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CDS 2026 Written Exam Strategy to Crack in 1st Attempt

Cracking the [CDS 2026 written exam](#) on the first attempt requires a smart preparation plan, a clear understanding of the syllabus, and consistent practice.

With the right strategy and disciplined study routine, aspirants can easily clear the written exam and move toward the [SSB interview stage](#).

The key to success is not studying for long hours but **studying with the right approach, focused resources, and regular mock practice**.



Understand the CDS Exam Pattern First

Before starting preparation, candidates must understand the exam structure.

For IMA, INA & AFA

- English – 120 Questions (100 Marks)
- General Knowledge – 120 Questions (100 Marks)
- Elementary Mathematics – 100 Questions (100 Marks)

For OTA

- English – 120 Questions

- General Knowledge – 120 Questions

Each paper is conducted for **2 hours with one-third negative marking**, so accuracy is very important.

Know the CDS Syllabus

Understanding the syllabus helps candidates avoid unnecessary topics and focus only on what is important for the exam.

English Syllabus

Important topics include:

- Spotting Errors
- Synonyms & Antonyms
- Reading Comprehension
- Cloze Test
- Ordering of Words/Sentences
- Idioms & Phrases

English is considered one of the **most scoring sections** in the CDS exam.

General Knowledge Syllabus

GK covers both static and current topics such as:

- History
- Geography
- Indian Polity
- Economy
- Science (Physics, Chemistry, Biology)
- Defence News
- Current Affairs (6–12 months)

Mathematics Syllabus

Major topics include:

- Number System
- Algebra
- Geometry

- Mensuration
- Trigonometry
- Time & Work
- Time & Distance
- Statistics

Read More About [CDS Syllabus 2026 with Subject-Wise Topics](#)

6-Month Study Plan for CDS 2026

A **six-month strategy** is ideal for beginners preparing for CDS.

Months 1-2: Build Basics

- Focus on fundamental concepts of Maths and GK
- Start English grammar practice
- Read newspapers like *The Hindu* or *Indian Express*

Months 3-4: Practice Phase

- Solve chapter-wise questions
- Attempt sectional tests
- Practice previous year questions

Months 5-6: Mock Test Phase

- Attempt 12–15 full-length mock tests
- Analyse mistakes carefully
- Improve speed and time management

Even **3-5 hours of focused daily study** is enough if preparation is consistent.

Subject-Wise Preparation Strategy

English Preparation Strategy

- Learn **20 new words daily**
- Practice grammar rules regularly
- Solve previous year papers

Daily routine Example:

- 20 minutes vocabulary
- 30 minutes grammar practice
- 30 minutes PYQs

Target score: 70+ marks

General Knowledge Strategy

GK preparation should be divided into **static GK and current affairs**.

Static GK

- Polity
- History
- Geography
- Economy
- Science

Current Affairs

Focus on:

- Defence news
- International relations
- Government schemes
- Awards & sports

Avoid studying from too many resources.

Mathematics Strategy

Many aspirants fear Maths, but CDS Maths is based on **basic concepts and speed**.

Preparation tips:

- Start with NCERT basics
- Maintain formula notes
- Practice previous year questions regularly

High-weightage topics:

- Algebra
- Geometry
- Trigonometry
- Time & Distance
- Time & Work

Target score: 50–60+ marks.

The Most Effective Preparation Formula

A proven method for CDS preparation is the following:

PYQs + Short Notes + Mock Tests

Why Previous Year Questions(PYQs) Matter

The UPSC often repeats patterns and concepts, so solving **the last 10 years' papers** helps understand the exam trend.

Role of Mock Tests

Mock tests help develop:

- Speed
- Accuracy
- Time management
- Exam confidence

Experts recommend 12-15 full mocks before the exam.

Time Management Strategy in the Exam

English Paper

1. Start with comprehension
2. Attempt grammar questions
3. Solve vocabulary questions at the end

GK Paper

1. Polity, History, Geography first
2. Current Affairs next
3. Science and miscellaneous last

Maths Paper

1. Attempt easy questions first
2. Solve moderate questions
3. Leave lengthy questions for the end

Common Mistakes to Avoid

Many aspirants fail because they:

- Study without understanding the syllabus
- Use too many books

- Ignore previous year papers
- Do not attempt mock tests
- Lack consistency in preparation

Avoiding these mistakes significantly improves chances of success.

Final Tips to Crack CDS 2026

- Be consistent in preparation
- Practice PYQs regularly
- Give mock tests frequently
- Revise short notes often
- Focus on concept clarity rather than quantity

Success in CDS is not only about knowledge but also **discipline, planning, and smart preparation**.

Latest Defence Exam Updates 2026 (NDA & CDS)

Stay updated with the latest syllabus, answer keys, exam patterns, and important notifications for NDA & CDS 2026.

- [NDA Syllabus 2026](#)
- [NDA 1 Answer Key 2026](#)
- [CDS 1 Answer Key 2026](#)
- [15 Day CDS Preparation Strategy 2026](#)
- [15 Day NDA Preparation Strategy 2026](#)

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the best strategy to crack the CDS 2026 written exam in the first attempt?

The best strategy is to understand the syllabus, practice previous year questions, take regular mock tests, and revise short notes consistently.

2. How many months are enough to prepare for the CDS written exam?

Generally, **4-6 months of focused preparation** is sufficient to crack the CDS written exam with proper study planning.

3. Are previous year question papers important for CDS preparation?

Yes, solving **the previous 10 years CDS question papers** helps understand the exam pattern, question trends, and difficulty level.

4. How many mock tests should be attempted before the CDS exam?

Aspirants should attempt **10-15 full-length mock tests** to improve accuracy, speed, and time management.

5. Which subjects are included in the CDS written exam?

The CDS written exam includes **English, General Knowledge, and Elementary Mathematics**, while OTA candidates only appear for **English and General Knowledge**