EDITION V

"The most comprehensive approach for an absolute transformation"

THE PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR BECOMING AN OFFICER

NFA'S OFFICIAL HANDBOOK FOR SSB PREPARATION

NFA
NO FRILLS ACADEMY

COL M M NEHRU

DISCLAIMER

No part of this eBook may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording or by any information storage and retrieval system, without written permission from the author.

CONTENTS

Why Should You Read This Guide? (1)

How to Use this Guide? (2)

Moulding the Core Personality (3)

Officer Like Qualities (51)

What to Expect at the SSB Centre (54)

De Novo SSB (67)

Self-Description (71)

The Psychology Tests (81)

Samples (99)

GTO Tasks (102)

Interview (114)

Busting Some SSB Myths (121)

Must Read Success Stories (127)

FOREWORD

Stephen Covey's *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* has inspired this book, which is collection of blogs written by me over 5-6 years for the benefit of all defence aspirants. My experience of 29 years in the Indian Army (including 2 years as Deputy President of 17 SSB) and about 5 years spent in guiding numerous students have shaped the ideas promoted in this book.

The idea of creating this book came from Raj. He has played a major role in the compilation of this book. I thank him. I also thank Satyendra and Bahmini for their help in giving the book the final shape.

I thank Shalini, my wife, and Shikhar, my son for supporting the whole idea of No Frills Academy as well of this book.

I thank my parents for the ideas promoted in this book because without their liberal upbringing I would not be what I am.

WHY SHOULD YOU READ THIS GUIDE?

This book is primarily focused on increasing the overall competence of an individual. Focus is on improvement of core personality aspects (reasoning, analysing and organising abilities, social aspects, leadership aspects, willpower, and mental and physical stamina) with the assumption that improvement in behaviour will automatically follow. Since any credible change in core personality takes place over a long period of time, this guide requires a good measure of perseverance and deliberate effort from the reader. The reader who is willing to embark on the path of constant self-improvement must then be proactive, determined, and highly motivated. There are no substitutes and short-cuts.

When you have overcome the weaknesses in you, the chance of achieving success in your life is greatly increased. SSB clearance will then happen without much conscious and deliberate effort.

"You will be recommended only when you are fit to be recommended."

Kritee Saxena (Ex-NFA, Recommended from 21 SSB)

HOW SHOULD YOU USE THIS GUIDE?

The primary intention of going to a coaching academy or reading a guide such as this is because you have found some inadequacy in yourself that is preventing your successful recommendation by an SSB. Keeping this inadequacy in mind, the first chapter of this guide contains a number of carefully and deliberately handpicked personality development essays and articles which will take you on a tour of self-analysis and instruction. The content has been chosen after years of study, practice, and experimentation in various capacities as a soldier, leader, and SSB selector. From taking full responsibility of yourself and your life to the productive and effective utilisation of you time, the fist chapter covers it all. Do not skip it, for a building is only as strong as its foundation!

Once the strong foundation is built, you can move forward to the subsequent chapters. Each of them deal with certain SSB specific factors. You will see that, if your core personality is sound, the demands made from the compliance of each of the SSB factors will come as second nature to you. There will then be no need of any pretence or facade that needs constant care and attention from you. The subsequent chapters will make you aware of what is required and empower you to be prepared for what you will soon face in your SSB. The chapter dedicated to the busting of SSB myths will help you stay focused in the face of misinformation. Lastly, the included series of unique success stories will keep you motivated and inspire confidence in your own abilities to achieve your dream of donning the coveted uniforms one day.

#1

Moulding the Core Personality

ESSAY #1
WHO AM I?

Who am I? This is a very diffi cult question to answer for most of humanity. We do not know ourselves well enough. Our **self concept** is hazy. Our self concept is often a summation of consistent views expressed by others about us. The views are often something like this:

Mother:

"You can never get up on time!"
"You are totally irresponsible!"
"You can never keep your things properly!"
"You stay in bad company- your friends will spoil you!"
"You are only fond of playing; see your neighbour, how much he studies! I don't know if you will be able to do any work!"
"You are too simple! The World is too bad! I don't know how you will manage?"

Teacher:

"You talk too much!"
"You never finish your homework in time!"
"You don't pay attention in class!"
"The way you are going, you will find it difficult to get admission in any good college!"

Friend:

"You are very straightforward; you should be more diplomatic!"
"X has said that he will beat you in the race! He is practicing very hard!"
Should we form a self concept on the basis of above views, which are all well meaning, but reflect the insecurities of the Mother, Teacher and Friend? Is there another way to form a self concept?

Introspection:

This is another method. You assess yourself based on self analysis and ignore the views of others. This method has only limited reliability. We may over-rate/ underrate our positive/ negative traits. Our assessment is subjective and ignores the value of demonstrated behaviour.

Let us now learn about the **"Self fulfilling Prophecy"**.

Self Fulfilling Prophecy (Pygmalion Research - 1968)

The original research of Rosenthal and Jacobson focused on an experiment at an elementary school where students took intelligence pre-tests.Rosenthal and Jacobson then informed the teachers of the names of twenty percent of the students in the school who were showing "unusual potential for intellectual growth" and would bloom academically within the year.

Unknown to the teachers, these students were selected randomly with no relation to the initial test.When Rosenthal and Jacobson tested the students eight months later, they discovered that the randomly selected students who teachers thought would bloom scored significantly higher.

Higher expectations of teachers induced higher performance. This showed the immense power of the **'self fulfilling prophecy'.** This logic of 'self fulfilling prophecy' applies almost universally. High expectations induce high performance, while low expectations induce low performance.

Let us note some facts.

Fact #1 - It is very difficult to form an accurate clear **self concept**.
Fact #2 - Human capacity for growth is unlimited.
Fact #3 - By being proactive we can unlearn poor habits and learn good habits and, thus change our personalities for the better.

Keeping the above knowledge in mind, can we now formulate the answer to the question – "Who am I?"

Forming a Clear Self Concept

We are able to develop a hazy self concept through opinion of others and by introspection. We can live with it, or make it more accurate by assessing ourselves:

"FORM A SELF CONCEPT ON THE BASIS OF CONSISTENT, DEMONSTRATED BEHAVIOUR, RATHER THAN ON THE BASIS OF OUR THOUGHTS and PERCEPTIONS."

It is not an easy exercise, but feasible enough to form a more accurate self concept.

Create your Personality

Now visualise as to what type of person you would like to be – your ideal self image. There would be differences in the ideal self image and the self concept. Some habits will have to be given up, which are unworthy of you, but form part of your personality because of various environmental influences. It will take time and effort. Similarly some new habits will have to be formed.
Thus you will always remain on a journey of self improvement, because as you mature your ideas will also evolve and so your ideal self image will also keep changing. Improvement will take place in small, incremental steps.
A reactive person will accept himself/herself as evolved due to the impact of genes and environment. The person believes that the negative aspects of the personality are to be lived with. For a reactive person the answer to the question 'who am I?' is that basic nature cannot be changed and I am how God made me and the environment shaped me.

Proactive Person's Answer to "Who am I?"

The answer to the question, "who am I?" for a proactive person will be –

"I AM AN EVOLVING PERSON, WHO HAS A FAIRLY ACCURATE IDEA OF WHO I WOULD LIKE TO BE. AND I AM SLOWLY MOVING IN THAT DIRECTION."

ESSAY #2
FROM REACTIVE TO PROACTIVE

To progress in life, we need to be proactive. The journey of self improvement often involves moving from being reactive to proactive. This essay guides you in a very simple manner on developing your proactive nature.

Making the Leap

When we make a promise to ourselves and keep it, we take the first step towards the development of our **proactive nature**. We can set daily or weekly targets in various spheres of our lives and attain them. Being able to achieve targets set for the first week has been critical in the process of self improvement for most of my students. This week gave them the confidence and self belief to attain their monthly targets. It improved their self discipline. Their planned schedules faced hindrances like family and health issues, reversion to old comfort zone of unplanned living or fatigue. These hindrances did not deter them from losing their sense of organised living and discipline. This is the first crucial step in our journey from **reactive to proactive.**

We can categorise aspects which concern us into the following categories: Direct Control (own behaviour), Indirect Control (behaviour of others, which we can influence by our conduct-parents, family members, friends and colleagues) and, No Control (weather, performance of government, SSB selec-

tion process, inflation, being caught in traffic jam, waiting in queue and so on).

A proactive individual will focus their energies primarily on Direct Control aspects; little on Indirect Control aspects; and little to nothing on No Control aspects. Meanwhile reactive people compulsively focus their energies on No Control aspects and keep getting frustrated and exasperated. Thereby reducing the energy available to be focused on Direct and Indirect Control aspects.

Making the leap from a reactive to proactive nature can improve our self control, sense of responsibility and consequently self confidence. We will find ourselves in greater control of our lives, being driven more by our values and much lesser by others and our impulses. A value driven student will find it easy to concentrate on his studies (a target set by them) while all their friends are enjoying watching an Indian Premier League match! A value driven working professional will find it convenient to exercise regularly, or invest in their growth while their colleagues waste their free time in amusement and gossip. Sustained living in this manner for a few weeks and months makes us more responsible in our lives. We will not even realise how this step-by-step, evolutionary growth, will have a revolutionary impact on our lives. Our personalities would have improved dramatically in facets like willpower, determination, mental and physical stamina. These qualities will set us on the path of sustained growth and long term success in our lives. This is a simple way to develop a proactive nature.

ESSAY #3
DEVELOPING
THE RIGHT ATTITUDE

"Bear in mind that our attitude determines our success in life."

Attribution Theory

Read the following statements:

"I failed in Math test because last night we had no current and I could not study"

"I was bowled because the ball did not rise, because of the bad pitch"

"I performed poorly in college because I got into bad company"

"I did not study well because my family environment was not conducive"

These are some commonly heard statements. These statements demonstrate rationalisation of behaviour by an individual to others and even to himself/ herself. Rationalisation to self, creates a flawed self concept and also has the negative impact of not learning from own mistakes. Such an individual is likely to repeat the same mistake again and again. His stubbornness will prevent improvement.

Now read these statements:

"I got a good rank because I worked hard"
"I scored a century because I concentrated well"

It is common human nature to attribute good things/successes to ourselves – that is our capabilities and effort, and for our failures we tend to blame external factors. This in brief is the essence of "Attribution Theory"– a topic in the field of Psychology. The first series of statements are blaming external factors for a poor performance and second set of statements are taking credit for good performance.

We are Responsible for our Lives

The truth is that in the long run external factors do not play a major role in how our lives and careers progress, but primarily depend upon our abilities and efforts. We should remember this important truth and attribute failures to ourselves, as well as successes. In short we should realise that we are responsible for our lives- good and bad both.

Developing Right Attitude

The right attitude of a proactive person who takes responsibility for his actions and works to improve his future would be:

"I failed in SSB because my GK and English are weak; I will improve them and succeed next time!"

"My parents don't trust me because of my past actions; I will make myself trustworthy and their attitude will automatically change!"

Thus, understanding the Attribution Theory, remembering and utilising it to **develop the right attitude** will set us on the path to continuous progress and success in life.

ESSAY #4: IMPORTANCE OF MOTIVATION

Some very commonly encountered problems:

1. "I started a weight loss program. It was okay for the first week, but now I find it difficult to continue."

2. "I find Math classes very boring and wait for them to get over"

3. "I am preparing for the IAS exam, but I find it difficult and uninteresting to study ancient Indian and World History"

4. "When I go to office/class on Monday, I am already looking forward to the weekend!"

5. "I just don't find the energy to go through the same old routine of life"

All these problems, apparently different, have a common thread binding them- "weak motivation".

Let us examine the concept of "motivation".

Understanding Importance of Motivation in Life

For a hungry and thirsty man food and water are very strong motives to work. It is the lowest order of need (physiological).This is often not the case for most of us in the middle class. As per Maslow's theory, there are other motivational needs as we progress up in the need hierarchy – namely "safety", "social", "esteem" and "self actualisation" What experience shows is that **selfish motives** are weaker than **altruistic motives.** Any mother will tell you that her motivation to teach her children is much stronger than pursuing her own higher studies. Similarly a committed teacher will find motivation to teach his students stronger than pursuing his higher studies. In my own case, I could keep awake and work for long hours at night when I knew that the lives of my troops and civilian population were endangered. I could not have done so for selfish reasons.

Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation

When I do a job, solve Math problems, read History, play a game, which I like, irrespective of any external reward I am 'intrinsically motivated'. When I do the same activities but the 'motivation' is the reward, like salary, marks in exams, earning from game, the motivation is extrinsic. **Intrinsic motivation is much stronger than motivation that is extrinsic.** An example of intrinsic motivation is the reason the protagonist in '3 Idiots' gives for studying mechanical engineering – his love for machines**.** A combination of **intrinsic** and **altruistic motives** is a very strong force. For example, take Tendulkar or Leander Paes playing for India. They both find the game **IN-**

TRINSICALLY MOTIVATING and combined with the MOTIVATION TO PERFORM FOR THE COUNTRY (ALTRUISTIC MOTIVE), THE FORCE IS VERY STRONG.

Motivating ourselves to accomplish Goals

We have understood the concept of motivation. Now, we will learn about motivating ourselves to accomplish goals. This will help us to energise our daily lives.

Staying Fit

We all want to be fit, but rarely are we able to define what it means in specific terms. Usually it would be advice from a doctor, or self image, often without a clear target. Let us see how we can make our motivation stronger in this case. It is important to have a well defined, measurable clear goal.

1. I could lay down a goal like running 10 km in 40/50/60 minutes in 3 months. If I achieve this then my weight loss goal would get automatically achieved, without having taken recourse to any popular (mostly unhealthy diet plans). I would be healthier and stronger.

2. I could have a goal of **"NOT FALLING ILL"**, because I have to look after my family and set an example for them. To attain this goal I have to exercise regularly and control my food intake: **(ALTRUISTIC MOTIVE).**

3. I could develop a love for exercising (INTRINSIC MOTIVATION) and combine it with a need to not fall ill and set an example **(ALTRUISTIC MOTIVE)**. This will be a very strong motivating force.

Math

Often students link studies only with passing exams, with no relationship with future life, which is a very weak motive. They should realise the value of knowing the subject in future life.

1. Realise that in the career which I intend to pursue to look after my family, knowing Math is essential: **(ALTRUISTIC MOTIVE).**

2. I study Math because I like Math, passing exams is incidental: **(INTRINSIC MOTIVATION).**

3. I can tell myself that I like challenges. If I find Math difficult, then it is a challenge to be overcome.

4. I should strive to get a combination of the above two motivational forces to succeed in knowing the subject.

Conclusion

So whenever you face problems of motivation like the ones discussed, or unique to your case, you should examine your motives deeply and get them aligned correctly. I assure you will feel energised to accomplish your goals.

