

UPSC NDA & NA Syllabus 2026

Union Public Service Commission — National Defence Academy & Naval Academy Examination

Vacancies	Announced twice yearly (NDA I & NDA II) for Army, Navy and Air Force wings
Age Limit	16.5–19.5 years, unmarried (as on the first day of the course); passed or appearing in Class 12
Qualification	Class 12 pass (Physics & Mathematics required for Air Force/Navy wings); Class 12 appearing candidates may apply
Application Fee	■200 (General/OBC male candidates). Women and SC/ST candidates are exempted.
Official Website	upsc.gov.in
Last Reviewed	27 Jun 2026

Overview

UPSC NDA & NA is the entry point for 12th-pass candidates into the National Defence Academy (Army, Navy and Air Force wings) and the Indian Naval Academy, and is conducted twice yearly. It's one of the youngest-entry competitive exams in the country, open to candidates as young as 16.5 years, which means preparation typically overlaps directly with Class 11–12 board studies. The written exam is split into Mathematics and a combined General Ability Test, followed by the SSB interview process and a rigorous medical examination — since successful candidates go on to a three-year joint training programme before specialising by service.

What's New in the 2026 Cycle

- Two annual cycles — NDA I and NDA II — each with a separate notification, written exam and SSB.
- Physics and Mathematics at Class 12 level are mandatory for Air Force and Navy wing applicants, unlike the Army wing.
- Mathematics carries equal weight (300 marks) to the General Ability Test's English section, making it a high-leverage subject to master early.
- SSB process and medical standards are especially stringent given the age and long training commitment involved.

Exam Pattern

Written Exam

Mode: Offline, objective MCQ | Duration: 2.5 hours per paper (2 papers)

Section	Questions	Marks
Mathematics	120	300
General Ability Test (English + General Knowledge)	150	600

Negative marking: 1/3rd mark deducted per wrong answer | **Nature:** Merit-determining; candidates must also clear the SSB.

SSB Interview (Stage I & Stage II)

Mode: Screening test, Psychological tests, GTO tasks, Personal Interview, Conference | Duration: 5 days

Section	Questions	Marks
Officer Potentiality Assessment	—	900

Negative marking: Not applicable | **Nature:** Counted for final merit alongside the written exam.

UPSC NDA & NA — Detailed Subject-Wise Syllabus

Mathematics

Carries equal weight to the entire General Ability Test — mastering the Class 11–12 syllabus early pays off across both papers.

- Algebra — sets, quadratic equations, binomial theorem, logarithms
- Matrices & determinants
- Trigonometry — ratios, identities, heights & distances
- Analytical geometry — 2D & 3D
- Differential calculus, integral calculus & differential equations
- Vector algebra
- Statistics & probability

General Ability Test — English

Tests foundational grammar and comprehension — a strong vocabulary habit built over months beats last-minute cramming.

- Grammar & usage
- Vocabulary
- Comprehension
- Cohesion & sentence structure

General Ability Test — General Knowledge

Broad but shallow — a wide-but-light revision approach across all subjects works better than deep specialisation in one.

- Physics — Class 11–12 level fundamentals
- Chemistry — Class 11–12 level fundamentals
- General science — biology, environment
- History, freedom movement & civics
- Geography — physical, Indian & world
- Current events — national & international

SSB — Psychological & Group Testing

Given the young age of most candidates, building basic fitness, teamwork and communication skills early makes a real difference here.

- Officer Intelligence Rating test (screening)
- Picture Perception & Discussion Test
- Thematic Apperception Test, Word Association Test, Situation Reaction Test
- Group Discussion, Group Planning Exercise & Progressive Group Tasks
- Command Task & Individual Obstacles
- Personal Interview & Conference

Selection Process

- 1 Written Examination — Mathematics and General Ability Test.
- 2 SSB Interview — Screening (Stage I), then Psychological Tests, GTO tasks & Personal Interview (Stage II).
- 3 Medical Examination by a Board of service medical officers.
- 4 Final merit list based on combined written and SSB marks, subject to medical fitness.

Salary & Job Profile

NDA cadets receive a stipend during training; on commissioning after the Academy programme, officers start at Pay Level 10 (■56,100 basic) plus Military Service Pay and applicable allowances, consistent with entry-level officer pay across the armed forces.

Best Books for Preparation

- Pathfinder NDA & NA Entrance Examination — Arihant Experts
- NCERT Mathematics (Class 11 & 12)
- Objective General English — S.P. Bakshi (Arihant)
- Manorama Yearbook (for General Knowledge & current affairs)

Previous Cut-off Trends (Approximate)

NDA written exam cut-offs typically vary between the two annual cycles (NDA I/II) and shift with paper difficulty and the number of vacancies for each wing. As with CDS, SSB selection is highly competitive beyond the written cut-off — always check UPSC's official cut-off release for the exact figures.

Preparation Tips

- Since Mathematics and GK carry roughly equal total weight, don't let board-exam Maths revision crowd out GK — build both in parallel from Class 11 itself.
- Read age-appropriate current affairs weekly; NDA's GK leans toward broad awareness rather than depth on any single subject.
- Begin basic physical training early — running, swimming and general fitness — since SSB tasks and the medical standard are demanding for this age group.
- Attempt previous years' papers under strict timing; the sheer volume of questions (270 across both papers) makes speed as important as accuracy.

Exam Day Guidelines

- Carry the e-Admit Card and a valid original photo ID — parents/guardians often need to accompany minors to the centre per local rules.
- Only black ballpoint pens are permitted for the OMR sheet — carry spares.
- Arrive well before reporting time; gate-closing rules are strictly enforced.
- No electronic devices, including calculators, are allowed inside the exam hall — all Maths must be done by hand.
- For SSB, carry original school/board certificates, photographs and your call letter as specified.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the minimum age for NDA?

Candidates must be between 16.5 and 19.5 years of age as on the first day of the course they're joining, and unmarried.

Is Physics and Maths compulsory for NDA Army wing too?

Physics and Mathematics at Class 12 level are compulsory for the Air Force and Navy wings; the Army wing has more flexible stream requirements, but Mathematics is still tested in the written exam for all wings.

How many times a year is NDA conducted?

Twice — NDA I and NDA II — each with its own notification, written exam and SSB process.

Is there negative marking in the NDA written exam?

Yes, 1/3rd of the marks allotted to a question is deducted for every wrong answer, in both the Mathematics and General Ability Test papers.

What happens after the NDA written exam?

Qualifying candidates are called for the 5-day SSB interview process, and final selection is based on combined written and SSB marks, subject to clearing the medical examination.

Compiled and reviewed by Syllabus Hub against the official Union Public Service Commission notification as of 27 Jun 2026. Exam patterns, vacancies and dates are subject to change — always cross-check with the official notification at upsc.gov.in before applying. © 2026 Syllabus Hub.