

# Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) About CDS 2026 Exam

The **Combined Defence Services (CDS) Examination 2026**, conducted by **UPSC**, is one of the most prestigious defence examinations in India. Every year, thousands of aspirants have common doubts regarding **eligibility, exam pattern, preparation, SSB, medical standards, salary, and career prospects**.

This article answers the **most frequently asked questions about CDS 2026**, helping aspirants make informed decisions and prepare with confidence.

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## General FAQs About CDS 2026

### 1. What is the CDS exam?

The CDS exam is a national-level examination conducted by **UPSC** for recruitment into:

- Indian Military Academy (IMA)
- Indian Naval Academy (INA)
- Air Force Academy (AFA)
- Officers' Training Academy (OTA)

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### 2. How many times is CDS conducted in a year?

The CDS exam is conducted **twice a year**:

- CDS I
- CDS II

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### 3. Who conducts the CDS 2026 exam?

The **Union Public Service Commission (UPSC)** conducts the CDS exam.

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### 4. Is CDS tougher than NDA?

Yes, CDS is generally considered **academically tougher than NDA** because:

- Graduation-level candidates appear
- Maths and GK are more analytical

- Competition is intense

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## CDS 2026 Eligibility FAQs

### 5. What is the age limit for CDS 2026?

Age limits vary according to the academy:

- **IMA:** 19-24 years
- **INA:** 19-24 years
- **AFA:** 20-24 years
- **OTA:** 19-25 years  
(Exact dates as per official notification)

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### 6. Is graduation compulsory for CDS?

Yes. Candidates must have a **graduation degree** or be in the **final year**.

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### 7. Can final-year students apply for CDS 2026?

Yes, final-year students can apply, provided they submit proof of passing before joining.

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### 8. Can women apply for CDS 2026?

Yes, women can apply for:

- **OTA (SSC - Non-Technical)**

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### 9. Is there any percentage requirement in graduation?

No, there is no minimum percentage requirement.

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## CDS 2026 Exam Pattern FAQs

### 10. What is the exam pattern for CDS 2026?

Academy	Subjects
IMA / INA / AFA	English, GK, Maths
OTA	English, GK

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### 11. What is the marking scheme in CDS?

- Correct answer: +1 mark

- Wrong answer: **Negative marking** ( $\frac{1}{3}$  mark deducted)

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## 12. Is Maths compulsory for OTA?

No. Maths is **not required** for OTA.

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## Preparation & Strategy FAQs

### 13. How many months are enough to prepare for CDS?

- Beginners: **10-12 months**
- Repeat aspirants: **4-6 months**

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### 14. Is coaching necessary to clear CDS?

No. Many candidates clear CDS with **self-study and proper planning**.

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### 15. Are previous year question papers important?

Yes. PYQs are **one of the most important resources** for CDS preparation.

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### 16. How many hours should I study daily for CDS 2026?

- Working professionals: 3-4 hours
- Full-time aspirants: 5-6 hours

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## SSB Interview FAQs

### 17. What is the SSB interview?

The **Services Selection Board (SSB)** interview is a **5-day personality and leadership assessment**.

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### 18. How many days is the SSB interview conducted?

SSB interview is conducted over **5 days**:

- Stage I: Screening
- Stage II: Psychological tests, GTO, Interview, Conference

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### 19. Is SSB tougher than the written exam?

Yes. The SSB tests **personality, leadership, and officer-like qualities**, not bookish knowledge.

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## 20. Can SSB be cleared without coaching?

Yes. Self-awareness, practice, and natural personality development are key.

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## Medical & Physical Standards FAQs

### 21. Are spectacles allowed in CDS medical?

Yes, but within **specified vision limits**.

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### 22. Is height and weight important for CDS?

Yes. Candidates must meet **minimum height and weight standards** as per academy norms.

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### 23. Can tattoos lead to rejection?

Tattoos are allowed **only on permitted body parts** as per defence guidelines.

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## Salary & Career FAQs

### 24. What is the starting salary after clearing CDS?

The starting salary is approximately **₹56,100 per month (Level 10)** plus allowances.

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### 25. Is CDS a permanent job?

- **IMA, INA, AFA:** Permanent Commission
  - **OTA:** Short Service Commission (10-14 years)
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### 26. What is the rank after training?

Candidates are commissioned as **Lieutenant / Sub-Lieutenant / Flying Officer**.

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## Attempt, Cut-off & Competition FAQs

### 27. How many attempts are allowed for CDS?

There is **no attempt limit**, only **age limit** applies.

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### 28. What is the expected cut-off for CDS 2026?

Cut-off varies by academy but generally ranges between **100-120 marks** per subject

(written).

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## 29. Is CDS very competitive?

Yes. Lakhs of candidates apply, but **smart preparation increases success chances**.

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## Frequently Asked Questions (Quick FAQ Section)

### Q1. Can I clear CDS 2026 in first attempt?

Yes, with disciplined preparation and practice.

### Q2. Is current affairs important for CDS GK?

Yes, especially the **last 8-10 months**.

### Q3. Is NCC certificate helpful in CDS?

Helpful for confidence, but **no direct marks advantage**.

### Q4. Can arts students clear CDS?

Yes, especially for **OTA entry**.

### Q5. Is CDS worth preparing for?

Absolutely. CDS offers **prestige, salary, leadership, and a respected career**.

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## Conclusion

The **CDS 2026 exam** is not just an examination—it is a **gateway to a life of honour, discipline, and leadership**. Most doubts about CDS revolve around **eligibility, preparation time, SSB, and career prospects**, and understanding these early can save months of confusion.

If you're clear about the process and consistent with preparation, **clearing CDS 2026 is completely achievable**.

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