ESSAY #5:
STAYING MOTIVATED

Sustaining Energy and Enthusiasm for Actions

It is quite common to start something with energy and enthusiasm and then give it up soon afterwards. This phenomenon is very common in our lives and is visible in all pursuits- study, business, work, health, etc. We would all like to overcome this problem. The genesis of the problem and the means to overcome it has been discussed.

Problems of Motivation

In majority of the cases the problem is that of motivation. The following questions weaken our motivating force. This is the biggest problem, preventing us from realising our potential. We call these problems of 'personal leadership'.

Examples:

- Students: Should I be studying the subjects I have chosen? Will my method of studying take me to my goal?
- Workers: Should I be doing the work that I am doing? Will my method of working take me to my goal?

These doubts weaken our sense of purpose and motivation. No time spent upon clarifying these aspects is wasted. Imagine doing B Tech for 4 years and then realizing that I should have done law! It is better to have spent 2 months to decide what to do & then not waver!

Problems of Discipline

In some cases, the problem is of discipline, procrastination and laziness. People having such a problem are unable to control their lives, but allow others and circumstances to do that. The key, therefore, is self-discipline.

Improving Self Discipline

Self-discipline separates us from our ancestors and the animal kingdom. Rather than responding to immediate impulses, we can plan, we can evaluate alternative actions, and can refrain from doing things that we will regret. We can also take advantage of these innately human abilities by developing wisdom and willpower. Self-disciplined people do not allow their choices to be dictated by impulses or feelings. Instead, they make informed, rational decisions on a daily basis without feeling overly stressed or upset. **Self discipline is a learned behaviour**. It requires practice and repetition. Some important tips to improve self-discipline are discussed below.

Remove Temptations to Improve Self Discipline

Removing all temptations and distractions from your environment is a crucial first step when working to improve your discipline. If you are trying to have better control of your eating, do not have junk food near you.

Habit Formation to Improve Self Discipline

When a behaviour becomes a habit, we do not have to exert our will power but start acting on reflex. Therefore, breaking a bad habit and building a new habit not only requires you to make active decisions, it is out of your comfort zone. Your brain will resist the change in favour of what it has been programmed to do. Acknowledge that it will take a while for your new regime to feel right or good or natural. Persevere-it will happen!

Schedule breaks, treats, and rewards

Self discipline does not mean that your new regimen needs to be drill sergeant-like in execution. In fact, giving yourself zero wiggle room often results in failures, disappointments, and giving into your old ways. While practicing self control, schedule specific breaks, treats, and rewards. Dieting? Designate Saturday as ice cream day. If you are studying hard then take recreational breaks and a weekly off. *Self discipline* can be hard. Reward your effort.

Forgive yourself and move forward

Instituting a new way of living to improve *self discipline* will not always go according to plan. You will have ups and downs. The key is to keep moving forward. When you have a setback, acknowledge what caused it and move on. It is easy to get wrapped up in guilt, anger, or frustration, but these emotions will not help build self discipline. Instead, use the hiccups in your plan as learning experiences for the future. Forgive yourself, and move on. The longer you take a break from disciplined life, the harder it becomes to get back to it!

ESSAY #6: HOW TO INCREASE SELF CONFIDENCE?

A lot of my students face problems of low self confidence and they want to know as to **how to increase self confidence**. In this post I discuss the subject.

Understanding Self Confidence

Self confidence can be understood as comprising of two facets of our personality. First is our sense of self efficacy. This means that we see ourselves capable of mastering skills and achieving goals in a specific field. We believe that if we learn and work hard in a field we will succeed. This type of confidence leads people to accept difficult challenges, and persist in the face of setbacks. Example: A child who likes Math and can easily solve his class Math problems will accept the challenge of solving Math problems of greater difficulty of a higher class. He may not succeed immediately, but will succeed ultimately because of his **self confidence.**

The second facet of **self confidence** is the idea of self esteem. It implies a more general sense that we can cope with what is going on in our lives. We consider ourselves competent at what we do and have a sense that we can do things if we focus on them. Example: Farhan Akhtar had the belief that he could play the role of Milkha Singh in the famous movie. He believed that he

could look and act like Milkha Singh. He did a great job. The most important part was his self opinion (**self confidence**).

Is it Possible to Enhance Self Confidence?

Popular belief is that it is possible to **enhance self-confidence** by external affirmations and positive thinking. There is some truth in this. It is most important to **increase self confidence** by setting and achieving goals – thereby **building competence**. Without this underlying competence, we do not **enhance self-confidence**, but build shallow over-**confidence**, which brings upsets and failures in life.

Bad news for the modern society and in accordance with my Guru, Stephen Covey's philosophy is: "There is no short cut, or quick fix solution!"

The good news is that increasing **self confidence** is genuinely achievable. It requires focus and determination. Another good part is that the things you will do to **enhance self-confidence** will also build success – after all, your **confidence** will come from real, solid achievements.

Vital Mindset to increase Self Confidence

- Carry out an introspection to assess your strengths and weaknesses as on date. Make a note of your strengths. Think about them every day.

- Positive thinking: Our mind often has vivid memories of failures and successes.

Failures could be like:

  - You fell down as a child and others laughed.
  - You embarrassed yourself by some stupid behaviour.
  - You became blank when faced with a crowd.
  - You became speechless when your teacher or boss asked something you knew.

Successes could be like:

- You recited a poem in class as a child.
- You solved a problem on black board in class.
- At home you solved a problem for your parents when they were stuck.
- You hit the balloon with the air gun at a fair.

"Positive thinking is to think more often about the successes than the failures. If you are facing an opponent you have lost to 9 times out of 10, think only about when you won, before facing him again. This confidence will increase your chances of success!"

Enhancing Self Confidence

Wherever you are in life and whatever you are doing do the following:

- Set small achievable goals and accomplish them with determination and focus.
- Gradually increase the level of your goals.
- Celebrate your success and keep remembering the small successes.
- As you **increase self confidence** try to place yourself in situations in which you had failed and visualise yourself succeeding in imagination and then go ahead and do it.
- **Increase self confidence on a strong foundation of consistent hard work and successes!**

ESSAY #7: BECOME ASSERTIVE FOR SUCCESS IN LIFE

As a child you did not agree with what your friends were doing but you went along because you did not want to annoy them.You often feel controlled by your friends and family.You often perform tasks at work place which you should not be. It takes a toll on your family life and you are not left with any time, or energy to invest in personal growth.You are unable to say, "No" to people.Your problem is not unique. It affects your self-esteem and self-confidence. You are constantly being run over by people. You need to be more assertive. The good news is that you can become more assertive. It will, however, take time. The change cannot be affected by superficial behaviour, or communication.

What is Assertiveness?

Assertiveness is the quality of being self-assured and confident but not being aggressive. You. respect your rights and views. You express them clearly. You respect the rights and views of others equally. You do not allow others to ignore your rights and views.

First Step to Becoming Assertive

The vital first step to *becoming assertive* is to build self-confidence and self-esteem. This is the essential base on which *assertive* behaviour can be built upon. Do not believe the short cut approach being promoted in self help and

motivation books. Adoption of assertive behaviour by a person having low self esteem will lack congruence and consistency. He will himself be confused and naturally send confused messages to others with his at times aggressive and at times passive behaviour. The problem has to be tackled from the root and not outward behaviour.

Second Step to Becoming Assertive

The first step is more difficult than the second. This step is easier. In fact being assertive is the natural behaviour of a confident person. We will assume that you are accustomed to behaving passively. You are comfortable with your behaviour and more importantly others expect you to behave as such!

You have to now start expressing your views calmly, clearly, firmly and politely. You will notice a change in yourself and so will others. Please be consistent!

Points to Remember in Being Assertive

- It is vital to understand the meaning of assertiveness.
- Assertive responses are rational and thought out and not impulsive ones.
- Impulsive responses are likely to be aggressive.
- In a onetime type situation, it is better to be passive than aggressive. Example: Your boss asked you to do something just one time (which

was not in your job description 90%, but could have been 10%). It is better to do the work.

- When you consistently find yourself in disagreeable situations then it is time to assert your rights and views.
- Assertiveness is never impolite.
- Assertiveness means understanding others' perspective first and clarifying your perspective to them for mutual benefit, fairness and justice.
- Assertiveness is a vital quality required in job interviews, group discussions and SSB.

Don't Forget!

By being assertive you are being fair and just to others as well as yourself. It is always good to be assertive.

ESSAY #8:
NERVOUSNESS DURING GD,PI?

Suddenly our stomach is queasy, your palms are sweaty, and your mind has gone blank about your opening lines. If you are like most people, then public speaking or making a presentation has put you through a similar experience. Being nervous is not a problem or a weakness; you just need to channelize your nervous energy wisely. On the other hand, being over-confident and not nervous could be a weakness!

This is a fairly common problem with job/ SSB aspirants. In this blog we will analyse the problem of group discussion/interview/presentation nerves and suggest remedies.

Examples of Good Control of Nerves:

- Virender Sehwag is as shy person. However, he was confident enough to hit a six to bring up his triple century (abnormal **control of nerves**)!
- A shy opening batsman when playing in front of thousands & facing Bret Lee is not concerned about the crowd, but the ball likely to come at 150 km/h!
- A shy, but very competent Math teacher, who can explain solution to a Math problem to 10 students, can explain it to 10,000 students as well *confidently*.

- A shy, cardiac surgeon who has never performed in front of a crowd can perform cardiac surgery when witnessed by 50,000 spectators *confidently.*
- Lalu Prasad Yadav can address a crowd in Bihar/India/ anywhere in the world without any sign of nerves**.**
- Ravi Shastri can speak about Cricket and other issues in public confidently.

Analysis of above Examples of Confidence

- Sehwag is shy in general, but is very confident in his craft. This explains his behaviour. The same reason explains the behaviour of the Math teacher in the example quoted.
- The examples of facing the fast bowler and performing surgery show absence of nerves because the focus is so much on the serious task in hand that the mind cannot afford to dwell on any other issue, thus inducing confidence**.**
- The case of Lalu Prasad is one of immense practice and experience in the field, generating confidence.
- The case of Ravi Shastri is one of confidence in playing cricket, having knowledge of the game and speaking about it, providing him the general self-belief to remain confident in other somewhat related fields as well.

Overcoming Group discussion /Interview/ Presentation Nerves

- **Knowledge/Competence**. These aspects are related to each other and help greatly in overcoming the *nerves*. Thus, improvement in knowledge and competence, which lead to enhanced *confi dence,* is vital.
- **Visualisation and Practice**. Visualise the event, entire seating arrangement and audience, etc, in your mind clearly and also visualise that you remain calm and *confi dent* and perform well. The more you rehearse mentally the more *confi dent* you become. The mental rehearsals remove the novelty aspect and you feel that you have done it earlier and *nerves* remain in control.
- **Focus on Content**. If you concentrate on the contents of what you have to speak and immerse yourself totally in that, you will become oblivious to the crowd and not experience *nerves.*
- **Deep Breathing**. A person who is calm takes slow and deep breaths, while a *nervous* person breathes quick and shallow. By focusing on deep and slow breathing the effect of *confi dence* can be induced!
- **Connect and Smile**. Connect with the audience in a relaxed manner with a smile. When you start to speak, fi rst greet the audience and smile. Speak more deliberately and clearly. Listening to your voice and pleasant refl ection from the audience, induced by your smile, will have a calming infl uence and help control the nerves.

ESSAY #9: IMPROVING WILLPOWER AND DETERMINATION

People with good **willpower and determination** are happier and more successful than those who are weaker in these qualities. It is a vital quality required for most of our difficult endeavours. The quality is far more important than talent. Willpower can be improved. Just the way we can improve our physical muscles, so can we improve our willpower. In this chapter we shall discuss simple practical ways to improve our willpower and determination.

Health is Important

Willpower is a mental quality. It is however dependent upon the health of the body. A hungry and tired man will display weaker willpower compared with a person with matching inherent qualities who has had a good sleep and is well fed. In our efforts to improve our will power we need the support of healthy eating, sleeping and exercise habits.

Train the 'Willpower muscle' with Small Steps

We can apply the analogy of physical muscles to increasing our willpower and determination by gradually loading the muscle to increase strength. Under training will not help and overtraining will injure the muscle (deplete willpower). If you want to run a marathon from the level of being

able to run one km you will find the target overwhelming. This is the problem which causes most people to give up early. They cannot believe that the goal is attainable. It is however, very much possible to add one km, or 500m per week to your current level. In this manner you can reach the capability to run marathon in about one year. Imagine how much physical and mental strength improvement is practicable in one year! If you are impatient with your progress you are likely to end up having abandoned the plan. Step by step is the right approach to attain our long term goals.

Meditation for Willpower

Regular meditation is a great way to improve willpower. It is a direct way to control our thoughts and prevent them from wandering in an undesired and unproductive manner. Even 10 min per day will help to improve willpower.

Small Steps in Self Control

Plan goals and actions for one hour, or one day and strive to attain them. Push yourself beyond your comfort zone of effort, but do not overdo it. Do not feel frustrated by your rate of progress, but have patience. Reward yourself for little improvement. This will lead to bigger improvements by and by (just like the marathon running logic explained above).

Improve Self Control to Overcome Bad Habits Step by Step

You may be drinking too much tea, gossiping too much, wasting time on social media, overspending, having low attention span, or having any undesir-

able habit. All these have to be overcome by the small steps method of patience and perseverance. You will not only become a better person, but also would have improved your willpower.

Resist Temptations by Deliberate Distraction or Simple Self Control

You can distract your mind away from temptations by deliberate effort, or if you are confident then just make effort to delay gratification. This is also a good way of improving willpower.

Conclusion

Willpower and determination are vital for success and happiness in our lives. These qualities can be developed by patience and perseverance by taking small steps towards our desired goals. Efforts in this direction will pay great dividends. Many students of No Frills Academy have become much more effective in their personal lives by adopting some of the measures discussed above.

ESSAY #10: HOW TO IMPROVE REASONING ABILITY?

Reasoning ability means using reason or logic in thinking out a problem in accordance with the principles of logic or reason. Reasoning ability also implies using rational thinking and not getting affected by emotions. Rational thinking would imply having a scientifi c temper of inquiry and reliance on empirical evidence rather than blind faith in accepted social and religious norms.

