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Anatomy of the 120-Minute Game Plan

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Advita Agrawal, a student at HNLU Raipur, has authored this preparatory article. Advita secured a rank of 842 in CLAT UG 2023. The CLAT paper is not just a test of knowledge or reasoning. In many ways, it is a test of how well you manage 120 minutes under pressure. When I first started preparing, I focused heavily on improving my concepts and solving practice questions, but I did not pay enough attention to how I would actually attempt the paper on exam day. It was only after taking multiple mock tests, and eventually the actual exam, that I realised one simple truth: even a well-prepared student can underperform without a clear time strategy. The 120 minutes you get in CLAT are your biggest asset, and how you use them determines your score. The first thing to understand is that CLAT is a reading-intensive exam. Almost every section, whether Logical Reasoning, Legal Reasoning, English, Quantitative Techniques, or even Current Affairs, is passage-based. This means your time is largely spent reading and processing information rather than recalling facts. Because of this, your game plan should not be rigid. It should be flexible and adaptive. You are not just solving questions; you are constantly managing your energy, focus, and decision-making for two hours. One common mistake many aspirants make is entering the exam hall without a clear sequence for attempting sections. Some begin with whichever section appears first, while others jump randomly between sections. From my experience, having a pre-decided order of attempting sections helps reduce confusion and saves time. However, this order should depend on your strengths. For example, if you are comfortable with English and Logical Reasoning, starting with these sections can help build momentum and confidence early in the exam. The idea is to begin with sections where you can score quickly and accurately. At the same time, it is important not to spend too much time perfecting one section at the cost of others. CLAT is not about getting every question correct. It is about maximising your overall score. This is where time allocation becomes crucial. While there is no one-size-fits-all formula, a practical approach is to divide your time roughly across sections and ensure that no single section consumes a disproportionate amount of time. During my preparation, I found it helpful to set approximate time limits in my mind. For example, I would decide not to spend more than a certain number of minutes on a particular section and adjust according to the paper's difficulty level. One of the most important aspects of the 120-minute game plan is knowing when

to move on. Many students get stuck on difficult questions and try to solve them at any cost. This can be a major mistake because it eats into the time available for easier questions that could have been answered correctly. In CLAT, every question carries equal marks. It does not make sense to spend excessive time on a single difficult question. If a question feels confusing or time-consuming, it is often better to skip it and return later if time permits. This ability to let go is an essential skill in time management. Another key element is maintaining accuracy while managing speed. In the pressure of the exam, it becomes easy to rush through passages and make avoidable mistakes. However, accuracy matters just as much as speed because of negative marking. Attempting a large number of questions with poor accuracy can significantly reduce your score. During the exam, try to maintain a steady pace where you read carefully without overthinking. Trust your preparation and instincts, and avoid second-guessing yourself unnecessarily. Mock tests play a major role in building an effective 120-minute strategy. During my preparation, I realised that simply taking mocks was not enough. Analysing them was equally important. After each mock, I reviewed how much time I spent on each section, where I lost time, and which questions I should have skipped. This process helped me refine my strategy over time. By the time I appeared for the actual exam, I had a much clearer understanding of how to approach the paper and adapt if something unexpected happened. Another practical tip is to use the first few minutes of the exam wisely. When the paper begins, take a quick glance at the sections and their overall difficulty level. This does not mean reading every passage in detail. It simply means getting a general sense of the paper. This quick scan helps you decide whether to stick to your planned order or make slight adjustments. Sometimes, a section you usually find easy may appear unusually difficult. Being flexible enough to adapt can make a significant difference. It is also important to manage your mental energy throughout the exam. CLAT requires continuous focus, and fatigue often sets in during the later stages of the paper. To handle this, try to remain calm and composed. If you feel overwhelmed at any point, pause for a few seconds, reset mentally, and continue. These small pauses can help maintain concentration and prevent careless mistakes. Towards the end of the exam, if you have time left, use it for revision and rechecking. This is your opportunity to revisit marked questions or review answers where you felt uncertain. However, be careful while changing answers. Only change an answer if you are reasonably sure that your initial choice was incorrect. Randomly changing answers out of doubt can do more harm than good. One mistake I made during the initial phase of preparation was trying to follow someone else’s strategy without adapting it to my own strengths and weaknesses. What works for one student may not work for another. The key is to experiment with different approaches during

mock tests and develop a strategy that suits you personally. Your 120-minute game plan should feel natural and comfortable, not forced. Finally, remember that CLAT is as much about decision-making under pressure as it is about knowledge and reasoning skills. Every minute counts, and every decision, whether to attempt, skip, or revisit a question, affects your final score. With consistent practice, careful analysis, and a well-thought-out strategy, you can learn to manage these 120 minutes effectively. In conclusion, the anatomy of the 120-minute game plan lies in balancing speed, accuracy, and smart decision-making. By planning your section order, allocating time wisely, practising regularly through mocks, and staying calm under pressure, you can make the most of the limited time available. From my experience, mastering this aspect of the exam can significantly improve your performance. The goal is not to attempt everything perfectly, but to use your time in the smartest way possible.