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The Ultimate Strategies to Ace CLAT English!

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The English section in CLAT and other law entrance exams usually have three major components. These are Vocabulary, Grammar and Reading Comprehension.

Other law entrance exams like Symbiosis Entrance Test and LSAT also put considerable weightage on English. Getting a good score in the English section can help a lot in increasing your overall score. This can significantly translate into a good position in the rank list of the concerned exam.

It does not matter whether you have studied English since your childhood or started at a later point in your school life. What matters is that tackling the English section of law entrance examinations will require some amount of dedicated effort on your part.

Remember that in a competitive exam you are not simply striving to achieve a pass mark. You are working towards ranking higher than your peers (who run into thousands in terms of numbers)!

Every student preparing for CLAT is putting in a considerable amount of effort. The goal is to achieve one of the elusive ranks that would open the doors for the law university of their choice, Therefore it is time that you realise that you have a difficult battle before you.

Here are the ultimate strategies to ace CLAT English:

CLAT English Preparation: Vocabulary

1. Be sure of the meanings of words which you are familiar with

There are many words whose usage you may be familiar with. However, when asked about their meaning you are unable to provide a proper answer. It is best to brush up on these ‘familiar’ words so that you can determine the correct answer among options which are very closer in their meanings.

2. Keep learning new words

If you come across any new words while reading any piece of text, take a note of it. Find out its meaning before moving further with your reading. In case you aren't fond of reading, search online for word lists.

Many websites compile lists of important words for exams like SAT, TOEFL and GRE. These lists can be a tremendous help in your preparations for tackling Vocabulary questions. You can subscribe to blogs with a 'word of the day' segment.

3. Pay attention to spellings

One of the important elements of good vocabulary is a good grasp on spellings. Next time you spend time learning the meanings of new words, pay some attention to the spelling of each word. Having an overall idea about the spelling of a word is not enough.

Exams with spelling check type questions tend to provide options with very similar alterations in terms of spelling. Only a cursory idea of the spelling may land you in trouble in case of such questions.

4. Revisit old words

You may believe that repeating the meaning of a word twice in your mind is enough to add it to your memory. That is sadly very far from the truth. Your brain responds better to repeated reviewing over a prolonged period in comparison to cramming within a short span of time.

So make it a point to write down the new words that you learn over the week. Review them regularly. A good practice would be to designate a day in each week for you to review old words from previous weeks.

5. Look up all the usages

Many of us have the habit of looking at the first meaning of a word which is provided in the dictionary and thinking that we know about its meaning.

Very often the first meaning provides an incomplete picture. This is because most words can be used in a variety of ways. Words carry varying connotations based on the context that they are placed in.

Exams tend to seek meanings to highlighted words within sentences. These questions can prove be a curveball for those acquainted with only the first specified usage of a word. As a result it is a

good practice to go through all the provided meanings of a word.

Another good practice is to look for sample sentences which use a particular word. This will help you understand its meaning and intended usage better. It will also serve as a welcome break from the monotony of memorising words from lists.

6. Check for synonyms and antonyms

The law entrance exams love to pose questions about synonyms and antonyms. Students have to choose words which are similar or opposite as the case may be in meaning to the word provided in the questions.

Furthermore looking out for synonyms of words can actually help in increasing your vocabulary at a faster pace. When you learn a new word, check for its synonyms. If you find two new words within the synonyms you will very well have learnt three new words at the time you spent on one.

7. Play vocabulary quizzes

It is always easier to remember things through games and fun quizzes. You can find interactive vocabulary quizzes of varying levels of difficulty online. You can also start your own vocabulary quizzes with a friend or two.

Each friend from your group can take turns in preparing the quizzes. The person to score the highest in the quiz for each week could be given a small prize like a chocolate to incentivise everyone to prepare better for the upcoming weeks.

CLAT English Preparation: Grammar

1. Revise your basics

Bring out your old grammar book and start reading up from chapter 1. Many of us are familiar with the usage of grammatical concepts in daily parlance.

However, over time we have forgotten about the technicalities connected to various topics. Be it tenses, articles or voice, you need to begin by quickly brushing up on your basic concepts.

2. Do not simply rely on intuition

Many of us have a knack for using our perception of ‘what sounds right’ to decide on what is good grammar. Often this perception is fine-tuned by the things we hear around us.