Popular belief is that reasoning ability is largely genetically determined. This is not true. Genetics determine **reasoning ability** to some extent. Reasoning ability, like practically all human endowments, can be improved. In this chapter we will discuss how to improve reasoning ability?

Understanding the Reasoning Process

Unless we know how someone arrived at a conclusion, we can critique only the answer or conclusion. If we break the process of thinking into individual steps, we are better able to critique both our own thinking process and that of others. Math teachers often advise their students to show their work. If all that counts is the answer, the work (or process) is irrelevant. Showing the work allows teachers (and students) to know just where the students may have gone wrong. Did they totally miss a concept or did they make a simple transposition error? This helps in future guidance and improving reasoning ability.

Step by Step Process helps Comprehension

An example of learning a new skill is a Tennis serve, A coach breaks down the process into a series of steps that address elements such as positioning the feet, tossing the ball, and moving the racket. Each of these skills can be examined and practiced independently and then in combination. When each element is correctly applied in concert with the others, the process of serving a tennis ball is complete. The same process holds true for **rational thinking**. As in learning a skill, we can break problem solving into individual steps that we practice. We can thus improve our rational thinking–and help others improve theirs.

Approach to solving Math Problems to Improve Reasoning Ability

Math is the subject best suited to improve logical thinking. Unfortunately the over emphasis on getting the right answer takes us away from the process of reasoning. The reasoning muscles are getting trained when the problem is in the process of being solved. If the child gets the answer straight away then the mind has not received the requisite training. This unfortunately is happening today through impatient parents and tutors. It would be good if just hints are given and the student is encouraged to continue effort to solve the problem. The same analogy applies to other subjects as well.

Consider Reasoning Ability as a Muscle

By training we can improve all our natural endowments. Consider **reasoning ability** as a muscle. It can be improved by systematic training. So, train hard and train often.

Meditation/Visualisation to Improve Reasoning Ability

Meditation involves focusing the mind and removing distractions. It is a good exercise to improve reasoning ability. Visualising is another great mental exercise. You can create a mental image in your mind about anything of concern; hold that image with clarity to improve logical thought process.

Regular Writing to Improve Reasoning Ability

We often think that we understand a particular thing or concept. We are surprised when we try writing it down and realise that we lacked clarity and had not understood the concept in totality. Writing helps us gain clarity of understanding and **improve reasoning ability.**

Teaching to Improve Reasoning Ability

When we have to teach someone it is a great mental exercise. My experience shows that students who have been teaching regularly gain greater clarity of concepts compared with others. This is another way to improve reasoning ability.

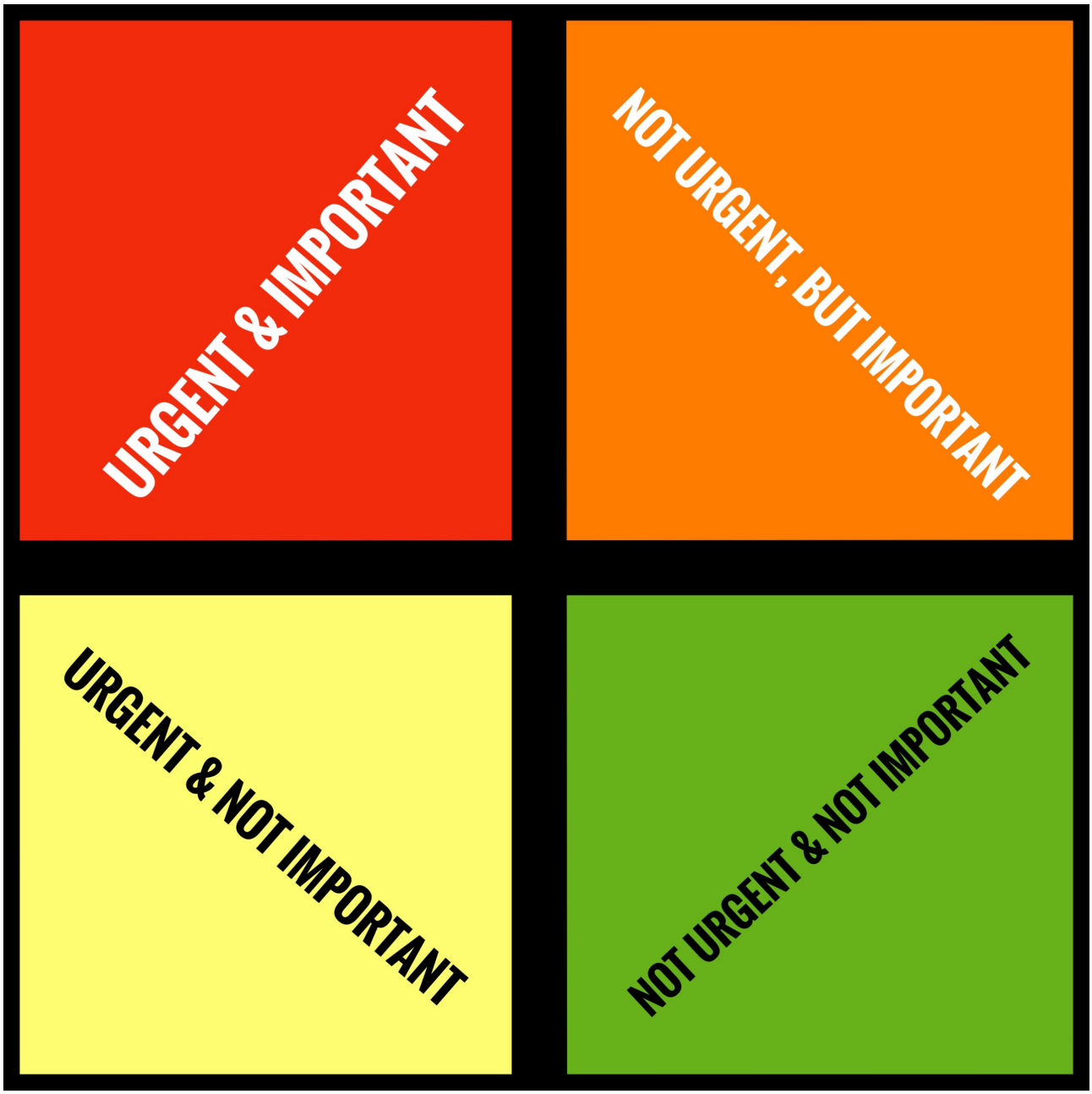
Diverse Interests, Sports and Games Improve Reasoning Ability

Chess and cross word puzzles are popular games for mental exercise. Various other games, both mental and physical provide scope for improving the mental muscles. The more we get out of our comfort zones the better challenge we provide to our mind to grow.

Conclusion

The above discussion would have clarified that reasoning ability can be improved. There are a large number of ways in which this can be achieved. Some important methods have been discussed above. Please understand that training of mental muscles is just like the physical muscles. Parents must allow the children to exert their minds to solve problems and not provide immediate solutions, thus depriving the young minds of vital exercise. Grown up adults, when confronted with complex problems must break them down into simpler and smaller steps and solve them. As we solve more, diverse and challenging problems in life our problem solving skills are consistently improving and thus our reasoning ability.

ESSAY #11:
TIME MANAGEMENT



Let us understand the terms which have been used. *Urgent matters* press us; insist on action; are often popular with others; often they are unimportant. *Important* matters have to do with results. They contribute to your mission,

your values & high priority goals in life. Based on this classification activities in one's day-to-day life can be broadly categorised into four quadrants.

Quadrant 1(Q1) -- Urgent & Important Activities

- Pressing problems.
- Deadline driven projects.

Quadrant 2 (Q2) -- Not Urgent But Important Activities

- Recognising new opportunities.
- All prevention activities: looking after health, mind, assets & finances (both your personal & that of the organization).
- Building & taking care of relations-family, friends & colleagues. Getting a clear perspective that people are more important than money, property, inanimate objects, marks, promotions, fame, etc.

Quadrant 3 (Q3) -- Urgent & Not Important Activities

- Unimportant phone calls.
- Popular activities.
- Unimportant pressing matters.

- Unimportant mails.

- Organised events.

Quadrant 4 (Q4) -- Not Urgent & Not Important Activities

- Pleasant pastimes- social media, social phone calls & chats, gossiping, watching TV, mobile & computer games.

- Other ways of 'killing' time.

Clarification

The key is not to prioritise your schedule but schedule your priorities. Going to watch a cricket match with family is recreation (comes in Q2), but being addicted to IPL, or *Game of Thrones,* or some TV show, is a Q4 activity. Some examples of how Q2 activities become Q4 activities are: not getting your bike serviced (Q2) and waiting for it to break down (Q1); not leading a healthy lifestyle (Q2) and getting a heart attack (Q1); not studying regularly (Q2) and panicking in exams (Q1); and not investing in your growth (Q2) and suddenly discovering that technological advancements have rendered you unproductive for the society (Q1). Popular tendency is to react to *urgent matters*. *Important matters* that are not urgent require more initiative and being proactive.

Effective people stay out of *Quadrants*-3 and 4, because urgent or not, they are not important. Q2 is the heart of effective personal management. It

deals with things like building relationships, writing a personal mission statement, long range planning, exercising, preventive maintenance, preparation-all those things we know we need to do, but somehow seldom get around to doing, because they are not *urgent*.

To paraphrase Peter Drucker, "effective people are not problem minded; they're opportunity minded". They feed opportunities and starve problems. They think preventively. They have genuine Q1 crises and emergencies that require immediate attention, but the number is comparatively small. They focus on the *important*, but not *urgent*, high leverage capacity building activities.

ESSAY #12:
STOP WORKING HARD

Smart Work versus Hard Work

A 'hard worker' is someone who is diligent, laborious and puts in a lot of effort and long hours into doing and completing tasks.

A 'smart worker' is someone who works intelligently and efficiently and achieves results with minimum effort.

This is a topic of considerable interest. Fortunately, most of my students realise that *smart work* is much better than *hard work*. *Hard work* has been glorified by the theories of Communism. Parents and teachers promote the goodness of *hard work* because they compare it with the choice students often take of opting for wasting their time and procrastination. These are dumb choices and not smart choices! In this essay I have tried to clarify as to why **smart work is much better than just hard work.** In fact, smart work is the only way to progress!

Some Examples of Hard Work versus Smart Work

- A takes 10 hours to cut a tree with sincere effort. B takes one hour to sharpen the axe and cuts a similar tree in 5 hours.
- A & B are athletes of equal standard. A practices for a 5 km run competition 14 hours per week for 4 weeks, i.e. 56 hours. B practices for 4 hours per week for 4 weeks, i.e. 16 hours. B beats A comfortably!

- A & B are students of matching academic competence. A studies for 12 hours every day. B studies for 8 hours every day with better planning. Both take the same competitive exam. B scores much higher than A!

Arguments in Favour of Smart Work

- Smart work implies good planning, clarity of goals, efficiency and utilising the best-known practices to accomplish the task.
- Tasks can be accomplished faster by smart work.
- Time saved can be used productively for other pursuits.
- The method will keep you energised and not leave you exhausted.
- Smarter work will provide you more time to invest in personal growth and enhance your competence.
- A smart worker enhances efficiency and effectiveness by using the following smart choices:
    - Delegate less-complex tasks to subordinates.
    - Prioritise tasks based on relative importance.
    - Stop doing unimportant things.
    - Reduce time spent in doing routine things by enhancing efficiency – Principle of Kaizen.

Arguments against Hard Work

- It is an exhausting experience. After doing laborious hard work you are left with little energy to do anything else.
- Hard work does not allow you to fully use your brain and it pushes you for more physical effort.

- It displays determination and persistence but not much is achieved.
- As the above examples show, working hard may give poorer results than smart work in academic as well as physical pursuits.

From the above arguments it would be apparent that smart work is vital for progress in life. With rapid advancements in the modern world it has become difficult for a worker to stay abreast with advancements even in his own field of work, forget about other fields. Hence a hard worker, who works 12 hours sincerely in doing his work will not advance but stagnate in his profession. In a few years' time his level of skills would have become obsolete, because the world would have moved ahead. Smart work is, thus, the only choice for simple survival!

ESSAY #13:
SLUMDOG SHASHI THAROOR: MASTERING ENGLISH

(The following article is by NFA's Satyendra Pandit. A bright and industrious boy who, despite his disadvantageous background, used his adversities as stepping stones to work his way out of poverty to a bright and promising future.)

English is the most important language of the interconnected, globalised world. It is vital for professional success. As a young person in this information age I consider myself not just an Indian but a global citizen and advise all of you to think likewise. Like me so many of you are weak in English. It is a big handicap. The weak blame the circumstances for their shortcomings while the strong and proactive work to overcome their weaknesses. I consider myself a proactive man and have improved my English. I am not perfect but can manage to express myself orally and in writing. Here I share my journey of learning English to benefit people with similar background like me.

My Background

I come from a humble family. My father is a security guard and it is very difficult for him to run our family. We are living in a one room of a slum area in Kolkata. Being a slum boy, I never found a culture where I could speak English. I completed my secondary and higher secondary education from a Hindi medium school. In my school, English teachers were unable to teach us the

basic concepts of English grammar because they themselves did not know. I was taught English in Hindi.

Early Difficulties

The idea of translating sentences into English from Hindi created discomfort and it was difficult to learn the basics of English. This discomfort continued till I reached the 2nd year of my engineering. In college life, I felt awkward among English speaking people. It badly affected my confidence. The weakness in English and consequent reduced confidence caused me to fail miserably in three consecutive SSBs for NDA. These failures further dented my confidence. I started to think that SSB was only meant for English speaking candidates. Weak English and low confidence never allowed me to display my knowledge and other skills.

Joining No Frills Academy

It was August 2017, when I read blogs written by Col. M M Nehru, which talked about Eklavya and Arjun and the story of a Dharavi slum boy. These two blogs inspired me to contact Nehru sir. He helped me and asked me to improve my grammar and vocabulary.

Strategy for English Improvement

Writing Ability: Essential

1. First of all, I went through basics of grammar. For that, I took help from the book by Wren & Martin. This book helped me to improve my knowledge of tenses, which enabled me to frame correct sentences. I also focused on articles and prepositions and their correct usage.
2. After spending a couple of weeks of reading grammar books, I moved onto reading the newspaper on daily basis. In the beginning, it was difficult to understand the editorials due to my weak English. I consulted the dictionary to learn the meaning of words that I did not know. This exercise helped me to understand the formation of sentences and structuring of paragraphs. After reading the newspaper, I started to write one article on my own daily. It helped me to improve sentence formation as well as my vocabulary.
3. For improving my vocabulary, I consulted a book called "Word Power Made Easy" written by Norman Lewis. This book helped me to understand the differences between similar words. It also enriched my vocabulary.

