Life After Clearing CDS: Training at IMA, OTA, INA & AFA

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Clearing the **Combined Defence Services (CDS) Examination** is a life-changing milestone. Once you clear the **written exam, SSB interview, and medical examination**, you officially begin your journey as a **Gentleman Cadet / Officer Cadet** in one of India's prestigious defence academies.

Life after CDS is **disciplined, challenging, transformative, and deeply rewarding**. This article explains **what happens after CDS selection**, including **training life at IMA, OTA, INA, and AFA**, daily routines, challenges, and career outcomes.

What Happens After Clearing CDS?

After final merit list selection:

1. You receive a **joining letter**
2. You report to your allotted academy
3. You undergo **rigorous pre-commission training**
4. You are commissioned as an **officer in the Indian Armed Forces**

Academies After CDS Selection

Academy	Service	Training Duration
IMA (Indian Military Academy)	Indian Army (Permanent Commission)	18 months
OTA (Officers' Training Academy)	Indian Army (Short Service Commission)	49 weeks
INA (Indian Naval Academy)	Indian Navy	~22 months
AFA (Air Force Academy)	Indian Air Force	~18–24 months

Life at Indian Military Academy (IMA), Dehradun

IMA trains officers for **Permanent Commission in the Indian Army**.

Training Structure at IMA

- Military tactics & warfare
- Physical training & endurance
- Weapon handling & firing

- Field craft & battle drills
- Leadership & command training
- Discipline, ethics & military law

Daily Routine at IMA

- Morning PT & drill
- Classroom lectures
- Weapon training
- Field exercises
- Evening sports
- Study hours & lights out

Key Highlights

- Extremely high discipline
- Focus on leadership under pressure
- Regular outdoor camps & exercises
- Final **Passing Out Parade (POP)**

Life at IMA transforms civilians into **battle-ready Army officers**.

Life at Officers' Training Academy (OTA), Chennai

OTA trains officers for **Short Service Commission (SSC)** in the Army.

Training Structure at OTA

- Military basics & drill
- Physical fitness
- Tactical training

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- Personality development
- Leadership & teamwork
- Military ethics

Duration

- 49 weeks (shorter but equally intensive)

Key Highlights

- Mixed training (men & women)
- Fast-paced schedule
- Strong emphasis on OLQs
- Opportunities to convert SSC to PC later

OTA training is compact, intense, and leadership-oriented.

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Life at Indian Naval Academy (INA), Ezhimala

INA prepares officers for the **Indian Navy**.

Training Structure at INA

- Seamanship & navigation
- Naval warfare
- Physical conditioning
- Swimming & water survival
- Leadership at sea
- Academic & technical subjects

Unique Aspects

- Sea training onboard ships
- Water-based drills
- Strict discipline & precision
- Joint training with Naval & Coast Guard cadets

INA develops officers who can **lead at sea under extreme conditions**.

Life at Air Force Academy (AFA), Dundigal

AFA trains officers for the **Indian Air Force**.

Training Structure at AFA

- Flying training (for Flying Branch)
- Aeronautical & technical studies
- Physical conditioning
- Ground duties training
- Military discipline
- Leadership development

Branches Trained

- Flying Branch
- Ground Duty (Technical & Non-Technical)

Key Highlights

- High physical & mental standards
- Strict medical fitness maintenance
- Advanced simulators & flying exposure
- Prestige of Air Force commissioning

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AFA creates officers who command the **skies with precision and responsibility**.

Common Challenges During Training

- Physical exhaustion
- Strict discipline
- Time pressure
- Homesickness
- Mental resilience tests

Those who adapt quickly emerge as **stronger leaders**.

Life Skills You Gain After CDS Training

- Leadership & command ability
- Decision-making under stress
- Confidence & discipline
- Physical fitness
- Emotional resilience
- Team spirit & integrity

Stipend During Training

All CDS cadets receive a **monthly stipend** during training:

- **₹56,100 per month (Level 10 Pay Matrix)**

Commissioning After Training

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After successful completion:

- You are commissioned as:
    - **Lieutenant (Army)**
    - **Sub-Lieutenant (Navy)**
    - **Flying Officer (Air Force)**
- You take the **oath of allegiance**
- Official posting to units/squadrons/ships

Career Growth After CDS

- Promotions based on time & performance
- Opportunities for:
    - Higher ranks
    - Specialised courses
    - Foreign postings
    - Defence services staff roles

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Q1. Is training life very tough after CDS?

Yes, it is demanding but designed to build officers, not break them.

Q2. Do cadets get leave during training?

Yes, limited leaves are granted during term breaks.

Q3. Can someone quit training after joining?

Yes, but it may involve **bond conditions** and recovery of costs.

Q4. Is OTA training easier than IMA?

No. OTA training is shorter but equally intense.

Q5. Are women trained at IMA?

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No. Women officers are trained at **OTA Chennai**.

Q6. What happens if someone fails during training?

They may be:

- Back-termed
- Re-trained
- Or discharged depending on performance

Conclusion

Life after clearing **CDS** is not just about a uniform—it is about **responsibility, honour, leadership, and service to the nation**. Training at **IMA, OTA, INA, or AFA** reshapes your mindset, body, and character.

If you are determined, disciplined, and passionate, **life after CDS will be the most fulfilling chapter of your life**.

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