

How to Prepare for UPSC Prelims-2020

- Civil Services Examination is conducted by the UPSC every year to recruit officers for various reputed government posts.
- It is one of the toughest examinations in the country.
- There are three stages of this examination - Prelims, Mains and IAS Interview.
- The UPSC Prelims 2019 was conducted on 2nd June 2019.
- The first stage- Prelims exam consists of two papers, both of them being objective type.
- It is important to do a planned and guided preparation.

UPSC IAS Prelims Format

There are two objective type (MCQs) papers in the prelims exam.

1. General Studies Paper 1 (General Awareness)
2. General Studies Paper 2 (CSAT)
 - ✓ Current Affairs
 - ✓ History
 - ✓ Polity and Governance
 - ✓ Economy
 - ✓ Environmental Studies
 - ✓ General Science
 - ✓ Comprehension and Communication Skills
 - ✓ Reasoning and Decision Making
 - ✓ Basic Numeracy and Data Interpretation

IAS Exam Format

Exam	Total marks	Duration	No. of questions	Negative Marking	Nature	Required marks to qualify
GS 1	200	2 hours	100	Yes	Marks counted for ranking	Cut-off prescribed by UPSC
GS 2	200	2 hours	80	Yes	Qualifying only	33% (66/200)

- The marks obtained in the CSAT or GS 2 paper will not be counted for the prelims ranking.
- Candidates need to score at least **33%** in this paper to qualify for the UPSC mains exam.
- There is penalty for incorrect answers to the tune of 1/3rd of the marks allotted to the question.
- The marks obtained in the GS paper 1 will be counted in the ranking.
- The cut-off marks (minimum marks required) in this paper will be determined by the commission
- It is declared to the public only after the final result of the UPSC civil services is out.

Few Tips

- Student needs approximately one year to prepare for UPSC examination.
- Dedicated preparation for the prelims alone should start at least 3 months prior to the prelims.
- You should remember that it is very important to go with a plan.
- There would be distractions and temptations pulling you away from your preparation.

- Be sincere to yourself.
- Remember, no gain no pain!
- CSAT checks your aptitude and logical reasoning skills.
- Candidates strong in mathematics or with a science/engineering background generally find it easy and don't necessarily spend a lot of time on it.
- They just practice a few mock papers or previous years' UPSC CSAT question papers.
- But for candidates who find CSAT on the tougher side, it is important to prepare for it properly.
- They should focus on understanding the concepts and practicing more and more questions.
- A common misconception regarding the UPSC prelims is that it is just about remembering a lot of facts and figures.
- But UPSC checks out your concepts.
- It also checks your ability to analyse the topics properly.
- Your speed will also be tested since you have to answer 200 questions in 120 minutes (less than a minute per question).
- Current affairs are the most important part of UPSC Civil Services exam.
- Every year, a lot of questions are based on current affairs directly or indirectly.
- So, you need to relate the news in current affairs to the related subjects.
- For example, if a certain topic is in news frequently, make sure you gather relevant information related to it and also understand it properly by going back to the theory/concept in them.
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- Prelims exam is about solving maximum questions correctly in less time.
- For this, you need to have a lot of practice.
- Only practice can help you familiarise with the question paper pattern, and also improve your speed.
- You should start taking mock tests as soon as possible.
- Remember that the Paper-I or the **General Studies-1 is the deciding factor** for qualifying the Prelims examination.
- The basic tip for the examination hall is one should read the questions carefully and thoroughly before selecting the correct answer.
- If a question cannot be answered immediately, one should move to the next question.
- After going through the whole question paper and answering all the questions, one may get back to unanswered questions.
- Since there is negative marking, one should avoid making guesses.
- Time management is very vital during the examination.
- Since there is only a minute or more to answer a question, speed and accuracy is the key to handle this exam.
- This can be done so by taking mock test with all its seriousness at preparation level.

- There are 100 questions to be answered in two hours, each question carries two marks. While the correct answer will fetch 2 marks, a wrong answer means a loss of 0.66 marks.
- The 100 questions can be grouped into three categories:
 - Multiple Choice Questions - single response correct
 - Multiple Choice Questions - multiple response correct
 - Multiple Choice Questions - Matching type
- The number of questions asked from different sections varies each time and there is no fixed rule for this.
- The nature of questions asked are generally on basic principles, their application, factual information and current affairs.
- Some questions are based on applied aspects of principles and factual information.
- It has been found that many of the questions overlap with more than one section of the syllabus.
- The answer to the question require analytical bend of mind.
- So mere reading NCERT high school texts books is insufficient and in depth knowledge is required to handle this paper.
- The best way should be to adopt an integrated approach for preparation that is combining Prelims and the Mains study together.
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- Considering the nature of the examination the strategy for Prelims should be to focus on greater rather than intensive reading.
- Since one is expected to know everything so only basics of each of the discipline need to be mastered, avoiding the element of over stretching the preparations at Prelims stage.

