

UPSC Optional Subjects

Complete List and Marks Distribution

The UPSC Civil Services Examination (CSE) is one of the toughest exams in India, and selecting the right optional subject for the **Mains Exam** plays a crucial role in a candidate's success. The **UPSC Mains** consists of **9 papers**, out of which **2 papers (Paper VI & VII) are based on the optional subject**, making it a **total of 500 marks** (250 marks each).

Thus, choosing the right optional subject can significantly impact your overall score and final ranking.

Marks Distribution in UPSC Mains

The **UPSC Mains** examination consists of the following papers:

Paper	Subject	Marks	Type
Paper I	Essay	250	Merit-Based
Paper II	General Studies I (History, Geography, Society)	250	Merit-Based
Paper III	General Studies II (Polity, Governance, IR)	250	Merit-Based
Paper IV	General Studies III (Economy, Environment, Science & Tech)	250	Merit-Based
Paper V	General Studies IV (Ethics, Integrity, Aptitude)	250	Merit-Based
Paper VI	Optional Subject Paper 1	250	Merit-Based
Paper VII	Optional Subject Paper 2	250	Merit-Based
Paper VIII	Indian Language (Qualifying)	300	Qualifying
Paper IX	English (Qualifying)	300	Qualifying

- The **Optional Subject** contributes **500 marks**, which can be a game-changer in determining the final rank.
- The **qualifying language papers** do not count towards merit ranking but must be cleared.

List of UPSC Optional Subjects

UPSC offers a total of **48 optional subjects**, categorized into **26 Literature subjects** and **22 other optional subjects**.

List of 22 Optional Subjects (Non-Literature)

1. **Agriculture**
2. **Animal Husbandry & Veterinary Science**
3. **Anthropology**
4. **Botany**
5. **Chemistry**
6. **Civil Engineering**
7. **Commerce & Accountancy**
8. **Economics**
9. **Electrical Engineering**
10. **Geography**
11. **Geology**
12. **History**
13. **Law**
14. **Management**
15. **Mathematics**
16. **Mechanical Engineering**
17. **Medical Science**
18. **Philosophy**
19. **Physics**
20. **Political Science & International Relations (PSIR)**
21. **Psychology**
22. **Public Administration**

List of 26 Literature Optional Subjects

Candidates can choose literature as an optional subject, even if they have not studied it academically. The available literature subjects are:

1. Assamese
2. Bengali
3. Bodo
4. Dogri
5. Gujarati
6. Hindi
7. Kannada
8. Kashmiri
9. Konkani
10. Maithili
11. Malayalam
12. Manipuri

13. Marathi
14. Nepali
15. Odia
16. Punjabi
17. Sanskrit
18. Santali
19. Sindhi
20. Tamil
21. Telugu
22. Urdu
23. English
24. Marathi
25. Mizo
26. Hindi

How to Choose the Right Optional Subject?

Selecting an optional subject should be based on the following factors:

1. **Interest & Background:** Choose a subject that genuinely interests you and aligns with your academic background or previous knowledge.
2. **Availability of Study Material:** Ensure that books, coaching, and notes are available for the subject.
3. **Scoring Trend & Overlap with General Studies:** Subjects like **Public Administration, PSIR, History, Geography, and Sociology** have a high overlap with **General Studies**, making them popular choices.
4. **Complexity Level:** Technical subjects like **Mathematics, Engineering, and Science subjects** require in-depth conceptual clarity.
5. **Previous Year's Performance:** Analyzing past trends and toppers' choices can help in decision-making.

Most Popular UPSC Optional Subjects

Based on past trends and toppers' selections, the following are some of the most preferred optional subjects:

- **Political Science & International Relations (PSIR)**
- **Public Administration**
- **Geography**
- **History**
- **Anthropology**
- **Sociology**
- **Philosophy**

Final Thoughts

Since the optional subject carries **500 marks**, choosing the right one is crucial for success in the UPSC Civil Services Examination. Analyze your strengths, weaknesses, and interest before making a decision. Consistent practice, revision, and answer-writing skills will help maximize your score in the optional paper.

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