

Chronicle's
UPSC-CSE
SYLLABUS
with Key Notes

Prelims & Mains

- Plan of Examination
- Trend Analysis
- Overview of Success Rate
- Remarks on Different Optionals
- Answers to Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

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UPSC-CSE
SYLLABUS
with Key Notes
(Prelims & Mains)

Editor

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Guiding Civil Services Aspirants Since 35 Years

Compiled by

Chronicle Editorial Team



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UPSC CSE EXAM : IN A NUTSHELL

The Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) examination is one of the most prestigious and challenging exams in India. It opens doors to a career in civil services, including the Indian Administrative Service (IAS), Indian Police Service (IPS), and Indian Foreign Service (IFS).

The exam is divided into three main stages: Preliminary, Main, and the Personality Test (Interview). Each stage has its own significance and requires a unique approach to succeed.

To appear for the UPSC Civil Services Examination, candidates must meet specific **eligibility criteria**. Eligibility criteria include specific educational qualifications, age limits, and nationality requirements.

The Preliminary Examination, often referred to as the Prelims, is the first stage of the UPSC exam. It consists of two papers: General Studies (GS) and the Civil Services Aptitude Test (CSAT). Both papers are objective in nature and serve as a screening test. The GS paper covers a wide range of topics including current events, history, geography, polity, economics, environmental ecology, and general science. The CSAT paper tests comprehension, logical reasoning, and basic numeracy skills.

The Main Examination, or Mains, is more comprehensive and includes nine papers, out of which seven are considered for ranking. These papers include Essay, General Studies I-IV, and two papers on the optional subject chosen by the candidate. The General Studies papers cover topics such as Indian heritage and culture, governance, technology, economic development, biodiversity, security, and ethics. The optional subject can be chosen from a list of subjects provided by UPSC, allowing candidates to select a field they are comfortable with.

The final stage is the Personality Test or Interview, which assesses the candidate's suitability for a career in public service. This stage evaluates not just the knowledge but also the personality traits of the candidate. Confidence, communication skills, and the ability to handle stress are key factors that are tested. Candidates are advised to stay updated with current affairs and practice mock interviews to perform well in this stage.

Stages of UPSC Selection Process

Prelims	
Paper-I	Paper-II
GS <ul style="list-style-type: none">100 Questions200 Marks2 Hours	C-SAT <ul style="list-style-type: none">80 Questions200 Marks2 Hours

Mains			
Qualifying Papers 1. English 2. Indian Language Total Marks: 2X300 = 600 Hours	Essay Two Essays Total Marks: 250	General Studies 1. Paper-I 2. Paper-II 3. Paper-III 4. Paper-IV Total Marks: 4X250= 1000	Optional Subject 1. Paper-I 2. Paper-II Total Marks: 2X250= 500
Interview or Personality Test			
Total Marks = 275			
Papers to be counted for Merit			
General Studies + Optional Subject + Essay + Interview = 1000 + 500 + 250 + 275 = 2025 Marks			

Civil Services Examination for Different Services

Preliminary Examination of the Civil Services Examination for recruitment to the Services and Posts mentioned below are held by the Union Public Service Commission in accordance with the Rules published by the Department of Personnel & Training.

- Indian Administrative Service
- Indian Foreign Service
- Indian Police Service
- Indian Audit and Accounts Service, Group 'A'
- Indian Civil Accounts Service, Group 'A'
- Indian Corporate Law Service, Group 'A'
- Indian Defence Accounts Service, Group 'A'
- Indian Defence Estates Service, Group 'A'
- Indian Information Service, Group 'A'
- Indian Postal Service, Group 'A'
- Indian P&T Accounts and Finance Service, Group 'A'
- Indian Railway Protection Force Service, Group 'A'
- Indian Revenue Service (Customs & Indirect Taxes) Group 'A'
- Indian Revenue Service (Income Tax) Group 'A'
- Indian Trade Service, Group 'A' (Grade III)
- Indian Railway Management Service, Group 'A'
- Armed Forces Headquarters Civil Service, Group 'B' (Section Officer's Grade)
- Delhi, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Lakshadweep, Daman & Diu and Dadra & Nagar Haveli
- Civil Service (DANICS), Group 'B'

SECTION I : PLAN OF EXAMINATION

The Civil Services Examination comprises two successive stages:

- **Civil Services (Preliminary) Examination** (Objective Type) for the selection of candidates for Civil Services (Main) Examination; and
- **Civil Services (Main) Examination** (Written and Interview/Personality Test) for the selection of candidates for the various Services and posts.

