



Sociology Optional Preparation Strategy for UPSC

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Sociology is one of the most opted-for subjects in the UPSC Mains Exam and there have been about 1500 candidates appearing in the Mains for the Sociology Optional Paper consistently. Various aspects of Sociology Optional prove to be beneficial to the aspirants from the UPSC CSE Mains point of view, having a significant correlation with the overall scores. With the right Guidance and Preparation Strategy for Sociology Optional can be the key ingredient you need for your success in the UPSC Civil Services Examination.

Why is a good Preparation Strategy required for Sociology Optional?



Overview of Sociology Optional and its Popularity

Sociology is one of the most consistently [popular Optional Subjects](#) chosen by candidates for their Main examination, with an average of 1500 students appearing for the Sociology Optional Paper in the Mains.



Reasons for the popularity of Sociology can be pinned on the following factors:

- Candidates can take up Sociology despite having an educational background in different fields because of the simplicity and relatability of the topics in Sociology.
- The syllabus is relatively shorter and hence, it does not discourage students from taking up the subject.
- The overlap of syllabus with the GS Subjects and the Essay paper is seen as the most advantageous factor for students to select Sociology as their optional.
- The availability of standard sources and study materials is seen as an added advantage.
- It is also a common notion that Sociology is a 'scoring subject' and aides a candidate in preparation for the Interview round as well.

Overlap of the Sociology syllabus with the syllabi of the GS subjects

GS-I:

- Salient features of Indian Society, Diversity of India.
- Role of Women and Women's Organization, Population and Associated Issues, Poverty and Developmental issues, Urbanization, their problems and their remedies.
- Effects of Globalization on Indian society.
- Social Empowerment, Communalism, Regionalism & Secularism.

GS-II:

- Issues relating to Poverty and Hunger.
- Development Processes and the Development Industry — the Role of NGOs, SHGs, various groups and associations, donors, charities, institutional and other stakeholders.
- Welfare Schemes for Vulnerable Sections of the population by the Centre and States and the Performance of these Schemes; Mechanisms, Laws, Institutions and Bodies constituted for the Protection and Betterment of these Vulnerable Sections.
- Issues Relating to Development and Management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

GS-III:

- Linkages between Development and Spread of Extremism.

GS-IV (Ethics):



- Human Values - Lessons from the Lives and Teachings of Great Leaders, Reformers and Administrators; Role of Family Society and Educational Institutions in Inculcating Values.

Success Rate of the Sociology Optional

The Success rate of the Sociology Optional has actually been on the higher side except for a few fluctuations. Despite the number of candidates being quite high, the success rate has crossed 10% quite often and hence increased the reputation of Sociology as a scoring subject.

Sociology Success rate



Preparation Strategy for Sociology Optional

I- Get comfortable with the subject

- Unless you already have a background in Sociology, begin your [IAS preparation](#) by getting to know what the subject of Sociology is all about and what your preparation for Sociology Optional subject entails.
- Falling in love with the subject and developing a keen interest in it is key to the successful completion of the syllabus in a holistic and thorough manner while enjoying the journey.
- To get a brief understanding of the subject, you can go through the [NCERT Books](#) for Class 11 and 12.



II- Go through the syllabus, nay, memorize it!

- Understanding and knowing the [UPSC Syllabus](#) forms a very important part of preparation for any optional subject. Without any exceptions, a serious candidate should read the syllabus thoroughly and memorize it completely.
- Knowledge of the syllabus is key to developing efficiency in your preparation and time allocation for topics.
- Remembering the syllabus will also help in relating what one studies on a daily basis, not just Sociology but GS and Current Affairs content as well, with the Optional subject and retain elements such as examples and statistical data better.

III- Allocate the right amount of time for preparation

- It takes 3 -4 months to complete the Sociology Optional syllabus with a good understanding despite having a different educational background. It is also advised to divide your time equally for both Papers-I and Paper-2.
- Start with Paper-I for developing a holistic understanding of the theories and fundamental concepts in sociology.
- Paper-II, which is based on the Indian context, can be taken up after the completion of Paper-I. Linking the topics of Paper-II with the fundamentals learned in the Paper-I is crucial to build an analytical approach in understanding the problems in Indian Society.

IV- Fix your sources

- As mentioned earlier, Sociology as an Optional Subject does not have a lack of reliable sources.
- The ample number of books and study materials available for Sociology may overwhelm a candidate into confusion regarding the choice of sources, but it is necessary to finalize on the sources before diving into your preparation.
- It is generally considered that the following sources are more than sufficient for your [Sociology Optional preparation](#):
 - Sociological Theory by George Ritzer (for Thinkers in Paper-I)
 - Fundamental of Sociology by Vikash Ranjan (for topics like Sociology as a science)
 - Your class notes that you have prepared from your Sociology Optional Coaching classes (or the material provided by the [IAS coaching institute](#) itself)
 - Sociology themes and perspectives by Haralambos & Holborn (selective reading ONLY for a few chapters like Family, Polity, Religion)
 - IGNOU M.A and B.A. Sociology study materials (for filling the gaps in the syllabus)

V- Take up guidance



- Taking up coaching classes for Sociology Optional, especially if you do NOT have an academic background in sociology, will be very useful in gaining clarity and an in-depth understanding of the concepts without wasting a lot of time on searching for answers.
- It is important to take guidance from the right mentor who can help you in building a strong foundation on concepts in sociology.

VI- Go through previous years' question papers and answers

- Studying the previous years' question papers of Sociology Optional is another key step in focusing your preparation and aligning it towards the goal of clearing the exam.
- This exercise will help you in gaining crucial insights on the topics to focus on, frequency and difficulty levels of questions from different topics etc.
- You can also start writing answers for these questions as you progress in your preparation to develop a natural way for approaching Sociology Optional questions in UPSC Mains.

VII- Making your own notes

- Without consolidating the information and knowledge that you are gaining along on the lines of UPSC Optional Paper in such a manner that you can read it and revise it easily, it is impossible to comprehensively prepare for any Optional subject and be confident while giving the exam.
- In fact, we suggest that you should make 2 sets of notes.
 - The first set will be the one where you combine what you have studied in your [Optional Subject classes](#), standard books and other sources to compose a single source for your studies. You can update information from Current Affairs and add examples etc., in the first set of notes as well.
 - The Second set of notes are solely for the purposes of quick revision. In this, you need to ensure that you “shrink” the content to such an extent that you cover a topic in just a few pages, without trying to cover all the points.

VIII- Paying attention to the Important of Current Affairs in Sociology paper

- Adding relevant examples from the current issues as well as mentioning statistical data as applicable adds a value to your answer in the Sociology Optional Paper.
- Developing a habit to substantiate your answers with the current events will be key in getting awarded with higher marks for every answer and staying ahead of the competition.

IX- Attempting tests or taking up test-series



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- It is important for a serious candidate to not miss out on the tests conducted by the institute where they are taking up coaching classes for their optional. In case you are not enrolled for any Optional subject classes (Sociology Optional Preparation Strategy for UPSC) at any institute, you should definitely take up a test-series at any institute for gaining confidence and understanding your weaknesses in the optional subject.
 - It is also important to make sure that you are getting feedback on your answers from the right mentor and work on the feedback to improve consistently.

Following the Sociology Optional Preparation Strategy for UPSC will help you gain confidence and the requisite proficiency for successfully tackling the Sociology Optional Subject paper in the **UPSC Main Exam**. With such a strategy, it is not only possible to clear the Mains exam, but also score more than 300 marks in your Sociology Paper and set yourself up for getting a top-rank thanks to the support that sociology provides for the GS subjects and the essay paper.

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