Oral Communication

Till now I have discussed my approach to improving my writing skills. Now let me talk about my approach to improving my oral communication skills.

1. For improving my oral communication skill, I became an active listener. I started to watch "Ted Talks" on YouTube. It helped me to gain wide knowledge on different topics of my interests. Hollywood movies and TV series like Dexter enabled me to get familiar with their conversation style.

2. Apart from just becoming an active listener, I started to communicate in English with my friends. Initially, I felt very awkward, but later I became comfortable. Practicing in front of a mirror gave me more confidence. These things helped me to regain my lost confidence.

Lists of Books I Read

During the journey of improvement of English, I started to write articles on current and several geopolitical issues. I also read some books on these issues. Some books that I read during this wonderful journey of improvement are listed below:

1. *The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari*, by Robin Sharma.
2. *International Relations In The 21sh Century*, by Pushpesh Pant.
3. *Challenges to Internal Security* by Ashok Kumar (IPS).
4. *Indian Shastra: Reflection on the Nation in Our Time* by Shashi Tharoor.
5. *Half Girlfriend* by Chetan Bhagat.

You Can Do it Too!

I would like to say that learning English is not very difficult. It, however, requires perseverance and patience. These qualities, unfortunately, my generation often lacks! We want results in 2 weeks or we give up! With regular and consistent effort anyone can improve his/her skills in English. In my opinion, good English helps an individual to build his confidence not only to communicate but also overall in life.

#2

Officer Like Qualities (OLQs)

Officer Like Qualities (OLQs) sought in SSB develop in routine life over a period of time. Trying to memorise the 15 OLQs, and then understanding their definition and assessment is a task best left to assessors. Understanding the assessment techniques by candidates is a mere wastage of time as it is a complex task that is not required of them.

A candidate should be aware of being assessed as adequate in the following qualities: reasoning & organising ability, communication skills, sociability, leadership, will power & determination. What aspirants should understand is that an average candidate getting selected would have in his/her career done the following:

- Studied sincerely & understood what was taught well.
- Played some games, and done some physical fitness exercises.
- Have led a reasonably organised life. Have been involved in organising some events at home or school/college & hence would have the ability to organise an event, if required.
- Would have had some friends at school/college & good relations with family members. He/she would have been helpful in social relations & would respect & regard others.
- Would have been involved in some leadership role like house captain, team captain, prefect, etc & developed abilities to positively influence a group & work effectively as a leader, as a subordinate and a team member.

- Would have developed willpower & determination through tough times faced at home & school/college like exams & other pressure/deadline oriented tasks.

- Would have some hobbies & interests & would have been involved in some extra curricular activities, which would have aided personality growth in fields other than the prescribed curriculum.

- Would have a reasonable interest in knowing about important National & International events & social issues & have an independent opinion on them.

Reasons for deficiencies in QLQs

It would be apparent from the discussion that the above should be a very normal profile of a candidate. Such a candidate would be selectable. Nothing extra ordinary is required!

Unfortunately, a large number of candidates do not develop these qualities because their growth lacks balance. This mis balance is caused by undue focus on marks and wastage of considerable time in attending extra tuition classes.

How to develop OLQs

If you have led a normal life of a student as discussed above, then there is no problem. You would be have adequate OLQs.

However, if you have led a marks obsessed with no sports, no extra-curricular activities and a tuition-rich life, then there are chances of having personality deficiencies. Please understand that no coaching academy in the world can develop deficient OLQs sought in SSB in 15 days of intensive coaching.

We, at NFA, have prepared a method of developing the deficient qualities with focussed effort over a period of time. Identification of the weak aspects is the first course of action. This is to be followed by the construction of a long term practical plan to overcome the identified weaknesses. The rate of improvement will vary from person-to-person, and depends upon the individual's competence and commitment. The method is quite effective. Anybody who has committed themselves to this method totally have emerged highly competent and effective at what they do.

#3

What to Expect at the SSB Centre?

DAY 1 (REPORTING DAY)

As per the call letter, usually, the reporting time is in the afternoon& place is Movement Control Office (MCO), located at the Railway Station. You will not find it difficult as there will be many other candidates who will be scheduled to report on the same day, & you are likely to find some of them.

For some entries reporting day and Screening day are same, so please follow your call letters for correct information. In such case, reporting time is likely to be early morning, like 0700 hours.

On reporting day you are given a detailed brief about the tests & instructions & timings for various things. PIQ (Personal Information Questionnaire) forms are to be filled (similar to the one which I get filled).

DAY 2 (STAGE 1 TESTING/SCREENING)

Screening is the process designed to select potential candidates, from all those who have reported for the particular entry, for Stage 2 of testing, or complete SSB process. It comprises the following:

Officer's Intelligence Rating (OIR) Test

It is similar to the intelligence tests of reasoning (verbal & non-verbal) given in various competitive examinations preparatory books & magazines. Reasoning ability, as well as the speed of reasoning, is important. It is advisable to practice these to get a good score.

Screening Test

Picture Perception & Description Test (PPDT)

It involves two aspects- first is writing a story, & second is a discussion on the story.You will be shown a black & white, hazy picture for 30 secs.You are required to write some particulars in the available box in the answer sheet, which includes No of Characters, their Age, Sex & Mood.You have to identify the main character & build the story around him/her. It is convenient to name the character (helps in discussion stage).You are required to describe what the scene in the picture depicts (what is going on).You have to visualize & write, what led to the present scene (what happened in the past).You have to foresee the future & write it. (What will happen in the future).The entire story has to be written in about 3 mins & submitted.

Tips for Story Writing

Avoid

Pre-prepared Story: Some coached candidates (generally ACC & SCO entries), come with a misconception that the time is too less to make a story & hence come with a pre-prepared story & fi t it there. Often the main character in such stories is narrated as a young man who joins the Defence Services & also gets a decoration! There is nothing in the picture to suggest any of these things. There are several such "positive" coaching academy type stories which can be easily found out by the assessors. Such stories have an adverse impact on the clearance of Stage 1 by the subject candidate.Stories Displaying Wrong Interpretation of Positive Thinking. Experience shows that quite a

few coached candidates are over-enthusiastic about "positive thinking" & display it in an unnatural manner in their stories. E.g: In an obviously tragic scene such candidates will state that the mood of the main character is positive. Such stories can be easily found out & have an adverse impact on the clearance of Stage 1 by the subject candidate.

Abide

Write a natural & realistic story that comes to your mind on seeing the picture. The moods, etc of characters should be stated as observed.

"POSITIVE THINKING MEANS THAT EVEN IF THE PICTURE SHOWS SOMETHING ADVERSE, OR TRAGIC, THE CANDIDATE FORESEES THAT IN THE FUTURE THINGS WILL BECOME ALL RIGHT, WITH THE MAIN CHARACTER PLAYING A PROACTIVE PART IN THE SAME. THE MAIN CHARACTER SHOULD BE PROACTIVE & DO SOMETHING FOR THE BETTERMENT OF THE EXISTING SITUATION."

Discussion Requirement

Candidates are organised in groups of 14-15 for group discussion. Each candidate is required to narrate his story in turn. After everyone has narrated his/her story the group is required to discuss the same & arrive at a consensus story. The group is required to nominate a leader who has to narrate the story on behalf of the entire group.

Tips for Discussion:

- Narrate your story confidently in a clear voice in about one minute.

- Remain confident about being selected, remain relaxed & do not feel pressurised to force your views on others, in the fear that others will dominate you.

- Never look at the assessors while narrating the story, or during the discussion.

- Listen to the speakers attentively.

- Be polite, give your ideas & views only, & do not argue with others.

- In case the entire group is shouting, as is usually seen in repeater groups, do not try to out shout others. Wait for your turn patiently.

- Do not try to dominate the discussion by speaking more. The quality of your views is more important than how much you speak.

- Do not repeat your views.

- Help the weak members to talk.

- If the story of the majority of the group is similar to yours, it is easy to contribute to the discussion.

- In case your story is different from the entire group, it is sensible to change your views & help the group in forming a consensus story, rather than trying to guide the group towards your perspective.

Results of Screening

After the completion of PPDT, you will get a break of 2-3 hours. Screening results will be declared after it. Selected candidates are allotted with new chest numbers. Rest of the candidates gets their TA and dropped backed to the railway station.

DAY 3 (STAGE 2 TESTING)

"PLEASE DO NOT WASTE TIME TO PRACTICE ALL THESE TESTS. WORK TO GENUINELY IMPROVE YOUR PERSONALITY. LEAVE THE ASSESSMENT TO THE EXPERTS!"

Following Psychology tests are conducted:

Thematic Apperception Test [TAT]

Word Association Test [WAT]

Situation Reaction Test [SRT]

Self Description Test [SD]

TAT

You will be shown 11 black & white pictures in which the last picture is a blank slide. Each picture will come just for 30 seconds and then disappear, after that you will get 4 minutes to write the story based on that picture. After 4 mins another picture will come for 30 seconds and same process will be

followed till last slide {blank slide}. The tips for TAT are the same as for the story of PPDT. Go prepared with the story for the blank slide.

WAT

You will be shown 60 words back to back; each word will remain on the screen for 15secs. In 15secs you are required to write a sentence which comes to your mind first after reading that word. Likewise, you have to write 60 sentences continuously without any pause in between.

Tips:

It is not possible to go prepared with 60 sentences, as some coached candidates try to do & in fact succeed in writing quite a few such sentences. This does not help, because only the spontaneous response is consistent with the personality of the candidate. The psychologist analyses the complete responses to construct a holistic & consistent personality of the individual. Any prepared response will be inconsistent with the complete battery of answers & hence will get ignored.

SRT

You will get a booklet with 60 situations written on it. You are required to write your responses based on those 60 situations. Time allotted will be 30 mins.

Tips:

Answer spontaneously. The main character in the situations should be a leader, who should try to resolve the problems proactively for the betterment of everyone & not wait for things to happen.

SD

You are required to write opinion about you from your parents, friends, teachers & yourself, and things which you would like to develop in the future. Time allotted will be 15 mins.

Tips:

You should go prepared. Write the truth. Opinions of others, as well as yourself about you are basically a brief about your strong & weak points. The strong points should be more than the weak points. In case the reverse is true, it shows that you have not taken enough action to improve yourself, despite being aware of your weaknesses.

"OVERALL TIPS FOR PSYCHOLOGY TESTS WOULD BE TO THINK FAST; WRITE FAST, LEGIBLY & INCORRECT SEQUENCE. IT IS NOT MANDATORY TO COMPLETE EVERYTHING, BUT THE CANDIDATE WHO CAN COMPLETE EVERYTHING DEFINITELY THINKS FASTER & HAS BETTER MENTAL STAMINA THAN THOSE WHO DO NOT."

DAYS 4 & 5: GTO TESTS

GTO tests are a series of outdoor tests, designed to judge your qualities during group performance. Remember most of the tasks in this series are group tasks. You are required to support the group with the best of your abilities and not to compete with them in any manner.

Series of Tests

GD

Discussion is on two topics, one is a debatable topic from current affairs & the other is on a social issue.
Tips: Are same as for PPDT discussion.

GPE

It is an important test in the GTO series. A situation is given to you. It is supported by a map. Invariably a group of persons has to go from one place to another, in a limited time & accomplish an important task. In between problems are confronted which need to be resolved, & in case a problem is unimportant & resolution will prevent you from accomplishing the main task then it has to be ignored, or resolved to the extent that the main task is not jeopardised. A written, individual, solution has to be submitted. The group has to discuss the plan, arrive at a consensus plan, and nominate a leader to narrate the plan. It is a comprehensive test, which brings out the aspects of logical thinking, ability to convince others with your views, accept

ideas from others which are better than yours, or are more acceptable to others.

Tips:

Concentrate to understand the situation well. Submit a comprehensive & well written plan. Be prepared to accept others' ideas. Do not try to resolve any intermediary problem which will prevent you from accomplishing the main task.

PGT

In Progressive Group Task, the group is required to cross some obstacles with the help of supporting materials like rope, plank, wooden log etc. Some rules are required to be followed during this task. It is a full group activity.

HGT

Half Group Task is similar to PGT but the number of group members will be half, so you may get more chance to show your potential.

IOT

In Individual Obstacles Task, you are required to attempt 10 obstacles individually; each obstacle consists of some points from 1 to 10.
Tips: It appears to be mainly a test of speed & strength, but is not so. Plan the sequence of crossing the obstacles with a view to score maximum marks earliest. If you are in doubt about clearing an obstacle attempt it towards the

end. In case you have begun to cross an obstacle, then do not leave it in between, as this displays lack of determination & self confidence.

Command Task

You will be a commander in this task, & are required to cross some obstacles with the help of 2-3 subordinates. You can choose 2-3 candidates from your own group whom you think can help you to clear the obstacles.

Tips:

Choose subordinates based on competence, rather than friendship. In case you are stuck, ask ideas from subordinates. CT is assigned to each candidate based on his abilities. In case your CT is quite difficult, then be happy, your IQ has been well rated.

Snake Race/Group Obstacle Course

All group members will be competing with other groups. Members will be holding a snake like rope; they are required to cross certain obstacles with the snake. There are certain rules like all other tasks. It is a kind of race among different groups.

Tips:

Use your abilities to help the group finish the race fastest.

Individual Lecture

Each candidate has to speak for 3 mins on a topic selected by him/her out of 3-4 topics.

FGT

FGT is similar to PGT.

Tips for PGT, HGT, CT & FGT:

Initially it will be difficult to understand the use of the helping material in crossing obstacles. Do not worry, keep thinking & observing. Ideas utilized in crossing one obstacle will have relevance in others as well. After PGT you will have better ideas for later tasks. Each task has more than one solution. Please adhere to instructions.

DAY 4 OR 5 (PERSONAL INTERVIEW)

The Interviewing officer has your Personal Information Questionnaire (PIQ) form, which provides him the base for your interview. He starts talking in a relaxed manner to make you feel comfortable. He then asks you a series of questions to which you are expected to answer in the same sequence. He keeps asking small questions in between. He again asks you a series of questions, to be replied as earlier.

Tips:

Be relaxed & confident of being selected. Write only truth in the PIQ form, without exaggeration. Listen carefully to the questions, without getting excited. Answer the questions in the sequence asked. Have good knowledge about your favourite subjects, sports, hobbies, etc. If you say that you have read a book, or seen a movie, or TV program, then you should know about it well.Be prepared to explain organisation of an event from your hobbies, sports or extra -curricular activities, you have been involved in.