Reading Material

- Read NCERT books for conceptual clarity and do in depth study of relevant topics from graduation level text books.
- A good general studies book for reference is needed because here most of the reading material is available at one source.
- Regular reading of newspapers and magazines helps you master over current developments in economic, political and social issues and policy changes.

Syllabus of Paper-II

- Comprehension
- Interpersonal skills including communication skills;
- Logical reasoning and analytical ability
- Decision-making and problem solving

- General mental ability
- Basic numeracy (numbers and their relations, orders of magnitude, etc.) (Class X level)
- Data interpretation (charts, graphs, tables, data sufficiency etc. - Class X level)

Paper-II

- The paper II or aptitude test may look complex at the surface but scratching it a bit it's not a difficult nut to crack.
- The best strategy, to read the basic concept first and develop a fair understanding of the question asked in each section.
- The pattern of allotting specific number of marks for specified section for each syllabus is followed for the paper II.
- As you know Prelim Paper 2 is now only of qualifying in nature.
- You are required to score just 66 marks out of 200 to qualify this paper.
- Even if you score higher marks it won't be matter in merit list of Prelims results.
- But if you score less than 66 marks, you won't qualify the Prelims.
- Focus more on
 - a) Comprehension
 - b) Decision Making
 - c) Data Interpretation
 - d) Interpersonal Skills.
- If you can prepare just four topics well you can qualify CSAT.
- **Comprehension:** Analyzing the previous year papers, it can be said that at least 5 Comprehension passages are asked in every year.
- It is relatively easier to score 50 marks from just Comprehension passages alone.

- **Decision Making:** At least 5 questions are asked on Decision Making. They can attempted without any fear since there is no negative marking in it.
- Rest of the marks can be obtained from **Data Interpretation and Interpersonal Skills questions.**

Some myths

- IAS is the mother of all exams.
- IAS is not for average students.
- You need to study 20 hours every day for 365 days.
- Your English is very poor so you can't qualify.
- Taking coaching classes in Delhi is must for this exam.
- You cannot prepare from home?
- This is my just 1st attempt, no worries if I fail, I have got more.
- Lakhs of aspirants give this exam and only few get into IAS. Do I have any chance?
- There is corruption in recruiting IAS officers.
- The syllabus is like a vast ocean and questions are asked from outside the syllabus.
- But UPSC strictly sticks to the syllabus.
- Sometimes it seems like questions are asked from outside of the syllabus, but they are actually in some ways related to it.
- Buy as many books from the shop to pass the exam: You need not buy all the books in the world to clear UPSC. Just stick to the basic reference books and notes.

Academic Qualification

- To apply for UPSC Civil Services (IAS/IPS) Examination, a candidate must be a graduate.
- No minimum %, grade or CGPA required in college but in RBI/CAT-exams they consider college marks.
- There are toppers failures in college/school exams.
- Undergraduate in last year, last semester can apply.
- Distance education degree valid- IF recognized by UGC/AICTE/any Law.
- MBBS must have completed internship before UPSC Interview-stage comes.

Age / Attempt limit in UPSC

- General & Creamy OBC: Maximum 32 years: 6 Attempts
- Non-Creamy OBC : Maximum 35 Years: 9 Attempts
- SC | ST: Maximum 37 years: Unlimited attempts

Age / Attempt limit in UPSC IAS/IPS?

- Age is counted on the 1st August of the given year.
- Physical Disabled candidates' age limits: PH-Gen: 42, PH-OBC (non-Creamy): 45 years; PH-SC/ST: 47 years.
- This is cumulative ST ex-serviceman who was disabled: 32 +5 (ST) +5 (Ex serviceman) + PH (10)=52 years.
- But such cumulative effect will apply till maximum upper age limit 56 years.

UPSC Prelims Preparation Books for CURRENT AFFAIRS

- Follow any one newspaper for news items (preferably The Hindu)
- You can also selectively read Indian Express and Live mint.
- Press Information Bureau especially the Features section for imp articles

- PRS (only for recent Bills and articles related to them)
- IDSA: Institute for Defense Studies and Analysis (keep checking every 2-3 days for in-depth IR articles)
- Yojana and Kurukshetra (read selectively)
- RajyaSabha Debates

UPSC Prelims Preparation Books for HISTORY

Modern India

- NCERT – Class 8th (New) – ‘Our Pasts – III’
- NCERT-Class 12th ‘Modern India’ (OLD)
- Tamil Nadu Edition- Class 12th
- Spectrum Modern India – Rajiv Ahir
- Reference Book: India’s Struggle for Independence – Bipan Chandra; Plassey to Partition by Sekhar Bandyopadhyay

UPSC Prelims Preparation Books for Medieval India

- Tamil Nadu Edition-Class 11th
- Ancient and Medieval India – Poonam Dalal Dahiya
- NCERT – Class 7th (New) – ‘Our Pasts –II’
- NCERT – Class 11th ‘Medieval India’ (OLD)- Satish Chandra

UPSC Prelims Preparation Books for Ancient India

- Ancient and Medieval India – Poonam Dalal Dahiya
- Most part of ‘Culture’ section overlaps with Ancient and Medieval History. Apart from the above mentioned books, you can refer the below link for more information on Culture.
- **CCRT Website**

