CDS I 2026 – Eligibility, Age Limit, and Application Process Explained

Victor Growth

Introduction

The **Combined Defence Services (CDS) Examination** is one of the most sought-after defence exams conducted by the **Union Public Service Commission (UPSC)**. It offers entry into the **Indian Military Academy (IMA), Indian Naval Academy (INA), Air Force Academy (AFA), and Officer's Training Academy (OTA)**.

If you are planning to appear for **CDS I 2026**, it is important to clearly understand the **eligibility criteria, age limit, and application process** before applying. This guide will help you with all the details you need to ensure you meet the requirements and successfully complete the application process.

CDS I 2026 Eligibility Criteria

The eligibility for CDS is divided into four major aspects: **Nationality, Age & Marital Status, Educational Qualification, and Physical Standards**.

1. Nationality

Candidates must be:

- A citizen of **India**, OR
- A subject of **Nepal/Bhutan**, OR
- A Tibetan refugee who came to India before **January 1, 1962**, with the intention of permanently settling in India, OR
- A person of Indian origin who migrated from **Pakistan, Burma, Sri Lanka, or East African countries** with the intention of permanently settling in India.

□□ Candidates belonging to the last three categories must have a **certificate of eligibility** issued by the Government of India.

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2. Age Limit and Marital Status (CDS I 2026)

The **age limits differ** for each academy:

- **Indian Military Academy (IMA)**:
  - Age: **19–24 years** (Unmarried male candidates only).
- **Indian Naval Academy (INA)**:

- Age: **19–24 years** (Unmarried male candidates only).

- **Air Force Academy (AFA)**:
  - Age: **20–24 years** as of **January 1, 2027**.
  - Upper age limit is **26 years** for candidates holding a valid and current Commercial Pilot Licence (CPL).
  - Candidates must be **unmarried**.
- **Officer's Training Academy (OTA – Men)**:
  - Age: **19–25 years** (Unmarried male candidates only).
- **Officer's Training Academy (OTA – Women)**:
  - Age: **19–25 years** (Unmarried women, widows, or divorcees who have not remarried).

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3. Educational Qualification

- **IMA & OTA**: Graduation degree in any discipline from a recognized university.
- **INA**: Degree in Engineering from a recognized university or institution.
- **AFA**: Degree (with Physics and Mathematics at 10+2 level) or Bachelor of Engineering.

□□ Candidates appearing in the **final year of their degree** can also apply, provided they can submit proof of passing the exam by the time of SSB interview.

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4. Physical Standards

- Candidates must be **physically fit** as per UPSC and Ministry of Defence guidelines.
- Key requirements:
  - Good mental and physical health.
  - No physical disabilities or chronic diseases.
  - Minimum acceptable height:
    - **Men** – 157.5 cm (AFA – 162.5 cm).
    - **Women (OTA)** – 152 cm.

- Vision standards vary for each academy (corrected vision allowed).

□□ Candidates are advised to undergo a medical check-up before applying to avoid rejection at a later stage.

CDS I 2026 Application Process Explained

The **CDS I 2026 application form** will be released online on the **UPSC official website (**www.upsc.gov.in**)**. The process generally involves the following steps:

Step 1: Online Registration

- Visit the **UPSC website**.
- Click on **“Apply Online for CDS I 2026”** under the Examination tab.
- Registration is divided into **Part I and Part II**.

Step 2: Part I Registration

- Fill in personal details such as name, DOB, nationality, email ID, and mobile number.
- Select your **preferred academies** (IMA, INA, AFA, OTA).

Step 3: Part II Registration

- Pay the application fee:
  - **₹200** for General and OBC candidates.
  - **No fee** for SC/ST candidates and female applicants.
- Upload scanned copies of **passport-size photograph, signature, and photo ID proof**.

Step 4: Final Submission

- Preview the application form carefully.
- Submit and download the final application form.
- Keep a printed copy for future reference.

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CDS I 2026 Important Dates (Tentative)

- **Notification Release Date**: December 2025
- **Application Start Date**: December 2025
- **Last Date to Apply**: January 2026
- **Admit Card Release**: March 2026
- **CDS I 2026 Exam Date**: April 2026

□□ Candidates are advised to **apply early** to avoid last-minute technical issues.

Why Choose Victor Growth for CDS I 2026 Preparation?

Clearing CDS requires **strong conceptual knowledge, time management, and SSB interview preparation**. This is where **Victor Growth** plays a key role:

- **Expert faculty** specializing in CDS syllabus.
- Structured **study materials** covering English, GK, and Mathematics.
- **Mock tests** and previous year paper discussions.
- Personalized guidance for **SSB interview and physical test readiness**.
- Proven track record of successful selections in **CDS and OTA entries**.

□□ With **Victor Growth's guidance**, you can confidently prepare for CDS I 2026 and take a step closer to becoming a commissioned officer.

FAQs on CDS I 2026 Eligibility, Age Limit, and Application Process

Q1. Can final-year students apply for CDS I 2026?
Yes. Final-year students can apply, but they must submit proof of graduation before the SSB interview.

Q2. What is the age limit for OTA in CDS I 2026?
For OTA (Men and Women), the age limit is **19–25 years**.

Q3. Do women candidates have to pay the application fee for CDS I 2026?
No. Women candidates are exempted from paying the application fee.

Q4. What is the minimum percentage required in graduation for CDS I 2026?
There is **no minimum percentage requirement**. A simple graduation degree is

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sufficient.

Q5. Can married candidates apply for OTA?
No. Only **unmarried men and women** (along with widows/divorcees who haven't remarried) are eligible for OTA.

Final Note:
The **CDS I 2026 Exam** is your gateway to joining the prestigious **Indian Armed Forces**. Make sure you fulfill the eligibility requirements, stay within the age limit, and follow the application process carefully. For expert coaching, personalized guidance, and maximum success chances, join **Victor Growth – your trusted partner in defence exam preparation**.

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