DAY 6 (SSB CONFERENCE)

In the conference, each candidate faces all the SSB assessors together. The decision about selection of candidates is taken in the conference by the assessors. Each case is discussed in detail to take a deliberate decision. Usually, questions about food, experience & stay are asked by the Interviewing Officer are just for formality. For these, only short answers are warranted.

#4

De Novo SSB — The 3 Day SSB

Let us first address the elephant in the room. Will the De Novo Selection System require aspirants to prepare differently for SSB? The simple answer is 'no'. The standards expected of the Indian youth rearing to join the armed services will remain the same.

Need for De Novo Selection System

- There was an urgent need to reduce the time for SSB.
- Reduced testing time will increase the number being tested.
- There was a need to update the SSB in accordance with the contemporary Service needs and the changes in the society.
- There was a need to incorporate new techniques of behavioural testing which are now available globally and will be used to automate and refine the SSBs.
- We still have a deficiency of 9000 officers in the Defence Services. The system will help in reduction of this deficiency.

Implementation

The De Novo Selection System is currently being run on trial basis at some centres. Subject to the outcome of the trials, and its acceptability by the three defence services, the system is likely to be implemented at all SSBs in the coming years.

Changes in Psychology Tests

TAT

Only 9 stories will have to be written & there will be no story required for a blank slide.

SRT

There will still be 60 situations given. For each situation a candidate will have to prioritise the response. Example:

Your boss does not agree with you. You will:

- Accept what he says because he is senior and you do not want to risk your job.
- Explain your point with greater clarity, thinking that he may not have understood the point.
- Deliberate upon his view, considering that he may be right and your point is not right.
- Insist that he accepts your point.

WAT

For 60 words candidates will not have to write sentences but the 3 words that come to mind. Example: Word given: Death:

Associated words written: 1. Inevitable. 2. Sad. 3. Rebirth.

DAY – 2: GTO

No change in the number or sequence of tasks has been visualised. The process is expected to be completed in one day instead of the earlier two days.

Interview

Interviews will get conducted after the Psychology Tests or GTO tasks on the first two days and even the morning of the third day.

DAY – 3: Conference

Conference will be held on Day-3. The procedure will be the same.

Prognosis

- Time spent in testing will reduce. Hence, professionals will have to take a shorter leave from their workplace.
- As a corollary of the above more aspirants are likely to go for SSB.
- The testing will still involve being tested through the three techniques.
- It will still remain a personality based, rather than a skill based test.
- Relevance of personality development and No Frills Academy will remain unchanged.

#5

Psychology Tests

FACTS YOU SHOULD KNOW

Personality assessment conducted in SSBs is based on the science of psychology. Psychology is not an absolute science, unlike the physical sciences known to us. It implies that there are not always definite, 'yes/no' answers to problems or situations.

Psychology tests in SSB are conducted based on projective technique. Projective technique works on the established fact that when we describe ambiguous stimuli, we actually describe ourselves, and reveal our personalities, the conscious part (of which we are well aware) and even the unconscious part (of which we are unaware). The unconscious part of the brain is assessed by some as being 9/10th part and conscious only 1/10th part. In projective technique, a person is shown ambiguous stimuli (such as words, situations or pictures) and asked to interpret them in some way. Such stimuli allow relative freedom in projecting one's own interests and feelings into them and reacting in any way that seems appropriate. Projective techniques are believed to be sensitive to unconscious dimensions of personality. Defence mechanisms, latent impulses, and anxieties can be inferred from data gathered from projective techniques by expert psychologists. *Assessment by expert psychologists is an art and not a science*.

Psychology tests arouse the greatest of interest among SSB aspirants. Aspirants waste maximum time on preparing for psychology tests. From the nature of questions asked by aspirants, I realise that there are a large number of misconceptions about the tests. I have tried to clarify the major misconceptions about psychology tests in SSB, in this book.

ASSESSMENT METHOD

It requires no psychological genius to assess qualities like communication skills in English. The quality of language written is in front of the assessor! Your vocabulary, spellings, grammar and expression are available for assessment.

Reasoning ability is assessed based on the understanding and logic apparent in understanding photos in TAT and situations in SRTs.

If a candidate leaves a large portion of the test unanswered it clearly shows:

- Low level of 'speed of decision making'.
- Low level of mental stamina.

The psychologist will have reasons to assess his reasoning ability and his time management in life to be of a low order.

Is there any value in understanding the assessment method?

The above information is given just to explain that consistent patterns display the true personality of a candidate. It is not possible for candidates to discern consistency in their responses to assess qualities. This job can be done only by experts.

HOW TO APPROACH PSYCHOLOGY TESTS?

SSB aspirants focus on individual aspects of the test. They focus separately on WAT, SRTs, TAT and self description. They try to plan strategy to excel in them. They are unable to understand any connection between them. From the perspective of the assessor there is little relevance of isolated responses. The assessor constructs a holistic and cohesive profile of the individual based on the consistency of responses. All the 15 OLQs are assessed in this way. Inconsistent and coached responses will have no positive impact on the assessment. Such responses get ignored.

Assessment of an individual is done based on the entire written tests and not piece meal, like separate assessment of WAT, TAT and SRT. Personality of an individual is one whole and the various inputs help to construct it. For example, If a candidate consistently only reports matters to authority and waits for others to do something and avoids personal action to resolve problems in TAT and SRTs then his leadership abilities and courage maybe of a low order.

Now that the approach to Psychology Tests is clear, let us learn about the tests.

Screening Process

The screening process can be assumed to be of approximately of 100 marks. Then the division of marks will be :

Individual Aspects:

- OIR Test- 25%
- PPDT story- 25%
- Narration of story- 25%

Group Behaviour:

- Discussion: 25%

Picture Perception and Description Test (PPDT)

Requirement in PPDT

PPDT involves three aspects – first, is writing a *story;* second, is narrating the story; and third, is a discussion on the story in a group.

You will be shown a black and white, hazy photo for 30 seconds.You are required to write some particulars in the available box in the answer sheet, which includes number of characters, their age, sex and mood.You have to identify the main character and build the story around him/her. It is convenient to name the character (helps in discussion stage).You are required to describe what the scene in the photo depicts (what is going on?)You have to visualise and write, what led to the present scene (what happened in the

past?)You have to foresee the future and write it. (What will happen in the future?)The entire story has to be written in about 3 minutes and submitted.

Avoid

Preconceived Stories.. Some coached candidates (generally ACC and SCO entries), come with a misconception that the time is too less to make a *story* and hence come with a preconceived *story* and fit it there. Often the main character in such stories is narrated as a young man who joins the Defence Services and also gets a decoration! This type of story is made even when there is nothing in the photo to suggest any part of such a story! There are several such "positive" coaching academy type stories which can be easily found out by the assessors. Such stories have an adverse impact on the clearance of the Stage 1 by the subject candidate.

Stories Displaying Wrong Interpretation of Positive Thinking. Experience shows that quite a few coached candidates are over enthusiastic about "positive thinking" and display it in an unnatural manner in their stories. E.g: In an obviously tragic scene such candidates will state that the mood of the main character is positive. Such stories can be easily found out and have an adverse impact on the clearance of the Stage 1 by the subject candidate.

Common Misconceptions.Some male candidates have a misconception that *the main character must be of their age and gender!* As a result of this wrong notion some candidates write story about a male character while the photo shows a female. This goes against them because the assessors are led

to conclude that such candidates are unable to interpret clearly what is shown and lack practical sense.

Do This

Write a natural and realistic story that comes to your mind on seeing the picture. The moods, etc of characters should be stated as observed.Positive thinking means that even if the photo shows something adverse, or tragic, the candidate foresees that in the future things will become all right, with the main character playing a proactive part in the same. The main character should be proactive and do something for the betterment of the existing situation.

Discussion in PPDT

Candidates are organised in groups of 14-15 for group discussion. Each candidate is required to narrate his *story* by turn. After everyone has narrated his/her *story* the group is required to discuss the same and arrive at a consensus *story*. The group is required to nominate a leader who has to narrate the *story* on behalf of the entire group.

Do This

- Narrate your *story* confidently in a clear voice in about one minute (for repeater batches-40 sec is safe).

- Remain confident about being selected, remain relaxed and do not feel pressurised to force your views on others, in the fear that others will dominate you.
- Don't look at the assessors while narrating the story, or during the discussion.
- Listen to the speakers attentively.
- Be polite, give your ideas and views only, and do not argue with others.
- In case the entire group is shouting, as happens in some repeater groups, do not try to out shout others, but await your turn patiently. In case of total chaos it is sensible to state: "Gentlemen/ladies, let us not shout; let us make a consensus story!"
- Do not try to dominate the discussion by speaking more. The quality of your views is more important than how much you speak.
- Once the discussion stage starts treat the story that you narrated as just one of the 15 stories. Do not remain attached to it.
- If the story of the majority of the group is similar to yours, it is easy to contribute to the discussion.
- In case your story is different from the entire group, please speak with a view to reach at a consensus story.

Whatever you do, don't do this...

Don't outshout others! When you come to the discussion stage 75% of the assessment is already over and only your group behaviour is being assessed. Your ability to get along with the group as well as ability to influence the group is being assessed. By shouting you only display poor group behaviour. It is common practice for SSB repeaters to try and outshout each other in

group discussion stage of PPDT. This is not a sensible practice. By doing so a candidate not only lowers his chances of success but that of others as well. I have explained as to why candidates should not *outshout in PPDT.*

Outlook of Outshouting

The practice of outshouting in PPDT displays a 'scarcity mentality'. Possession/display of this *outlook* lowers chances of selection. In simple words it displays the following qualities about the individual who is trying to outshout others:

- Lack of self confidence.
- Sense of insecurity.
- Poor team spirit.

Majority of the candidates who outshout display the outlook:

"Let me be unsuccessful but I will also make others fail with me!"

'Scarcity Mentality' versus 'Abundance Mentality'

Indian society is overly competitive. It has resulted in creation of a 'scarcity mentality' in the society. This attitude or paradigm is responsible for the failure of a large number of candidates in SSB. Let us analyse as to why candidates having a 'scarcity mentality' fail SSB? Before we analyse the reasons it is essential to be clear as to what is 'scarcity mentality' and 'abundance mentality'.

'Scarcity mentality', as opposed to 'abundance mentality' is the paradigm of an individual who feels that in general there is a scarcity. For such a person there is a scarcity of persons who will clear SSB, scarcity of food, scarcity of opportunities in life and anything that he/she considers important. This is the predominant psychological mindset of the individual. The paradigm is unsuited for teamwork and organisational success. Examples of behaviour displaying 'scarcity mentality':

- Since the individual is insecure about his getting screened in at SSB he will out shout others in PPDT discussion.
- As a child he will not share his toys, but try to snatch other's toys.
- He will try to take the maximum of the dish he likes.
- If in GD he had a point and someone else gives it before him, then he will get demoralised and feel cheated.

In contrast an individual having 'abundance mentality' paradigm is confident, relaxed and secure. He will not behave in the manner as given in the above examples.

'Abundance mentality' is the required paradigm for candidates getting selected. These candidates are relaxed, confident and secure. They do not want to beat others to get selected. They want to get selected and also help others to get selected. Such people are good team workers and assets to any organisation.

#6

Samples

TAT SAMPLE STORIES

I have written some blogs about psychology tests and specifically about Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) as well. Aspirants have been asking me to post some sample stories. I had not done that so far because the tendency to copy these stories by aspirants is high and also of trying to 'fit' these stories in somewhat similar photographs. Please do not do so! I have written some sample stories in this chapter.

Description: A house on fire and a man walking by

Story: Vivek was heading to his college when he heard screams of a lady from a house on fire. He rushed to the house and found that because of the strong wind it was difficult to douse the fire. He escorted the sole old lady occupant out of the house safely and informed the fire brigade. He took the help of some people who had gathered and neighbours to get buckets full of water and a water pipe to douse the fire. Some people brought some sticks and sand to beat the fire. On advice from the lady he retrieved the valuables from the house. By the time the fire brigade arrived the fire had already been controlled and could be quickly put off.

Description: A lady and a man working in laboratory

Story: Pia was pursuing her PhD on curing diseases in young children. As she researched the subject she realised that the children who had been kept in very hygienic environment were more susceptible to serious ailments because they had low immunity compared to the children who had been exposed to dirt and filth since birth. Her research work was greatly appreciated

and it made the society aware that bringing up children in overly hygienic environment can be dangerous for their later lives because of lowered immunity.

Description: A lady standing at a crowded counter

Story: Rakhi went to an employment exchange centre and noticed that many people were crowding up the counter for various works. She met the exchange center head to allow her to develop an app which allowed people to register online for vacancies. She developed the app and added multiple facilities to manage data, send message alerts to the registered people and facilitated companies to book slots to meet the people. This helped improve the effi ciency of the employment exchange.

Description: A man lying on bed and a woman crying at the door

Story: Maya's husband was ill. He had been diagnosed with dengue. She became sad and consulted the doctor. The doctor prescribed some medicines, healthy diet and nutritional supplements. Maya took care of her husband and gave him medicines and healthy food as prescribed. After one and a half months her husband began to recover and in a span of 3 months became well. He was really happy after getting well and Maya was glad that her effort brought a positive impact on her husband.

Description: 5-6 soldiers lying huddled together

Story: Lt Ranjeet had had a tiring day with his soldiers in a successful counter insurgency operation. They had not slept for 2 days. So after finishing the operation they reported the successful completion of the operation to their senior and decided to relax. After relaxing for some time they returned to their location. They were felicitated for their bravery. The soldiers were really happy and were ready for future operations.

Description: A man and woman appearing agitated and one young lady shown separately in background

Story: Vijay was very fond of his younger sister, Rama, who was a very bright girl and had been a topper in the village school. In the rural culture of Haryana, girl education was not encouraged. Vijay's mother wanted her daughter to stop studying and learn household duties well and get married at an early age. Vijay wanted her sister to study and pursue her dream of becoming a doctor. After a heated discussion, Vijay convinced his mother to allow Rama to pursue higher studies. Rama became the first doctor from her village.

Description: Faces of an elder and a younger man wearing jackets and ties

Story: Mohan worked at a factory where Mr Verma was his boss. He had been working there for 9 years. He had joined the factory as a trainee and due to his hard work, sincerity and commitment he had become the Manager. Mr. Verma trusted and supported him. They decided to start manufactur-

ing biodegradable packing bags for big items. Their product was good and found many buyers and got support from the government as well.

