

How to Clear CDS Written Exam in First Attempt

Clearing the **CDS (Combined Defence Services) written exam in the first attempt** is a dream for many defence aspirants—and it is absolutely achievable with the **right strategy, disciplined preparation, and smart practice**. Every year, thousands of candidates appear for CDS, but only a small percentage qualify for the **SSB interview**.

This article provides a **step-by-step, exam-oriented, and realistic preparation guide** to help you **clear CDS written exam in your very first attempt**.

Understand CDS Written Exam Pattern First

Before starting preparation, it is essential to clearly understand the **CDS exam structure**.

CDS Exam Pattern

For IMA, INA & AFA

Subject	Marks	Duration
English	100	2 hours
General Knowledge	100	2 hours
Mathematics	100	2 hours
Total	300	

For OTA

Subject	Marks
English	100
General Knowledge	100
Total	200

- Negative marking: **1/3rd marks deducted**
- Questions: **Objective type**

Know the CDS Cut-Off Trend

To clear CDS in the first attempt, aim **well above the cut-off**, not just around it.

Academy	Safe Score (Written)
IMA	125-135
INA	115-125
AFA	140-150
OTA	95-105

Targeting **10-15 marks above cut-off** increases selection chances

significantly.

Step-by-Step Strategy to Clear CDS in First Attempt

Step 1: Analyse CDS Syllabus & Weightage

Focus more on **high-scoring and frequently asked topics**.

English - High Weight Topics

- Spotting Errors
- Fill in the Blanks
- Synonyms & Antonyms
- Idioms & Phrases
- Reading Comprehension

GK - High Weight Topics

- Current Affairs (Last 6-8 months)
- History (Modern India)
- Geography (India-focused)
- Polity (Constitution basics)
- Defence & Awards
- Science (Class 6-10 level)

Mathematics - High Weight Topics

- Arithmetic (Profit & Loss, Ratio, Time & Work)
- Algebra
- Trigonometry
- Mensuration
- Geometry

Step 2: Create a Smart 3-4 Month Study Plan

Daily Study Time (Ideal)

- Weekdays: **4-5 hours**
- Weekends: **6-8 hours**

Suggested Time Allocation

Subject	Daily Time
Mathematics	1.5-2 hrs
GK	1.5 hrs
English	1-1.5 hrs
Revision & Practice	1 hr

Step 3: Subject-Wise Preparation Strategy

English Preparation Strategy

- Learn **15-20 new words daily**
- Practice **previous year questions**
- Read **editorials daily** (The Hindu / Indian Express)
- Focus on **accuracy over attempts**

First Attempt Target: 60-70 marks

General Knowledge Preparation Strategy

- Read one **standard GK book**
- Follow **monthly current affairs**
- Revise static GK repeatedly
- Practice **PYQs to understand UPSC trend**

First Attempt Target: 50-60 marks

Mathematics Preparation Strategy

- Master **basic formulas**

- Focus on **speed & accuracy**
- Practice **topic-wise PYQs**
- Attempt mock tests regularly

First Attempt Target: 55–65 marks

Step 4: Solve Previous Year Question Papers (Must-Do)

Solving **CDS previous year papers** is the **most important step** for first-attempt success.

Benefits

- Understand real exam difficulty
- Identify repeated questions
- Improve time management
- Reduce exam fear

Solve **at least last 10 years' papers**.

Step 5: Mock Test Strategy

How Many Mocks?

- Full-length mocks: **15-20**
- Sectional tests: **Unlimited**

Golden Rules

- Analyse every mock test
- Identify weak areas
- Avoid blind guessing
- Improve accuracy gradually

Step 6: Smart Attempt Strategy in Exam Hall

Ideal Attempts (Safe Zone)

Subject	Attempts
English	70-75
GK	65-70
Maths	60-65

- Avoid excessive negative marking
- Attempt only **sure-shot questions**
- Keep **last 10 minutes for review**

Step 7: Last 30 Days Revision Plan

- Revise formulas daily
- Read current affairs notes
- Solve 2-3 full mocks per week
- Focus on weak topics only
- Sleep well & stay calm

Common Mistakes to Avoid

- Ignoring GK current affairs
- Over-attempting in exam
- Skipping previous year papers
- Studying too many books
- Not analysing mock tests

Can Average Students Clear CDS in First Attempt?

Yes, absolutely.

CDS does not require extraordinary intelligence—it requires:

- Consistency

- Smart planning
- Repeated revision
- Exam-oriented approach

Many first-attempt toppers were **average students** with disciplined preparation.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Q1. Is it possible to clear CDS in first attempt?

Yes, thousands of candidates clear CDS in their first attempt every year with proper strategy.

Q2. How many months are enough for CDS preparation?

3-4 months of focused preparation is sufficient.

Q3. Is coaching necessary to clear CDS?

No. Self-study with the right resources is enough.

Q4. How important are previous year papers for CDS?

Extremely important—they define the exam trend.

Q5. What should be the minimum safe score in CDS written exam?

Aim for **130+** for IMA and **100+** for OTA.

Q6. Can non-math students clear CDS?

Yes, with strong basics and consistent practice.

Final Words

Clearing the **CDS written exam in the first attempt** is not about studying everything—it's about **studying the right things in the right way**. Focus on fundamentals, practice previous year questions, stay consistent, and trust your preparation.

With discipline and smart planning, **your first attempt can be your successful attempt** ☺☺☺

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