Going by the lingo and problematic grammar that is used by people online and offline these days, our perception may have been tweaked into thinking of incorrectly constructed sentences as ‘sounding right’.

Thus relying solely on intuition for solving grammar questions may not be the best step.

3. Practice error correction questions

One of the best ways to identify problem areas in grammar is to attempt error correction questions.

These type of questions present commonly used erroneous sentences before the test taker who has to identify the error(s) and attempt to rectify the sentence.

Attempting these type of questions help you find flaws in the sentences that we use. Over time-based on the type of issues that you face while solving these questions, you can get an idea about your problem areas.

4. Read well-edited articles

Look publications within your preferred genre which carry well-edited articles. Websites of The Hindu, Huffington Post India, Washington Post and The New York Times, for instance, carry articles of a diverse range of topics.

Make it a habit to read through articles in such publications. This will help you in forming an idea of how sentences should be structured. Ideas about inducing flow and meaning while maintaining proper grammar can also be picked up.

This can help you in understanding the different ways in which you can express a thought. You will also learn about how to rectify sentences with minimum alterations as is expected of you in error correction questions put before you in exams.

5. Get a grammar app

We spend a considerable amount of time staring into a mobile screen. Why not utilise some of that time for improving your English grammar? Multiple grammar apps can be found on app stores in

almost all mobile platforms.

These apps can help you in practicing your grammar through mini games, flashcards and pop quizzes.

6. Practice, practice, practice

English is a vast language with numerous rules. It can surely be quite difficult to remember all of them! Practicing grammar exercises regularly can help you to get used to many of the rules. This can in turn help you to process the question and identify the applicable concepts quicker.

CLAT English Preparation: Reading Comprehension

1. Work on your reading speed

CLAT and all other law entrance exams are timed examinations. When you attempt these exams you are essentially racing against the clock. So every extra second spent on a question can have an impact on your ability to attempt the remaining ones.

Reading Comprehension questions are among the more time consuming questions that you are likely to encounter during your exams.

The length of passages provided for Reading Comprehension may sometimes be quite large but you must remember that they carry equal weightage as the other questions. As a result you must use your time judiciously such that you are able to answer RC questions quickly but correctly.

Good reading speed can contribute greatly to the accomplishment of this objective.

It is advisable to start with writings on topics that you enjoy. Set a timer of 5 minutes and read the passage. At the end of 5 minutes check the number of words that you have been able to cover. Over time reduce the number of minutes and try to increase the number of words read.

You can also consult some helpful online videos on speed reading. Have a look at these videos as a starting point:

i. Video 1

ii. Video 2

iii. Video 3

2. Make a mental note of important details

While you are speed reading it is important to comprehend the text too. Do not spend time copying everything that is said in the passage or learning every point that is made.

Identify the most important details like names of persons, places, subjects being referred to and emotions being expressed.

Keep them in mind while you glance through the questions that follow. This will give you a broad idea as to the probable answers to the questions posed to you. You can then cross-refer to find the answers.

This will save you some precious time which you would have otherwise spent in re-reading the entire passage.

3. Summarise each paragraph:

There are many times where we know that the answer to a question lies in a specific paragraph containing certain other details. However, we are unable to locate the exact paragraph that we have in mind. A

simple way to deal with such situations is to read each paragraph in a given passage and write a one-line summary beside it. This basic technique will save you time by helping you in identifying the correct paragraph that you should refer to in order to find the answer to a question.

4. Start small

Long passages filled with technical terms can be a put off for any student. However, that is precisely the mountain that they have to tackle during entrance exams. The idea is to not try to scale the mountain all at once but to start with baby steps.

Start with simple passages of short length. As your comprehension skills increase alongside your reading speed, gradually start taking up longer passages with difficult subject matters and tougher language.

5. Diversify

You might have a tendency to gravitate towards texts pertaining to your areas of interest. However, you must also keep in mind that the texts given to you for law entrance exams may not

always be related to your scope of interest.

As a result, it is important that you begin reading writings on topics that you may not be overly familiar with. Work on maintaining a consistent reading speed and building good comprehension skills on different types of writings.

This article is posted in association with Clatapult.com

Read more articles on CLAT English preparation here.

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