

CDS OTA Entry: Complete Guide for Short Service Commission (SSC)

The **Officers' Training Academy (OTA), Chennai**, is one of the most popular entries through the **Combined Defence Services (CDS) Examination**. It offers a prestigious opportunity to serve as a **Short Service Commission (SSC) Officer in the Indian Army**, for both **men and women**.

If you want to wear the uniform, lead troops, and serve the nation—without committing to a full lifelong military career—**CDS OTA entry is the perfect option**.

This article explains **everything about CDS OTA entry**, including **eligibility, exam pattern, selection process, training, salary, and career prospects**.

What Is CDS OTA Entry?

CDS OTA entry allows candidates to join the **Indian Army as Short Service Commissioned Officers** after clearing:

1. CDS written examination
2. SSB interview
3. Medical examination

Selected candidates undergo training at **OTA Chennai** and are commissioned as **Lieutenants** in the Indian Army.

What Is Short Service Commission (SSC)?

Short Service Commission is a **limited-period commission** that allows officers to serve in the Army for a fixed tenure.

SSC Tenure

- Initial service: **10 years**
- Extension: **4 years**
- Total maximum: **14 years**
- Option to apply for **Permanent Commission (PC)** later (subject to vacancies & merit)

CDS OTA Eligibility Criteria (2026)

Nationality

- Indian citizen
- Subjects of Nepal/Bhutan (as per UPSC rules)

Age Limit (OTA Entry)

Category	Age Range
OTA (Men & Women)	19 to 25 years

Age limits are strictly calculated as per the **official CDS 2026 notification**.

Educational Qualification

- Bachelor's degree from a **recognized university**
- No minimum percentage required
- Final-year students can apply (with proof at SSB)

CDS OTA Written Exam Pattern

OTA candidates appear for **only TWO papers**.

Paper	Marks	Duration
English	100	2 hours
General Knowledge	100	2 hours

- **Total Marks:** 200
- **Negative Marking:** -0.33 per wrong answer

OTA entry **does not include Mathematics**, making it ideal for non-math students.

CDS OTA Cut-Off (Expected Trend)

Stage	Expected Cut-Off
Written Exam	95-105 marks
Final Merit	160-170 marks

(Cut-offs vary based on paper difficulty & vacancies)

SSB Interview for OTA Entry

OTA SSB process is the **same 5-day SSB interview** conducted for other CDS entries.

SSB Stages

- **Stage I:** OIR & PPDT (Screening)
- **Stage II:**
 - Psychological Tests
 - GTO Tasks
 - Personal Interview
- **Conference & Recommendation**

OTA SSB focuses strongly on **leadership, teamwork, confidence, and OLQs**.

Medical Standards for OTA Entry

- Same medical standards as IMA (Army)
- Height: **157.5 cm (men & women)**
- Weight proportionate to height
- Vision: **6/6 or 6/9**
- Tattoos allowed only at prescribed locations

Training at Officers' Training Academy (OTA), Chennai

Training Duration

- **49 weeks (approximately 11 months)**

Training Focus

- Military drill & discipline

- Physical training & endurance
- Weapon handling
- Field craft & tactics
- Leadership development
- Officer-like qualities (OLQs)

OTA training is **shorter but extremely intense and professional.**

Life After OTA Training

After successful completion:

- Commissioned as **Lieutenant**
- Posted to units across India
- Eligible for promotions and specialised courses
- Opportunity to apply for **Permanent Commission**

Salary After OTA Commission

- **Basic Pay:** ₹56,100/month (Level 10)
- **Military Service Allowance:** ₹15,500
- Additional allowances based on posting

OTA officers receive the **same salary and respect** as Permanent Commission officers during service.

Career Growth After OTA Entry

Promotion Path

- Lieutenant

- Captain
- Major

Higher ranks possible after PC conversion or based on SSC policies.

Post-Service Opportunities

- Corporate leadership roles
- Government jobs
- Security & defence consultancy
- MBA & higher education advantages

Why Choose CDS OTA Entry?

- No Mathematics paper
- Open for both men & women
- Shorter training duration
- Same honour, rank & pay
- Option for permanent commission
- Ideal balance between service & civilian career

Common Myths About OTA Entry

- OTA officers are inferior to IMA officers
- **False** - Same rank, pay, and respect
- OTA has easy training
- **False** - Training is equally demanding
- No career growth in SSC
- **False** - Many SSC officers reach senior ranks

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Q1. Is CDS OTA only for women?

No. CDS OTA is open to **both men and women**.

Q2. Is maths required for OTA entry?

No. OTA has **only English and GK papers**.

Q3. Can OTA officers become permanent officers?

Yes. SSC officers can apply for **Permanent Commission**.

Q4. Is OTA easier than IMA?

OTA exam has fewer papers, but **SSB and training standards are the same**.

Q5. What is the service duration after OTA?

Up to **14 years**, with option for PC.

Q6. Are OTA officers eligible for pension?

Yes, after completing the **required service tenure** as per rules.

Conclusion

The **CDS OTA entry** is one of the **best pathways to become an Indian Army officer**, especially for aspirants who want leadership, adventure, and national service without a lifelong military commitment.

With **no mathematics paper, equal respect, strong career growth, and future flexibility**, OTA entry through CDS is an **excellent choice for 2026 aspirants**.

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