How to Prepare for CDS 2026 from Scratch: Step-by-Step Strategy

Victor Growth

Preparing for the **Combined Defence Services (CDS) Examination 2026** from scratch may seem challenging, but with the **right strategy, disciplined routine, and clear understanding of the exam**, cracking CDS is absolutely achievable—even for beginners.

This complete guide explains **how to start CDS preparation from zero**, covering **study planning, subject-wise strategy, daily routine, mock tests, fitness, and SSB readiness**, all explained step by step.

□□ Understanding CDS 2026 – First Step Before Preparation

Before starting preparation, you must clearly understand **what CDS demands**.

CDS 2026 Exam Stages

1. **Written Examination**
    - English
    - General Knowledge (GK)
    - Mathematics (Not for OTA)
2. **SSB Interview**
3. **Medical Examination**
4. **Final Merit List**

□□**OTA candidates:** English + GK only
□□**IMA / INA / AFA candidates:** English + GK + Maths

□□ STEP 1: Set Your Target & Choose the Right Academy

Start by deciding:

- Which academy you are aiming for (IMA / INA / AFA / OTA)
- Which CDS attempt (CDS-I or CDS-II 2026)

Why this matters

- Maths is required only for IMA/INA/AFA
- OTA preparation is English + GK focused
- Your strategy depends on the academy choice

□□ STEP 2: Create a Realistic CDS 2026 Study Plan

Ideal Preparation Duration

- **Beginners:** 8–10 months
- **Intermediate level:** 6 months
- **Revision focused:** 3–4 months

Daily Study Time

- Minimum: **4–5 hours**
- Ideal: **6–8 hours**

Sample Daily Schedule

- English: 1.5 hours
- GK / Current Affairs: 2 hours
- Maths (if applicable): 2 hours
- Revision + Practice: 1 hour

□□ STEP 3: Master the CDS Syllabus (Very Important)

Never study blindly. Stick **strictly to the CDS syllabus**.

Subjects in CDS 2026

- **English:** Grammar, vocabulary, comprehension
- **GK:** History, Geography, Polity, Economy, Science, Current Affairs
- **Maths:** Arithmetic, Algebra, Geometry, Trigonometry, Statistics

Victor Growth

□□ Print the syllabus and keep it in front of your study table.

□□ STEP 4: Subject-Wise Preparation Strategy

□□ English Preparation Strategy

Focus Areas

- Grammar rules
- Vocabulary
- Reading comprehension

How to Start from Scratch

- Learn basic grammar concepts first
- Read newspapers daily
- Practice error spotting & comprehension regularly

Daily Task

- 20 new words
- 1 grammar topic
- 2 comprehension passages

□□ General Knowledge (GK) Preparation Strategy

GK is the **most scoring yet tricky** section.

Divide GK into Two Parts

1. **Static GK**
    - History
    - Geography
    - Polity
    - Economy

Victor Growth

- Science

2. **Current Affairs**
    - National & international news
    - Defence news
    - Awards, sports, appointments

How to Prepare

- Static GK: Concept clarity + revision
- Current Affairs: Daily + monthly revision

□□ Defence-related current affairs are very important for CDS.

Victor Growth

□ Mathematics Preparation Strategy (IMA/INA/AFA)

Level: Class 10+2

How to Start from Zero

- Begin with Arithmetic (easiest & scoring)
- Learn formulas properly
- Practice daily to improve speed

Priority Order

1. Arithmetic
2. Algebra
3. Trigonometry
4. Geometry & Mensuration
5. Statistics

□□ Accuracy is more important than attempts due to negative marking.

□□ STEP 5: Smart Study Techniques for CDS 2026

✔ Use **short notes** for revision
✔ Revise weekly & monthly
✔ Focus on accuracy, not guesswork
✔ Practice topic-wise questions
✔ Analyze mistakes regularly

□□ STEP 6: Practice Previous Year Question Papers

This is **non-negotiable**.

Why PYQs Are Important

- Understand exam trend
- Know difficulty level
- Identify important topics
- Improve time management

□□ Solve at least **10–15 years of CDS papers**.

□ STEP 7: Mock Tests & Time Management

When to Start Mock Tests

- After completing 60–70% syllabus

Mock Test Strategy

- Start with subject-wise tests
- Then full-length mocks
- Analyze every test deeply

□□ Mock tests convert preparation into performance.

□□ STEP 8: Physical Fitness & SSB Preparation (Start Early)

Many candidates fail **after written exam** due to poor fitness or SSB preparation.

Daily Fitness Routine

- Running (2–4 km)

Victor Growth

- Push-ups & sit-ups
- Stretching & flexibility exercises

SSB Preparation Basics

- Improve communication skills
- Build confidence
- Practice logical reasoning
- Develop officer-like qualities (OLQs)

⚠ STEP 9: Avoid Common Mistakes

 Ignoring Maths till the end
 Studying without syllabus
 Skipping revision
 No mock test practice
 Neglecting fitness

□□ STEP 10: Last 2 Months Revision Strategy

- Revise short notes daily
- Practice mock tests every 2–3 days
- Focus on weak areas
- Avoid new topics
- Maintain health & sleep cycle

□□ CDS 2026 Preparation Summary

✔ Clear goal & academy selection
✔ Strong syllabus understanding
✔ Consistent daily study
✔ Regular revision & mocks
✔ Physical + mental fitness

□ Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Q1. Can I crack CDS 2026 starting from scratch?

Victor Growth

Yes, with disciplined preparation, proper strategy, and consistency, beginners can crack CDS.

Q2. How many hours should I study daily for CDS?

Ideally **6–8 hours**, but even 4–5 focused hours are sufficient if consistent.

Q3. Is coaching necessary for CDS preparation?

No, self-study with the right resources and practice is enough.

Q4. Which subject is most important in CDS?

All subjects are equally important. For OTA, English & GK are crucial.

Q5. When should I start SSB preparation?

Start basic SSB and fitness preparation **alongside written exam prep**.

Q6. How many mock tests should I attempt?

At least **20–30 full-length mock tests** before the exam.

Q7. Is CDS tougher than NDA?

CDS is slightly tougher academically but easier physically compared to NDA.

□□ Final Words

Preparing for **CDS 2026 from scratch** requires clarity, consistency, and commitment. If you follow this **step-by-step strategy**, stay disciplined, and believe in yourself, cracking CDS and becoming an officer in the Indian Armed Forces is well within your reach.

Facebook

Instagram

Youtube

Victor Growth