Description: A man at a graveyard

Story: Joseph had gone to the graveyard to pay homage to his departed grandfather. He had always been a source of inspiration and inculcated in him good ethical values and taught him to be modest and down to earth. He cleaned the grave, put flowers and remembered the good times they had had. He resolved to continue working in accordance with the good values inculcated in him by the departed soul. Joseph became an Air Force pilot.

Description: Accident of cart and car in middle of the road and a youth passing by

Story: Rajat was going to the market when he saw an accident of a car and a cart on the road. He immediately ran to the spot of accident and saw that the driver of the cart was badly injured and the driver of the car was unhurt. He called the police using his mobile. The car was functional. The police reached the spot in 10 min. He took the cart driver in the car to the nearest hospital and informed his relatives. Once the relatives arrived and took over the patient he went home.

Description: A lady in European dress with a book standing in the foreground, while farming activity is on in the background

Story: Mary was the daughter of a farmer. She was a bright girl and wanted to raise the economic status of her family. She studied agricultural science and returned to her village. She took a small plot of her farm and used modern seeds and methods of cultivation to demonstrate the efficacy of her knowledge. The excellent results converted her parents into believing in her methods which were used on their entire farm next year. Their farm income trebled and they were very happy. Soon the entire village adopted the modern methods of farming and prospered.

Blank Slide Story

Sita was a young civil engineer who was hired to look into the failure of a fly-over bridge. She reviewed all the files, drawings, data-sheets of material purchased, quality reports of material used in the construction and the load calculations. She came to a conclusion that there was sub-standard construction material used. She decided to bring this out. She had to put up a brave fight against corrupt officers at every level. Sheer determination, courage and will to bring about justice to the affected families motivated her to keep fighting. In the end she won the case and was able to claim handsome compensation for the affected families.

Points to Note in the Stories

- No one has won PVC.
- No adjectives are used to describe the main character.

- No location of towns and districts is given.
- There are no unnecessary preambles given about the situation or the characters.
- The stories can be written easily within 3-4 minutes.
- The stories are relate to the pictures shown as also routine life events.
- When the scene is of a European location, and graveyard the characters are given suitable names.

SAMPLE SOLUTIONS IN SRT

Posing "challenge SRT" is a very fond practice among SSB aspirants. This is not a helpful exercise.I had been resisting requests for posting samples of psychology tests for long. Since aspirants keep seeking ideal answers I have written sample solutions to situations in SRT.Please note the following points/ clarifications:

1. It is sensible to give comprehensive solutions.
2. It is not sensible to give long solutions.
3. Effort should be made to solve maximum number of situations.
4. Proactive outlook and action is better than reactive.
5. Reactions displaying confidence and practical sense should be preferred over meek responses.
6. The solutions are given below adhere to the above guidelines. Take them as guidelines and not ideal solutions.

Sample Solutions

1) His captain was injured before a crucial match, he was asked to lead the team? He **led the team to victory.**

2) He was on his way to home and suddenly it started raining heavily? He **ran fast and reached home.**

3) You are an officer posted at the border and suddenly shelling happens from the other side, **you will order troops to stay in shell-proof bunkers, inform the CO and request for counter shelling**.

4) You are in an unknown city and lost your purse. You need money. As a stranger how will u manage? **I will ask my parents to send money through PayTm**.

5) Your brother wants to get admission in a medical college but his marks fall short by 1% for admission. **You'll ask him to try in other colleges where his marks are within cut-off**.

6) You have to go to a city with cash to work but the way is dangerous as da-coits. How will u manage to go? **I will avoid carrying cash and use the credit card.**

7) He was traveling by train and suddenly a person snatches purse from lady and jumps out of train. **He pulls chain, jumps down and catches the criminal, recover purse and handover criminal to police.**

8) You are going to sign a contract suddenly u got news that one of your friend who had helped you once met an accident and is in ICU.**You'll sign the contract and then go to the hospital to meet a friend.**

9) He had boarded a wrong train and came to know only when he was asked to pay money to TT. **He explained the situation to TT, apologised and took the right train.**

10) He saw his girlfriend walking with another person on his way. **He trusted his friend and did nothing**.

11) He was on his way to the railway station to catch a train; suddenly a car passes by and throws a person out of the running car. **He will help the person with the appropriate first aid, inform police, and then catch his train.**

12) He was driving the bike without a helmet and the traffic police caught him. **He apologised, paid fine and never repeated the mistake.**

13) He was asked to organise the farewell party. **He organised it well**.

14) He was ironing his clothes when suddenly he received an electric shock and he noticed the wire burning. **He will turn the switch off, remove the plug and get the iron repaired.**

15) He was in charge of the wireless board in a sailing ship which lost its communication with the coast. **He restored communication quickly**.

16) In a discussion with your colleagues, you find your losing ground, **you will agree to their better logic.**

17) He was to appear for an exam and all of a sudden the curfew was imposed in that area, **he showed admit card to the police and took the exam.**

18) He went for the picnic with his friends and on the way he had hot arguments with them. **He will calm down the situation and enjoy the picnic.**

19) There is a person who sells smuggled goods. You too, like many others, have purchased a wristwatch from him. But it doesn't work.**You'll ask for the replacement**.

20) Just two days before the semi-finals of the bridge tournament, his partner was called by his parents and had to go out of station for an urgent work. **He took another partner and won.**

21) He was rather young when his father was killed in the war and later mother kidnapped by the rival group. He had no other relative. **He approached the Police to get his mother back and register case against the criminals.**

22) You are on the way to your home suddenly your bicycle got punctured.**You'll get down, walk with the cycle, get it repaired and ride back home**.

23) He urgently needed of money. **He took it from parents**.

24) During d exams his teacher threatened him to fail in examination. **He prepared and performed well and ignored the empty threat.**

25) You are getting late in reaching meeting. **You would inform the organiser and reach at the earliest.**

SRT Samples Considered Difficult

There are quite a few SRT samples which are considered as difficult or 'tricky' by aspirants. One of my students has compiled them and I have written the responses as a guide.

Sample Responses

1. He receives conflicting orders from his two superior officers. **He went to his immediate reporting officer and told him the conflicting order received from the other senior and after clarification obeyed the order.**

2. He was going to attend SSB interview. On reaching the Railway Station he noticed that his suitcase has been stolen with his original certificates needed at SSB**. He immediately lodged an FIR, went back and got the original certificates from the college and then attended SSB.**

3. While he was traveling on his scooter, someone at gunpoint demanded his purse. **He rammed the scooter into him, took his gun and lodged FIR against the criminal.**

4. He was going on a bicycle in thick jungle. It was already dark and his destination was 10 Km away. His cycle got punctured. **He walked with the cycle to destination.**
5. He is new in the city. Suddenly he noticed that all his items were stolen. He had no money in his pocket. **He got money from home through PAYTM, lodged FIR and managed.**

6. He observed a Cobra was approaching his brother who was sleeping in a room at night. **He struck the Cobra on the head and killed it with one stroke**.

7. He was in a NCC Camp. While on guard duty at mid night , he observed a person crossing the fence and getting in. **He challenged him and the person ran away.**

8. While negotiating a forest with his friend, his friend lost consciousness due to exhaustion. **He gave him water, made him recover, rested a little and continued walking.**

9. He was caught alone at night by thugs who demanded all valuables on him while he was unarmed. **He, being an athlete, ran away and could not be caught.**

10. While crossing a jungle, he observed that a tiger was standing just 10 yards from him. **He quietly and quickly climbed a tree.**

11. While going through a jungle, he noticed that someone was following him with a rifle. **He joined him and they walked together.**

12. He was on leave in his village. Once at night he got up due to firing sound and cries of the villagers. He noticed that village was attacked by dacoits. **He immediately informed the police, organised the villagers and young men with firearms fought the dacoits till the arrival of police.**

13. He and his friend were arguing over a topic later he found that his friend was correct. **He thanked his friend for educating him.**

14. While going through a forest with his brother, he lost the way and it had become dark. **He managed his way through the GPS.**

15. While coming back from late night movie show he saw 5 men are harassing a girl. **He shouted and scared the criminals away and later dropped the girl home.**

16. His mother is seriously ill and his boss doesn't grant him leave. **He promises his boss that he will complete the assigned work, take leave and attend to his mother.**

17. While traveling in the train, his compartment got fire. **He pulled the chain to stop the train and helped the passengers evacuate the compartment and railway staff to fight the fire.**

18. He was forced to vote the candidate whom he doesn't like. **He voted for the candidate of his choice.**

19. While watching movie in a movie theatre, he saw a snake near his legs.
He stomped on its head and killed it.

SAMPLE SENTENCES FOR WORD ASSOCIATION TEST (WAT)

I have been asked by a large number of students to write sample sentences for WAT. I was not doing so because I was worried that it may encourage students to memorise and write these sentences. I have now given these samples because aspirants are in any case learning a lot of wrong things. Just note that these are simple and grammatically correct sentences. Please ignore all other advice about WAT.

Sample Sentences

1. Help – Helping others spreads goodwill.
2. Organise- An organised room is an indication of an organised mind.
3. Action- In an emergency it is better to act quickly rather than keep pondering.
4. Determination- A determined man can achieve anything.
5. Imagination- Imagination has no limits.
6. Friends- Friends are the family we choose.
7. Lively- Lively people are good company.

8. Courage- Courageous men inspire generations.

9. Mind- The mind is the most powerful human organ.

10. Neighbour- Neighbours are good to you when you are good to them.

11. Group- Group cohesion leads to success.

12. Strength- Strength can be built with systematic effort.

13. Reasonable- Reasonable prices attract customers.

14. Sister- Sister is another form of mother.

15. Speed- Speed often beats strength.

16. Timid- Timid people cannot be great leaders.

17. Knowledge- Knowledge is more powerful than money.

18. Country- A strong country is made by honest citizens.

19. Dependence- Dependence is often seen in old age.

20. Brave- Brave men inspire men and children alike.

21. Expression- Simple and clear expression is well understood.

22. Emotions- Emotions are unique to everyone.

23. Action- Action drives results.

24. Health- Healthy lifestyle comes with discipline.

25. Awareness- General awareness is improved by reading.

#7

Self-Description

In the psychology test of SSB you are required to write your self-description, which includes the opinions of parents, teachers, friends as well as your own. Often in interview questions as given below get asked:

- How would your best friend describe you?
- How would your boss describe you?

SSB aspirants should go prepared with what to write in their self-description so that it can be written well and quickly in the test and questions can be answered well without trying to think too hard during the SSB. Self-description will be unique to every individual. However, a sample self-description of a candidate is given below to guide SSB aspirants on the subject.

Parents' Opinion

My parents know that I am honest, responsible and independent. They appreciate my concern for them and my younger brother's well- being. They appreciate my being confident and competent in academics as well as extra-curricular activities. They are confident that I will have a good future and bring a good name to the family. At times, they feel that I tend to be a little over- confident and advise me to stay grounded.

Teachers' Opinion

My teachers considered me disciplined, punctual and respectful. They found me bright, responsible and an all-rounder. They believed that I could carry out any responsibility given to me with full enthusiasm. As such, I was ap-

pointed the Head- girl. They sometimes advised me to be less talkative. They feel that I will have a bright career.

Employer's Opinion

My manager and team take me as responsible, helpful, hardworking and dedicated. They appreciate my zeal to keep learning as also accepting my faults and improving upon them.

Friends' Opinion

My friends know that I am lively, helpful and totally trustworthy. They consult me about their various problems. They like my company. They feel I can adapt to any situation. They like me for my commitment. They appreciate my being focused on my career. They advise me not to trust people too easily.

Own Opinion

I am a responsible daughter, trustworthy friend and reliable worker. For me, my work is worship. I am helpful to my friends as well as colleagues. In difficult times, I prefer to stay calm and resolve the problems.

Aspects I would like to Improve

I think I did not done justice to my academic potential in my school and college. I have resolved to rectify this aspect now. I need to improve my physical fitness as well as general awareness and have been working on the issues with reasonable success.

#8

GTO Tasks

HOW TO GET IDEAS IN GTO TASKS?

Get the Big Picture

Generating workable ideas in GTO tasks, namely, Progressive Group Task (PGT), Half Group Task (HGT), Command Task (CT) and Final Group Task (FGT) is a challenge. Let us understand the big picture in order to solve the tasks.

- **Practical Knowledge**. Your theoretical academic knowledge will not be of much use but practical knowledge will be required to solve the tasks.

- **Genuine Worth Gets Known.** At the end of the GTO tasks you will be able to assess the calibre of the candidates in your group as also the comparative rating of the group. Since you can do it then it is safe to assume that the GTO, who is an expert assessor, will definitely be able to do so. Hence it is sensible to work calmly in a cooperative spirit.

- **Focus on Task.** Indian society is over-competitive and in general the aim of the candidates is to give impressive ideas to get into the lime light. This attitude is not conducive to team synergy. The usual worries troubling an insecure candidate's mind are:
    1. Some others will not allow him to give ideas.
    2. If he has an idea then someone will state it earlier than him.
    3. Others will adopt his ideas as their own and he will be deprived of due credit.

Thus most candidates are able to focus with not more than 70% of their brain on doing the task. A confident candidate should focus his 100% energy on solving the task in the spirit of being a good team-man.

- **Effective Team-man.** An effective team-man is much better than an intelligent but dysfunctional group member. Hence please behave in the right spirit.

Developing Ability to Solve Practical Problems

We develop our abilities to solve practical problems in life by facing them. A student gets opportunities to develop these abilities through sports, extra-curricular activities and organising things at home/school/college. A working professional gets ample opportunities to improve his problem solving skills through doing his work with dedication. The GTO is trying to assess these qualities because it is highly unlikely that after becoming an officer a person would have to solve PGT in his professional career. A person who sits at home and prepares for competitive exams only is likely to be less competent in this facet of personality than a person who is working in the field. Hence, develop yourself by leading an all round productive life. This is the most effective method.

Developing Ability to Solve Specific GTO Tasks

It is important to have an idea about solving the tasks like PGT. You have 3 items to help you cross the obstacles, namely plank, log & a rope. Here are some important points to remember:

- In 90% of the situations the plank would be used to bridge the gap required to be crossed.
- Securing firmly one end of the plank would be the key to cross obstacles.
- The plank may get secured by the following means:

    1. Resting atop a suitable place to walk across.
    2. Putting it in some wedge.
    3. By tying it on a suitable platform using the rope.
    4. Tying the rope across two posts may create a platform on which one end of the plank gets secured.
    5. There may be various other means to do so as well.