Civil Services (Preliminary) Examination

The Civil Services (Preliminary) Examination consists of two papers of objective type (multiple choice questions) and carry a maximum of 400 marks.

This examination is meant to serve as a screening test only; the marks obtained in the Civil Services (Preliminary) Examination by the candidates who are declared qualified for admission to the Civil Services (Main) Examination will not be counted for determining their final order of merit.

The number of candidates to be admitted to the Civil Services (Main) Examination will be about twelve to thirteen times the total approximate number of vacancies to be filled in the year through this Examination. Only those candidates who are declared by the Commission to have qualified in the Civil Services (Preliminary) Examination in the year will be eligible for admission to the Civil Services (Main) Examination of that year provided they are otherwise eligible for admission to the Civil Services (Main) Examination.

How does the Commission select candidates for Mains Examination?

The Commission draws a list of candidates to be qualified for Civil Services (Main) Examination based on the criterion of minimum qualifying marks of 33% in General Studies Paper-II of Civil Services (Preliminary) Examination and total qualifying marks of General Studies Paper-I of Civil Services (Preliminary) Examination as may be determined by the Commission.

How negative mark for incorrect answer is calculated?

There is provision of negative marking for incorrect answers as detailed below:

- (i) There are four alternatives for the answers to every question. For each question for which a wrong answer has been given by the candidate, one-third (0.33) of the marks assigned to that question is deducted as penalty.
- (ii) If a candidate gives more than one answer, it is treated as a wrong answer even if one of the given answers happen to be correct and there is same penalty as above for that question.
- (iii) If a question is left blank i.e. no answer is given by the candidate, there will be no penalty for that question.

Trend Analysis (Prelims) (Subject-wise Weightage: No of Questions Asked in GS Paper I - 2011-2025)								
Year	History	Geography	Polity	Economy	Science & Tech	Environment & Ecology	Current Affairs	
2025	16	14	17	16	16	12	9	9
2024	12	18	15	14	13	15	13	13
2023	14	16	15	14	12	14	15	15
2022	11	09	21	16	15	18	10	10
2021	10	10	11	16	14	14	17	17
2020	20	10	17	15	10	10	18	18
2019	17	14	15	14	07	11	22	22
2018	22	10	13	18	10	13	14	14
2017	14	09	22	16	09	15	15	15
2016	15	07	07	18	08	18	27	27
2015	17	16	13	13	08	11	22	22
2014	20	14	14	10	16	18	08	08
2013	16	18	16	19	14	17	00	00
2012	19	17	20	17	09	17	01	01
2011	11	11	12	19	19	15	13	13

Pros & Cons of History Optional

- History is often perceived as a scoring subject in the UPSC Mains examination.
- Studying History as an optional subject can complement the preparation for General Studies papers, particularly Paper 1, which covers Indian heritage and culture, world history, and post-independence India.
- History optional poses challenges such as vast syllabus, memorization burden, and interpretation complexities.

Success Rate of History Optional (As per annual reports published so far by the UPSC)

Year	No of Candidates Appeared	Recommended	Success Rate (%)
2021	574	25	4.4%
2020	581	24	4.1%
2019	751	51	6.8%
2018	848	52	6.1%
2017	1074	59	5.5%
2016	1427	60	4.2%

Law

Paper-I

Constitutional and Administrative Law

- Constitution and Constitutionalism: The distinctive features of the Constitution
- Fundamental Rights—Public interest litigation; Legal Aid; Legal services authority
- Relationship between Fundamental rights, Directive principles and Fundamental duties
- Constitutional Position of the President and relation with the Council of Ministers
- Governor and his powers
- **Supreme Court and the High Courts:**
 - Appointments and transfer
 - Powers, functions and jurisdiction
- Centre, States and local bodies:
 - Distribution of legislative powers between the Union and the States
 - Local Bodies