

# 7

Know yourself ●

Develop your skills ●

Adopt better habits ●

Be more competitive ●

Know your destination ●

Adapt according to needs ●

Aids to better preparation ●

# Mantras to Excel in EXAMS

Practical tips to score maximum marks



**Prem P. Bhalla**

Prolific writer, Education and  
Career counsellor



# 7 Mantras to Excel in Exams

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V&S PUBLISHERS

*Published by:*



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Email: info@vspublishers.com • Website: www.vspublishers.com

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ISBN 978-93-505720-7-8

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**Dedicated to**  
**Rajiv and Rima**  
**who are guiding their children**  
**to excel in exams**



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# Preface

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Exams play a major role in the lives of all people. One is confronted with them on joining school. This continues up to college and even later. Entry to many vocations, both at the higher and lower levels, is dependent upon exams. Even in adult life, where learning needs to be updated regularly, exams play an important role in achieving success.

In school, students are taught a variety of subjects to equip them for adult life. However, no school teaches them how to excel in exams. Most students learn through hit-and-miss methods. Some learn it late. Many never learn it at all. It is unfortunate that youngsters are deprived of this knowledge when even those with an average IQ can excel in exams.

An effort has been made through **7 Mantras to Excel in Exams** to guide youngsters to rise step by step and excel in exams. Throughout the book exercises are given so that a person can learn through practise. After each step, **Points to Ponder** will help one perfect a technique. Many suggestions are given to help students gain confidence and a new insight to appear in exams.

Discover the 7 Mantras. Success awaits you. Go ahead and excel in your exams!

—Prem P. Bhalla





# MANTRA 1

## **“Know Your Destination”**

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Why are you preparing and appearing for exams? What is your goal? Unfortunately, most students are unable to answer these simple questions. They fail to explain why they are studying in school or college. Those who answer explain they are doing so to obtain a certificate, degree or diploma. And why do they need these? To them, these are symbols of being educated and through these they hope to follow a reasonable vocation and achieve a respectable position in society.

But the real purpose of going to school and college is not to obtain certificates and degrees, but to get educated. The word *education* is derived from the Latin *educere*, which means *to bring forth from within*. Education is the process of preparing a person to use personal capabilities buried deep within. When one knows the purpose of education, and appears for exams that are a part of the process, the person becomes aware of his destination.

At every level of study there will be exams. Written exams, exams in practical work, viva voce, group discussions, interviews, health check-ups and a variety of other tests. Each of these is planned for a particular purpose. To prove your proficiency, you will need to understand the purpose of the exams and qualify in them. Let's proceed step by step to know our destination.

## Mantra 1 : Step 1

### **Do We Need Exams?**

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Exam is an informal abbreviation of the word *examination*. An examination is a formal test of knowledge or ability in a subject or skill. It can also be a test of the qualifications or progress of a person.

An exam is nothing new to any educated person. As soon as one enters a school, and learns the first few alphabets, a test soon follows. The teacher wants to ascertain whether the student has learnt what was taught. New lessons are taught as the student progresses. More difficult tests follow. The word *test* is soon replaced by the word *examination*. With frequent use, the word has simply been abbreviated to exam.

#### **Exams Begin Early**

Even before a child joins school, s/he is not spared from being tested. The mother and father of the infant take pride in making the baby sit, crawl, stand up and take its first unsteady steps. They also take pride in the child's smile and laughter, just as they are happy when the child says "Ma" or "Pa" for the first few times. The child's abilities are freely tested before friends and relatives and it is a matter of pride and happiness for the parents when the child responds.

When children grow up and advance to higher classes, the number of subjects taught increases and so does the frequency and number of exams. There are the quarterlies, the mid-year and the final exams. That is when children question the very concept of exams. Who devised exams? Do we really need them? Is it not enough to impart the necessary knowledge and leave the rest to the person concerned? That may appear to be a reasonable way of looking at the problem, but in a civilised society it is not practical.

## **The Need for Exams**

Let's take a look at some interesting newspapers headlines:

1. Over 120,000 to appear for the preliminary PCS exam in Uttaranchal.
2. 26,000 students apply for 120 seats in Management College.
3. Over 100,000 students sit for Common Admission Test (CAT).

Uttaranchal is a small state with only 13 districts. How many youth can possibly be recruited in the Public Civil Service to administer these districts? With 120,000 aspirants, can there be any other way to shortlist the best candidates than through an exam?