- The log my get used to cross shorter gaps or extend the length of the plank with the help of the rope.

- It would be helpful to watch some of the numerous videos about GTO tasks available on Youtube to get acquainted with the obstacles and methods of crossing them.

GROUP PLANNING EXERCISE

Group planning exercise is an important exercise in the **GTO** series. It is the only task in which a written plan is submitted & studied by the GTO in detail. I have discussed the common mistakes which candidates make & what they should do to ensure good performance.

Common Mistakes

- Ignoring the time plan. This is the most common mistake. Accomplishing the tasks in the required time is important. Time is a limited resource and hence judicious utilisation is essential to an effective plan. It must be given due respect. In the time plan at times candidates tend to make impractical assumptions which should not be done:
    - Example: If a person has to be admitted in a hospital then the travel time as well as time taken to get him admitted must be considered realistically. Just taking the return journey time is impractical.
- Wasting Time in Stupid Tasks. I remember some stupid tasks which cannot be done being attempted by candidates. Examples (You are a group of students on picnic):
    - A monkey owner requests you to locate his monkey who has run away.
    - A lady requests you to recover her buffalo from marshy land.

    - A man asks you to save his dry haystack which has caught fire.

- 'Rambo' Tasks Attempted by Impractical Candidates: A large number of candidates behave like 'Rambo' (Stallone movie character) & do tasks like:
    - Catching terrorists.

    - Killing dacoits with 12 bore guns taken from villagers.

Avoiding Common Mistakes

To avoid common mistakes please make a realistic time plan & not undertake stupid and 'Rambo' tasks. Let the 'Rambo' tasks be done by the police. You should just inform the police.

Interesting Practical Problem

During the discussion stage in a group full of coached candidates not much consensus is arrived at. A stupid individual who is convinced that he must dominate the *group* appoints himself to be the consensus leader to narrate the plan on behalf of the *group*. He is by no means the nominated leader. The plan he narrates is his plan and not a consensus plan of the *group*. This plan has obviously some serious shortcomings. The *group* does not object to the disagreeable points of the plan narrated thinking that it will be wrong to disagree with the plan of the leader. In some cases there are a few candidates who are much more sensible and could have given a much better and acceptable plan. The *GTO* at times asks them whether they agree with the

plan narrated. These candidates confirm to the *GTO* that they agree with the plan, once again thinking that this is the right thing to do.

What should You Do?

The group in this situation is a disorganised group. The leader has not been nominated by consensus. This is known to all the candidates in the group and definitely by the GTO. In this situation you must speak and ask the parts of the plan which are unacceptable to be changed. In case the GTO asks you, then you must convey your differences to the plan told. Why this is the right thing to do?

- Your aim as a part of the group is to make the best possible plan for the group to be effective in performing the task most efficiently.

- By stating the changes to the plan you have achieved that objective.

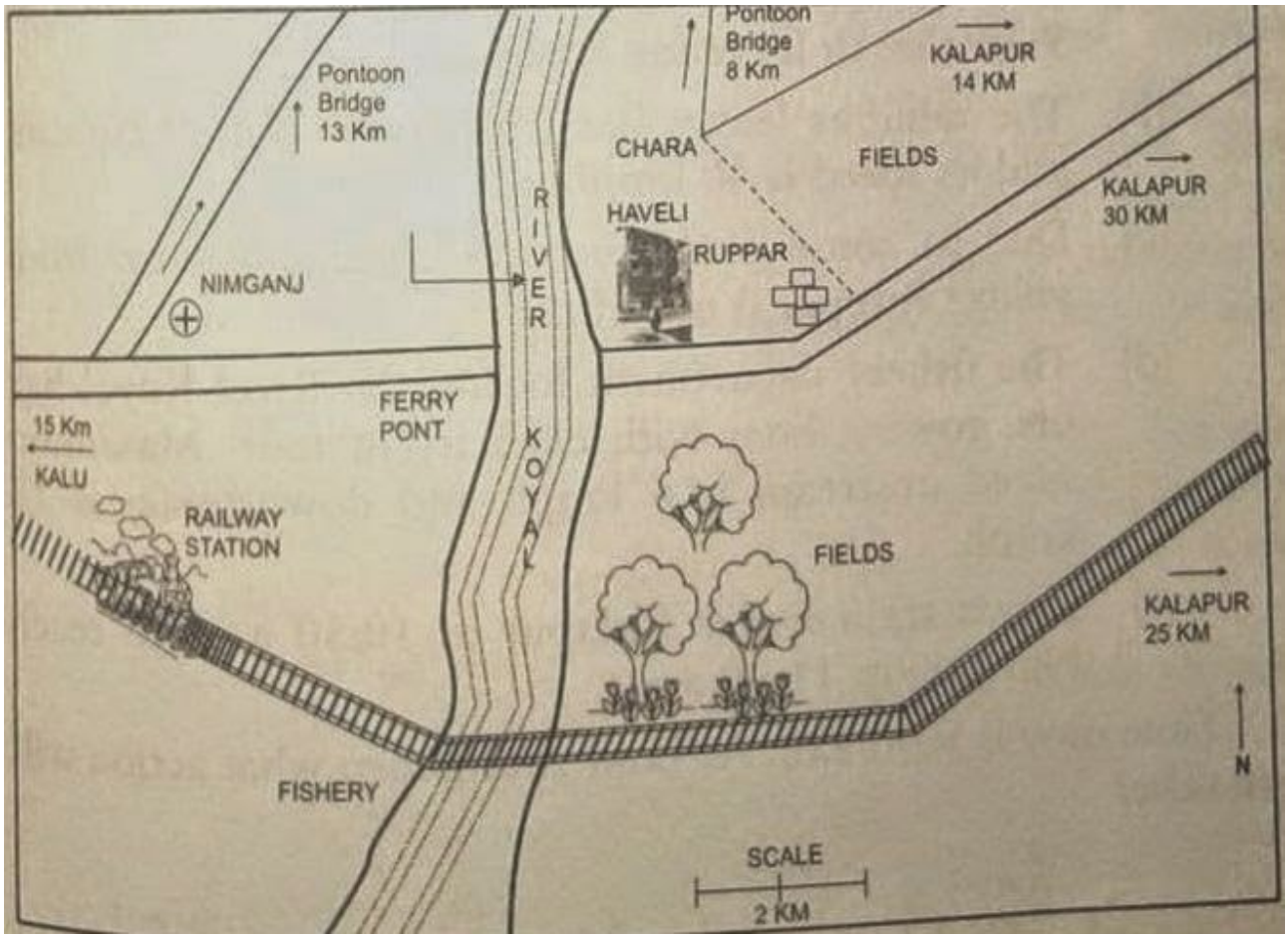
- By expressing disagreement with the leader you have done no wrong because he is not the nominated leader and nor is the plan a consensus plan. It is not against the wrongly perceived military ethos!

- By not expressing disagreement you have made yourself party to a poor plan. The GTO has all reasons to consider your planning abilities to be as poor as the plan presented.

Group planning exercise is an important part of the GTO series. To perform well in this task please ensure that you do the following:

- Make a realistic time plan & submit a brief but comprehensive plan.
- Do not plan to accomplish the stupid and 'Rambo' tasks.
- Do not agree with the stupid plan of a self-appointed leader.
- Do not get into an altercation but guide the group towards a sensible, practical & simple plan.

SAMPLE GPE



Narrative

You are a group of 10 students coming from your small town Kalapur in a minibus going to neighbouring district town Nimganj to appear in an Exam commencing at 11:15 a.m. After dismounting from the minibus at village Ruppar you are waiting for the steamer to go across River Koyal. Suddenly a villager comes to you for help and informs that an old dilapidated haveli on the outskirts of the village Ruppar has crumbled down crushing five men, out of which two are seriously injured. He also tells that while he was working in his field nearby, he overheard two terrorists who had planted a bomb on the Railway Bridge on River Koyal and timed it to blow up at 10:15 a.m.,

when Nimganj- Kalapur passengers passes over it. He further added that they have gone to village Chara where they plan to exchange the contra-band, they were carrying with other party at 10:20 a.m. at Raju Hotel and chalk out a plan to destroy a Pontoon Bridge on River Koyal further up-stream. Subsequently as you were listening to this villager another shep-herd comes running asking for help to put out the fire in his hut where he stored haystack and fodder for his cattle. Some additional information is available as follows:

- The streamer service is twice a day and comes at 9:30 a.m. to leave for Nimganj.
- The minibus leaves back of Kalapur at 9:20 a.m. and its speed is 40 kmph.
- Due to some problem local communication form village Ruppar is out of order.
- The fishery department located on River Koyal has one rowing boat with capacity of four. Maximum speed upstream is 6 kmph and downstream is 15 kmph.
- Down train leaves Kalapur at 10:30 a.m. to reach Nimganj at 11:00 a.m.
- Police stations are at Nimganj & Kolapur.

Time now is 9 a.m. as bold young men what action will you take?

Solution

Term of reference: Time now: 09:00 AM; must reach Nimganj exam centre before 11:15 AM

Priority	Problem	Resource	Solution	Time Plan
1.	5 injured-Ruppar	6 boys	Ruppar–>Hospital (Nimganj)–>Exam center	9:10 -11:10
2.	Bomb-Koyal Railway Bridge	2 boys	Ruppar–> Police Stn(Nimganj)– >Exam Center	9:10-9:40–>11:10
3.	Contraband exchange-Raju Hotel(Chara)	2 boys	Ruppar–>Police Stn(Nimganj)– >Exam center	9:10-9:40–>11:10
Nil	Haystack fire	Nil	—	—

Explanatory points

- The shepherd is not being helped because he could have retrieved the hay & fodder by separating it from the portion on fire & using water etc to douse the fire with the help of neighbours immediately. He is stupid to seek your help; you would be stupider to attempt to retrieve something which would have already been burnt. Please note that the majority of the group members would not agree with this point. Please give your point politely & not argue with them endlessly. In case, the GTO asks you after the final plan has been presented about the issue, then tell him that you should be ignoring this task.

- The time & distance calculation & modus operandi of the groups should be explained in the discussion.

- The major group of 6 boys will provide first aid to the injured & take them along with them first across the river on the steamer at 9:30 AM & then to the hospital for treatment & then reach the exam centre.

- The other two groups of two boys each will also cross the river at 9:10 AM in the fishery department boat and thereafter report the issues of bomb on railway bridge, contraband & plan for destruction of pontoon bridge to the Police personnel at Nimganj PS & provide any assistance, if required. They have to definitely reach the exam centre by 11:10 AM.

Note to students

Only such a type of brief solution is required. Detailed aspects are for discussion.

#9

Interview

I was an Interviewing Officer (IO) and Deputy President of 17 SSB in 2010–11. Since 2014 till date, I am guiding SSB aspirants. I find a lot of misconceptions about the Interview. Let me explain the process and what is required to be done in simple words

.

What Does an IO Assesses?

The IO, just like the other two assessors, is required to assess as to whether the candidate he is interviewing possesses the requisite 15 OLQs in adequate measure or not.

Methodology of IO's Assessment

An IO tracks the life history of the candidate in front of him through his childhood, family and academic environment, the opportunities available, difficulties faced, successes and failures to construct a consistent behavioural profile. A guiding principle for all IOs is:

"Past behaviour is indicative of future conduct; more consistent has been a past behaviour, more likely it is to be repeated in the future."

Questions

In about 40–50 min an IO completes the assessment. The questions posed are in roughly the following sequence:

- **Initial introductory questions**: For candidates who are interviewed immediately after the Psychology Tests the initial questions

are about the place from where the candidate has come, journey and so on. For the candidates being interviewed during the GTO tests the initial questions are generally about the GTO tasks, group members and so on. The aim in the initial 2–3 min is to make the candidate comfortable and open up in a new and often (for some) intimidating environment.

- **There are no "Rapid-fire Questions!** A stupid, popular, terminology for the series of questions asked by the IO is 'rapid fi re'. There are no 'rapid fi re' questions but a series of interconnected questions. These may be asked as follows:
- **First series of questions for students:** The fi rst series of questions maybe like this:"Please tell me about your academic performance, starting from 10th, the percentage of marks you scored, your favourite subject-why was it your favourite? Which subject you did not like/why you did not like? Who was your favourite teacher-why was he the favourite? Which teacher you did not like/why you did not like? Who are your close friends/why are they close? Who among your colleagues you did not like/why you did not like? How you adjusted to hostel life? Also tell me about the sports and extra-curricular activities you participated in and achievements if any?"
- **First series of questions for professionals:** The fi rst series of questions for professionals maybe like this: "Please tell me about your professional experience-what you like about your work/what you don't like about your work? Any changes you would like to bring in your work-place? What is your opinion about your boss? How many friends you have at work? Why did you switch jobs? How you adjusted to leaving home? Why you want to leave the present job and join Army?"

- **Second series of questions:** The second series of questions would be about your family and neighbours. These maybe like this: "Tell me about your parents occupation? How do you spend time at home? Who are you closest to? In case of a problem who do you approach? Tell me about your relations with your siblings and neighbours?"
- **Third series of questions:** The third series of questions maybe like this: "Tell me about your hobbies and interests? How do you spend your spare time? What is your daily routine? What TV program you like? What do you like to read?"
- **Subsequent Questions:** After these questions IO may not ask any series of questions but may ask questions related to hobbies/interests, sports, achievements and GK. The IO may ask you to explain about organising some event/activity. He may ask you about performance in Psychology Tests/GTO. He may ask things like: How did you prepare for SSB? Why you have opted for Air Force? If you are not selected what will you do?
- **Probing Questions While Candidate is Answering:** During the time a candidate is answering the IO may ask probing questions to check your academic knowledge, practical sense which may be related to your favourite subject or a practical problem related to understanding of time & distance/dimensions & so on.

Correct Attitude/Approach to Answering Questions

A competent candidate's approach to answering the questions should have the following ingredients:

- He/she should be confident of being selected.
- He/she should be transparent, truthful and have an attitude of not hiding anything.
- Opinions about teachers, friends, family members, boss & colleagues should be expressed freely and honestly not diplomatically.
- Do not treat any questions as tricky or asked with an aim to push you into a corner. Please consider in such situations that the IO wants to know the answer out of curiosity. Examples:
    - Why your marks fell? (Honest answers are the right thing to do; in 99% cases the real reasons are incompetence or lack of commitment; the popular reasons given like: bike accident, grandmother's illness, candidate's illness are invariably false & do not help your cause at all).
    - Why you got backlogs?
    - Why did you quit the job?

