

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

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.

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## ☐☐ 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

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## ☐☐ 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

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## ☐☐ **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

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## ☐☐ **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

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

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## ☐☐ **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

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## ☐☐ **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

- 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.

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## ☐ **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.

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## ☐☐ **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

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## ☐☐ **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**.

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## ☐ **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.

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## ☐☐ **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)

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

## **SSB Preparation Basics**

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

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## **⚠ STEP 9: Avoid Common Mistakes**

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

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## **☐☐ 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

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## **☐☐ CDS 2026 Preparation Summary**

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

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## **☐ Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

**Q1. Can I crack CDS 2026 starting from scratch?**

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.

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## **□□ 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.

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