CDS I 2026 Exam – How to Clear Cutoff and Secure SSB Call

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Introduction

The **Combined Defence Services (CDS) Examination**, conducted by the **Union Public Service Commission (UPSC)**, is one of the most sought-after gateways to join the **Indian Armed Forces**. Aspirants who clear the **CDS I 2026 Exam** will get the opportunity to attend the **SSB Interview** – the next crucial step toward joining IMA, INA, AFA, or OTA.

But the biggest challenge most candidates face is **clearing the written cutoff**. Thousands appear, but only a fraction manage to cross the qualifying marks and receive the **SSB call letter**.

This guide will provide you with **detailed strategies on how to clear the CDS I 2026 cutoff and secure your SSB call**, along with tips to maximize your overall performance.

CDS I 2026 Exam Cutoff – Understanding the Basics

Before preparing to beat the cutoff, it's important to understand how UPSC evaluates candidates.

CDS Cutoff Structure

1. **Sectional Cutoff**: Candidates must score at least **20% marks in each subject** (English, GK, Mathematics).

2. **Overall Cutoff**: The combined score across all sections should cross the overall cutoff marks (varies for IMA, INA, AFA, and OTA).

3. **Final Merit List**: Even after clearing the cutoff, only those who qualify the **SSB Interview + Medicals** will make it to the merit list.

Previous Year CDS Cutoff Trends (Approximate)

Academy	Written Exam Cutoff	Final Cutoff (Written + SSB)
IMA	120–130	245–260
INA	110–125	230–245
AFA	135–145	260–270
OTA	90–100	160–170

(Cutoffs vary each year depending on difficulty level and vacancies.)

How to Clear CDS I 2026 Cutoff – Section-Wise Strategy

1. English Paper Strategy

- Focus on **Grammar, Vocabulary, and Reading Comprehension**.
- Daily practice of **error spotting, synonyms-antonyms, and para-jumbles**.
- Read newspapers like *The Hindu* or *Indian Express* to improve comprehension and vocabulary.
- Target Score: **70+ out of 120**.

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2. General Knowledge (GK) Strategy

- Cover **Current Affairs of last 8–10 months** (national & international events, defence news, government schemes).
- Revise **Static GK**: Indian Polity, History, Geography, Economy, and Science.
- Use monthly compilations from sources like **GKToday or AffairsCloud**.
- Attempt **mock quizzes daily** for better recall.
- Target Score: **55+ out of 120**.

3. Mathematics Strategy (for IMA/INA/AFA Aspirants)

- Syllabus includes topics from **Class 6 to Class 10 NCERTs**.
- Prioritize **Arithmetic, Algebra, Trigonometry, Geometry, Mensuration, and Statistics**.
- Practice speed and accuracy – avoid lengthy calculations.
- Take at least **15–20 mock tests** before the exam.
- Target Score: **70+ out of 100**.

(Note: OTA candidates do not have Mathematics paper.)

Smart Strategies to Clear CDS I 2026 Cutoff

1. **Understand Exam Pattern Thoroughly**: Know which topics carry more weightage.

2. **Focus on Sectional Cutoff First**: Don’t neglect any paper; balance preparation.
3. **Solve Previous Year Papers**: Helps in understanding question trends.
4. **Take Regular Mock Tests**: Simulate exam conditions to improve time management.
5. **Revise Consistently**: Especially for GK and current affairs.
6. **Avoid Negative Marking**: Accuracy is key – don’t make blind guesses.

Securing the SSB Call After Clearing CDS Cutoff

Once you clear the cutoff, you will receive the **call letter for the SSB Interview**. To increase your chances:

- **Work on Personality Development**: SSB focuses on Officer-Like Qualities (OLQs).
- **Practice Group Discussions & PPDT**: Improve communication and quick thinking.
- **Stay Updated with Current Affairs**: Essential for lecturette and interview rounds.
- **Physical Fitness**: Maintain stamina for outdoor tasks.
- **Mock SSB Sessions**: Join a professional academy for practice.

Why Victor Growth is the Right Choice for CDS I 2026 Preparation?

While self-study and online resources are helpful, aspirants often need **structured guidance, mentorship, and expert strategies** to cross the cutoff and excel in SSB.

Here’s why **Victor Growth** is the right partner for your success:

- **Expert Faculty** for English, GK, and Mathematics.
- **Regular Mock Tests** with detailed analysis.
- **Updated Study Material** aligned with CDS 2026 syllabus.
- **SSB Interview Guidance** – from psychology tests to GTO tasks.
- **Personalized Mentorship** for working professionals and students.

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With **Victor Growth**, you don't just prepare for the written exam – you prepare for the **complete journey from CDS to SSB to final merit list**.

FAQs on CDS I 2026 Cutoff and SSB Call

Q1. What is the minimum cutoff for CDS I 2026?
The cutoff will depend on the difficulty level of the exam. Typically, it ranges between **90–100 for OTA** and **120–130 for IMA/INA**.

Q2. Is there a sectional cutoff in CDS?
Yes, candidates must score at least **20% marks in each paper** to qualify.

Q3. How many mock tests should I attempt before CDS I 2026?
At least **15–20 full-length mocks** along with **daily practice quizzes**.

Q4. Do I need coaching to clear CDS cutoff?
Not mandatory, but coaching institutes like **Victor Growth** provide structured preparation and boost chances of clearing both **written and SSB** stages.

Q5. What happens after clearing CDS cutoff?
Candidates who clear the cutoff receive an **SSB call letter** for the interview process, which includes psychology tests, group tasks, and personal interviews.

Final Word:
Clearing the **CDS I 2026 cutoff** is the first step toward achieving your dream of serving in the **Indian Armed Forces**. With smart preparation, regular mock practice, and the right guidance from **Victor Growth**, you can not only **cross the cutoff with ease** but also **ace the SSB Interview** to secure your final selection.

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