Poor Strategy for Preparing for Interview

Most coaching academies coach aspirants to learn the questions likely to be asked and rehearse diplomatically good answers. This is a very poor strategy because candidates who go with this strategy often perform badly because of the following:

- If unprepared questions get asked the candidate gets stumped and panics. Such a situation almost always occurs.
- The rehearsed answers are invariably not all honest and consistent with the candidate's personality.

Poor Strategy During Interview

Coached candidates are obsessed by answering the series of questions asked in exactly the same sequence as asked. At least 30% of their memory is re-hearsing the questions that have been asked and as a result suffer impaired attentiveness and comprehension and may often not comprehend some of the questions asked and hence give poor answers.

Correct Strategy During Interview

Please think that you are speaking to a friend, maintaining a state of relaxed attentiveness (as you would do while watching an interesting movie). Please do not try to remember the sequence of questions desperately. If you can remember it is fine & if you do not then also it is okay. Answer whatever questions you remember and if you have forgotten then seek pardon of the IO and ask him to repeat the questions.

Tackling IO's Questions

There are only three kinds of questions. Please answer them keeping the ad-vice given below in mind:

- **Questions about personal life:** Please answer them honestly and undiplomatically.
- **Academic questions/ practical problems**: Please take your time to think and answer well. If you do not know the answer then state so.

If you are confi dent about the answer but not sure then say: "I am not sure, but would like to guess & then answer."

- **Questions about general awareness:** Answer these questions like the academic questions.

Please observe the above guidelines for success in SSB interview and ignore all trash advice given in websites and by coaching academies. Good luck!

#10

Busting Some SSB Myths

IS SSB CLEARANCE DIFFICULT FOR REPEATERS?

My experience in the SSB suggested no bias. Two of my students Tarun and Anand cleared SSB after 6 years and in 12th attempt respectively.

Why SSB clearance may become Difficult for Repeaters?

The major problem is the common paradigm of most SSB repeaters. Salient features of the paradigm are given below:

- *SSB repeaters* give considerable credence to luck and try to face maximum SSBs in the hope of clearing.
- They focus on beating the system.
- *SSB repeaters* do not make serious efforts to improve core aspects of their personality, but try to depend upon superficial improvement.
- They get adversely influenced by selected peers and wrong advice existing in the environment because of coaching academies.

Tips for SSB Repeaters

- Do not go for another SSB in a gap of less than 3 months after rejection, unless definite improvement has been effected in the personality.

- Introspect after rejection (2-3 days are enough) and make sincere efforts at self improvement. Please do not waste excessive time in introspection.

- My experience suggests that elimination of poor impacts of coaching and peer learning itself may take about one month. Unlearning is a difficult thing- particularly when wrong ideas are deep rooted.

- Trust the authenticity of the selection system; take responsibility for self improvement and focus energies towards that.

- If by introspection you do not get a clear idea of your weaknesses then do not worry but improve the following aspects to increase chances of selection:

1. GK.
2. Knowledge of important subjects studied recently.
3. Fitness.
4. English expression.
5. Practice for OIR test.

Having faith in the system and working systematically as per above guidance will definitely improve chances of selection for repeaters.

SSB: COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS

I have enumerated some common misconceptions about SSB to help my students and other aspirants.

General

- **Misconception:** Don't speak against the government's policies.
- **Fact:** This is untrue. You should not hesitate to criticise policies or actions in accordance with what you feel is right or wrong.
- **Misconception**: It is a good quality to shout loudly and prevent others from speaking in all discussions. It shows that you are assertive and have the good quality of taking initiative.
- **Facts**: This behaviour shows that you are a dysfunctional member of a group, selfi sh & insecure. Being polite and considerate are good qualities, essential for team-work. That is how you should behave!

Psychology Tests

- **Misconception:** In TAT the main character should be of your age as well as gender and also from a similar background.
- **Fact:** This is a stupid idea. If you are shown a village girl fi lling water in an earthen pot from a river & you are an urban male then how can you adhere to this advice? You should write a story about a rural girl only.

- **Misconception**: Candidates should make efforts to show consistency in responses.
- **Facts:** In SRT when situations are similar your responses should obviously similar. Apart from this, a candidate should not be bothered about trying to establish consistency in responses. This is the job of the assessor & he/she will do it!

GTO

- **Misconception**: In Group Planning Exercise a candidate must make efforts to nominate himself and narrate the plan on behalf of the group.
- **Comments**: This is a very commonly observed stupid conduct of coached candidates. It should never be done. Only narrate the plan if others have nominated you to do so.
- **Misconception**: If a self-appointed person narrates his plan in the GPE which is not sensible you must agree with it because in military life this is the norm.
- **Comments:** Military is not a stupid organisation; you should not agree to senseless ideas; Please correct the ideas considered as wrong by you unhesitatingly, in the plan narrated.

Interview

- **Misconception**: The interviewing officer has read whatever you wrote in the psychology test and you must ensure that you speak exactly the same things.

- **Facts:** The IO does not have access to your psychology test responses. However, it is sensible to write the truth in the psychology tests as well as state the same to the IO.

Advice

Please make a note of these points & not be misguided by the trash being promoted by coaching academies and SSB websites. When in doubt as to what to do please go by common sense rather than irrational ideas you have heard from others.

#11

Success Stories That You Must Read

Success stories explain the effective execution of plans. Out of the numerous success stories I have picked up just three to bust several popular myths, like:

- Defence officers' children get preference.
- Sportspersons only get selected.
- Candidates having a solid past academic record only get selected.
- Repeaters have very low chances of selection.

AJAY SINGH RAJPUROHIT

Ajay Singh of No Frills Academy cleared SSB in his 3rd attempt on 01 Jun 2017 for SSC NT-106.

Status upon Joining No Frills Academy

Ajay had an unimpressive academic past. He had got 14 back logs during his engineering and had taken from 2011 to 2017 to earn his degree.

He had, however, become well-organised and systematic and had been managing a restaurant very effectively for 2 years. This had contributed greatly to his personality. He continued to work during his preparation for SSB.

Excellent Discipline & Commitment

During the 3 months that Ajay was under my guidance he remained totally focused, disciplined and showed excellent commitment to improve. In short, he adhered to the schedule prepared by him and I for his improvement almost totally. His improvement in fitness, GK and other aspects was impressive. Most importantly he had changed as a person from his irresponsible college days to a responsible and competent manager.

Ajay's Message

I was very thorough with the SSB process and all the things to do but the

problems were that the solutions were not personalised to my problems and that's what you helped me resolve. This time I didn't get overworked about SSB but focused to improve the work I was doing daily. This greatly helped me perform better in life. My performance in SSB was much better and I cleared it this time.Your guidance had a very big contribution in my results. I realised that:

"SSB performance is a reflection of our routine life"

My Remarks

A person can decide to change any time in his/her life for better or for worse. The decision to change has to be of the individual. Ajay decided to change for the better. In his journey of success his role was 98% & mine was about 2%.

TARUN SINGH

I,Tarun Singh, got recommended in my 9th attempt at SSB. I was trying for the defence forces since 2010 with absolutely no success and no clues about my weaknesses. I graduated in 2015 with no job and 7 unsuccessful attempts at SSB. I saw *Nehru* sir's blogs online and made up my mind to take his guidance. It was the first time that any mentor's blogs for SSB made any sense to me. I had seen various capsules and 15 days coaching and their philosophy. The difference between their methodology and *Nehru* sir's approach convinced me that his method was logical.

Starting: No Frills Academy

I got associated with *Nehru* sir and started preparing for various exams like SSC CGL and IBPS PO. In my first interaction with sir he told me that my reasoning abilities and effective intelligence were good and I should work hard to clear these exams as well. I asked him what about SSB sir?

To which he said,

"First let's get your life settled and moving. Let's work on your confidence and general knowledge. Let us work on your physical fitness. When all of this gets moving SSB will be done without any special effort".

Now, after 3 months I can clearly relate to this statement. His focus was never on any SSB task or test. On the contrary I only discussed about them only a

week before my SSB. Those 3 months had been absolutely fantastic for me. They have changed my life! My confidence level is on a peak!

He prepared a plan for me and we got started. I followed every inch and full stop of his instructions and methodology. Initially, it was difficult because of my disorganised life and poor habits. But seeing the amount of benefit and change in my approach towards challenges made me push harder.

Regular Interaction with Nehru Sir

I interacted, at times, with *Nehru* sir twice a day. I use to ask him that am I bothering you too much sir? To which he replied,

"I feel very happy when my students bother me. It's when they don't bother me, that I worry about them! "

This friendly and positive motivation helped me to stay connected with him and this helped him in monitoring my progress regularly. I accepted my shortcomings readily and worked hard to overcome them under his expert, yet very simple guidance.

Encouraging Results

Owing to his guidance I got placed in TCS in Dec 2015. This boosted my morale and helped rebuild my confidence which had taken a beating with repeated 'screening outs' at SSB. I also had SSB in Dec 2015. Sir asked me to leave it because I was not ready for it at that point of time. I did it trustfully and got back to my studies and organised life.

My physical fitness was poor and I could barely run 400 meters and could not do a single chin up. I reduced from 91 kg to 75 kg in 5 months. Now I can easily cover 8 km in 40 minutes. I can do 40 push-ups and 5 chin ups. He monitored my physical activities and gave me suitable feedback and advice to avoid injuries.

I cleared my IBPS PO exam and had my interview for the same. It was because of Nehru sir and his knowledge about banking and diverse aspects of Economics like FDI, agriculture and Political Science that helped me clear it successfully. I remember that the interviewer asked me about FDI and RBI interest rates and he was extremely impressed by my knowledge. He told me that he had never seen any engineer having such knowledge. At No Frills Academy we used to discuss simple social issues as well complex global affairs. Surprisingly, complex issues were made simple and interesting. I never had to mug up any data. Eventually I got through the IBPS PO exam as well and got selected in Union Bank of India as a PO.

Thanks No Frills Academy!

Now when I look back, I feel extremely thankful to No Frills Academy. **I got through SSB, cleared IBPS PO and got placed at TCS with Nehru Sir's guidance and no other coaching of any type whatsoever. Physically I am robust. My decision making ability has improved tremendously and confidence high.** I thank him for his guidance and maintaining faith in me. His faith aroused my self- confidence and energised me.Thank you sir! I would gladly remain connected with you and advise all SSB aspirants to take your simple and expert guidance for genuine self- improvement!

My Comments

Students primarily come to me for SSB guidance. I, however, guide them to be more effective in their lives. After Tarun had qualified to join Coast Guard I advised him not to do so considering his domestic commitments (mother & sister; he had lost his father earlier). He reluctantly took my advice & is working with SBI. He may sometimes blame me for the advice when he gets frustrated with his bank job. My advice was in good faith-right or wrong is difficult to say!

AKANKSHA MISHRA

Akanksha Mishra of No Frills Academy cleared SSB in her 6th attempt. She shares her experience in her words.

Akanksha Joins No Frills Academy

I found some nice answers by Col MM Nehru on Quora and enrolled for his guidance in December 16 and my SSB was due on 16 January, 2017. He told me that the time was too short. I felt that I will benefit from his guidance as his ideas appealed to me and were very different from those promoted by the coaching I had attended earlier. I had so many interactions with him and I got to understand myself better and also as to what I needed to do to improve.

Self –Awareness and Improvement

No Frills Academy made me realise that I was not being myself in the psychology tests. I was trying to do something impressive, extraordinary and different because of misguidance of coaching academy and friends. While working in the MNC I was not focusing on my work but SSB. Sir told me to focus on my work with total commitment and stop practicing for psychology tests and abandon my SSB obsession. I did the same. I only prepared current affairs for this SSB and improved my fitness and nothing else. Sir helped me to rebuild my lost self-confidence. Moreover, I began to have fun on every weekend which I had stopped because of practicing for SSB. My dedication in office improved my image and built my confidence. Before leaving

for SSB I went through some personality related blogs written by Sir and discussed the issues with him. I left behind the fear of failure and decided to enjoy my SSB experience.

AFSB, Mysore, Day 1

I found the reporting was around 180. I did well in OIR. In PPDT I could write only half the story before we were queued up for the discussion. My story was very simple and I started the narration but within 30 sec I was asked to stop. Discussion was a fish market situation. I managed to put across a few points without getting involved in shouting. 77 candidates were screened in.

Day 2

I did well in the psychology test. I completed all the TAT stories before time (wrote simple routine life related stories: no big ideas or big achievements) and all the WATs and 46 SRTs. I had already prepared my self- description and was able to write it in time.

Days 3 & 4

My GTO performance was unimpressive. I was giving points and was open to others' opinions. In PGT I hardly got any opportunity to implement my ideas because of the over-enthusiasm of others, but I contributed ideas. I was not thinking about my performance but group effort. At the end of Day3 I felt that I would not make it and spoke to Sir. He told me to continue doing the

tasks in the same spirit, irrespective of what the others were doing. Reassured, I continued.

Day 4 started with command task. I was called 2nd and was given a very simple task and my faith started fading. However, I did not allow it to affect my next task. I did 6 individual obstacles out of 7. 7th was rope climbing, which I could not complete. In FGT I again did not lose faith and performed my best.

Day 5: Interview

My interview was at 11:45 AM. While sitting in the waiting area I was trying to recollect some current affairs. I was not nervous at that moment. As soon as the call for interview came my heartbeat increased. I entered the room confidently. My interview went well. Maximum focus was on personal life. I was asked some current affairs which I could answer well. I made no effort to impress and answered questions honestly and hence felt no pressure.

Day 6: Conference

Before my conference I had to wait for over 10 min. After the conference results were announced and I was recommended.

Akanksha's Post Selection Thoughts

I felt this time I was just myself: simple, cheerful and friendly. I did not compete with any one. I did not think about if I did something which OLQ will be reflected like earlier times. Believe me, such thoughts are useless. I felt more like a fresher. I give credit for this changed attitude to Sir, who had faith in me and made me realise my real potential. I am a better worker and without being desperate I cleared SSB.

My Comments

I remember Akanksha calling me after GTO-1 & she was in tears. She told me that in the earlier attempts at least she was moving with the group but this time because of following my advice she was left alone as others took her ideas as if they had thought of them. In short, she felt that my advice had done more harm than good. I calmed her & told her to continue being her normal genial self. I assured her that the girls may behave stupidly but the GTO is not stupid. She spoke to me post the conference and conveyed that she alone had been selected from her GTO group!



I hope you found the 5th edition of the book useful. Please do share your views to improve the next edition.

Col Nehru

NFA Supoort Team (E-books)