The Management College has 120 seats for various courses. Can it ever accommodate 26,000 aspirants? The Common Admission Test was introduced to ensure that the most capable youngsters were admitted into prestigious institutions that provide the future administration of the country's commerce and industry.

With a large population, and ever increasing aspirants for the top positions, exams of various kinds are the only option to select the best candidates. Exams are indeed a need and not a curse, as many make them out to be.

## **Survival of the Fittest**

Charles Darwin suggested that there is a natural process of selection in every field all the time. In the race for selection, it is the fittest that survive. We see that happening everywhere, everyday. In every sphere of life, people compete with each other to provide better products and services. This in turn means a better life for the common man. Exams play an important role in the process of selection of the best people.

Wherever there is competition, there is bound to be some tension. Doing away with exams is not a solution to end such tension. Competition is a part of life and cannot be eliminated. To counteract the tension linked with it, the

solution lies in developing the correct attitude towards exams and in understanding how to be more competitive. If one can tackle exams positively, it is a definite step towards becoming more competitive in life.

## **A Hurdle or Stepping-stone?**

Many youth consider exams as a conspiracy to place hurdles in their path! To them every exam is a hurdle. These hurdles have been so placed that at every step some trip over them. Only a lucky few reach the finishing line. Or so such youngsters feel. This is not a positive attitude towards exams.

We need to view exams not as hurdles in life, but as stepping-stones to greater progress. Hurdles are placed at the same level. Even the finishing line is at the same level. In real life, those who succeed do not remain at the same level. They rise just as one climbs a staircase step by step. Therefore, we should perceive exams as stepping-stones to rise higher, just as we do in a staircase, slowly moving towards the top.

Look at how one makes progress in school, from kindergarten to the first, then to the second and onwards, up to the tenth and twelfth classes. Each student moves upwards as in a staircase. At the level of completing school there are many options. Each person selects an option in harmony with his skills and abilities.

Some steps are easy to climb. Others are not. It is the fittest that rise the fastest. So we should always remember that exams are not hurdles, but stepping-stones to success.

## **Life is an Exam**

Although our immediate interest are the formal exams we encounter in everyday academic and professional life, let us not overlook that in due course everyone realises that living honourably is also an exam. Every individual undergoes tests at the hands of many people everyday. Our success depends upon our attitude. When we are positive, and take a positive outlook at what confronts us, we are successful. When we harbour doubts, we buckle.

In the same way, it is important that we learn to be positive whenever we enter an examination hall. Our attitude and confidence will take us towards success.

### **Exams are a Part of Life**

A positive way of looking at the situation is to accept exams as a part of life. There are two elements involved in this situation: firstly, the individual who appears for the examination and, secondly, the examination. It is important that we understand all there is to know before appearing for the examination. It is equally important that we recognise our own strengths and weaknesses. When we are clear on this score, success follows.

#### *Points to Ponder*

- ◆ An exam is a formal test of knowledge and skills.
- ◆ Exams are a need of society.
- ◆ The fittest survive in this world.
- ◆ Exams help select the fittest.
- ◆ Exams are not hurdles but stepping-stones to success.
- ◆ Life too is an exam.
- ◆ A positive attitude towards exams ensures success.

## *Mantra 1 : Step 2*

### **Where Are You Going?**

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Do you know where you are headed? Most students do not. They simply study to go to the next higher class and because they do not want to be labelled uneducated. They want to have certificates and degrees to prove they have gone through school and college.

Can you imagine a football or hockey field without goals on either side? How will the teams play? Will they just keep moving the ball from one end to another? How will we decide the winner? Just like the players on these fields without goals, many students keep running about aimlessly with the ball! They score no goals – because there are none before them!

#### **Lack of Goals**

A major cause of low achievement is having no goals in life. Many youngsters contend that when they reach the appropriate age, the goals will appear before them. They will then score. Unfortunately, it never happens like that. Once a child begins to study, there should be a goal towards which he gradually moves. If you have nowhere to go, you will reach just there – nowhere! Just as a boat without a rudder cannot be steered towards its destination, similarly, we cannot be successful without a goal in life. Those who set out in life with definite goals achieve much more than their friends who have no goals. This is a fact proved repeatedly.

#### **Why We Need Goals**

We need goals because they tell us where we must go. Unless we know where to go, we cannot reach there.

A very important aspect of setting goals in life is that when we accept a goal in our mind, we keep thinking about it and our mind releases a success mechanism. This success mechanism attracts individuals and circumstances that are in harmony with the goals before us. When a person decides to do a specialised course in a foreign country and makes