or even at the very beginning. You ought to sense them and maintain utmost care in responding to them. Remember, they carry the maximum weight.

Some possible critical questions could be: Should a particular political party, using religious sentiments, to rouse the feelings of the electorate, be banned? Can we combat corruption in public life? Should we have reservations for backward classes in jobs? Why do you want to be an IAS officer? There is a big fire and and a riot in two corners of the District where you are the District Magistrate. Where would you prefer to go first? Your minister asks you to do something off the record. Would you? These and many such other questions, I repeat, are to test your balance of judgment, honesty, integrity, and uprightness. There are no readymade answers to these questions. Think over them! And let us know too.

The Civil Services examination is one of the toughest and its interview, most rigorous of all conducted in the country. And by people who have excelled in their respective fields. Before your interview begins, each of the Board members would have read through your bio-data and have had a mental image of your personality. If you prove to be better than what they had expected, it's your day. If you don't. Never mind. The road to success does not end here...



Media Contact

Pragnya IAS Academy

thejaswaroop.p@gmail.com

Pragnya IAS Academy

Source : Pragnya IAS Academy

[See on IssueWire](#)