- NCERT– Class 11th ‘Ancient India’ (OLD)- R.S. Sharma
- NCERT– Class 12th ‘Themes in Indian History- Part I’ (NEW)- Chapters 1 to 6
- Tamil Nadu Edition – Class 11th

UPSC Prelims Preparation Books for GEOGRAPHY

- NCERT Social Science, Class 6th (New) ‘The Earth Our Habitat’
- NCERT Social Science, Class 7th (New) ‘Our Environment’
- NCERT Social Science, Class 8th (New) ‘Resource and Development’
- NCERT Social Science, Class 9th (New) ‘Contemporary India’
- NCERT Social Science, Class 10th (New) ‘Contemporary India-Part II’

NCERT – Class 11th (New)

- Fundamentals of Physical Geography
- India physical environment

NCERT – Class 12th (New)

- Fundamentals of Human Geography
- India – People and Economy
- Atlas: Orient BlackSwan School Atlas (or) Oxford School Atlas
- Reference Book: Certificate Physical and Indian Geography – Goh Cheng Leong; OLD NCERT Geography – Class 11th and 12th

UPSC Prelims Preparation Books for POLITY

- NCERT – 6th to 8th (for basic understanding)
- NCERT- Class 9th to 12th (for understanding more on democracy and federalism)
- Indian Polity – M Laxmikanth
- Reference Book: Introduction to Indian Constitution – D.D.Basu

UPSC Prelims Preparation Books for ECONOMICS

- Macroeconomics- Class 12th , NCERT
- NCERT 11th – Indian Economic Development
- NCERT- Class 9th and 10th (for basics)
- Indian Economy – Ramesh Singh-Selective (Chapters on)
- Introduction (GDP, GNP, growth etc.)
- Evolution of the Indian economy
- Banking
- Inflation & Business Cycle
- Agriculture
- India and the Global Economy (include chapters relating to it)
- Human development
- Technology and environment
- For understanding concepts refer to either of these:
- Investopedia – University (also read basics of Microeconomics from here)

UPSC Prelims Preparation Books for SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

- The Hindu-Monday Edition (not technical news, only application based science & Tech)
- NCERT- Class 6th to 10th
- NCERT – Biology – 11th (Unit IV & V only – read basic concepts not technical details)
- NCERT Biology – 12th (Chapters 4, 5 and rest from 7 to 16 – all important – read line by line except technical details)
- NCERT – Biology – 12th (OLD) – Chapter 9 onwards

- NCERT – Physics – 11th (Chap 1,5 & 8) and 12th (Chap 15 only)
- NCERT – Chemistry – 11th (Chap 1 & 14 only) and 12th (Chap 14 & 16 only) Science reporter- Selectively

UPSC Prelims Preparation Books for ENVIRONMENT

- ICSE Board- Environmental studies- Class 10th and 11th
- NCERT- Geography Books (in 6th to 12th there are lot of chapters on Environment)
- Science NCERT books mentioned above
- Current affairs
- downtoearth.org.in
- Reference material : Shankar IAS notes on Environment

UPSC Prelims Preparation Books for SOCIAL ISSUES & NEW POLICIES/SCHEMES

- vikaspedia.in (lists all schemes Ministry and sector wise with details)
- India yearbook
- NCERT books mentioned above
- Current affairs (also keep checking our weekly PIB Gists – very important)
- We will never make you restrict your choices. But the above is essential for a solid preparation.
- There are people who qualify without even reading NCERTs or any most followed resources. The key to their success is smart study. They spend more time in chalking out what not to study than what to study.
- If they follow one source, they keep on revising from the same along with complementing it with dynamic updates.
- If you trust your resource, please stick to it. Never rush to fascinating books or suggested resources that are never ending. You are bound to fall. Because you are running behind them.
- While NCERT books may sound deceptively simple, trust us, they are not!

How to prepare for the CSE?

- It is a vast curriculum examination especially at the Main exam stage.
- A candidate, therefore, has to begin preparation for the Main Exam and then for the Prelim.
- This is so because, if one starts his preparation for the Main exam after the having written the Prelim exam, he will have just four months (June to October) to prepare the Optional subject, Essay and General Studies, which is almost impossible to achieve.
- The optional subject is of post-graduation level and usually it will be totally a new subject.
- Let us take 2020 as the year in which you want to sit for the CSE.
- Start your preparation in June, 2019 if you wish to appear for the Prelim exam in 2020.
- Begin your preparation of the optional subject, from the second week of June to October (4 months) of 2019 and General Studies for both Prelim and Main exam from June of 2019 to March of the year 2020 and take the Prelim exam in June of the year 2020.
- Prepare for the CSAT in either October 2019 or in January, 2020.
- After taking the Prelim exam, from June to October of the year 2020, you can revise your optional subject and GS and prepare the Essay paper before taking the Main exam in October.
- The period from January to April and June to October of the year 2020, can be used to take a test series for the optional subject for the Main exam.