

CAREER IN ARMED FORCES

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"We sleep soundly in our beds because rough men stand ready in the night to visit violence on those who would do us harm"

- George Orwell

The Armed Forces are the backbone of a country and our valiant men and women in uniform stand tall and walk proud knowing that they will spend their lives in service of their motherland. When you are truly motivated to serve, you will do whatever in your power to prepare yourself, whether it is your belief in freedom for all or desire to uphold the dignity of home & hearth, you will one day embody that belief in the uniform you choose to wear.

One of the means of enlisting in the tri services is the Combined Defence Services Examinations (CDS) which is conducted twice a year by Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) for recruitment into the Indian Military Academy, Officers Training Academy, Indian Naval Academy and Indian Air Force Academy. The notification for the examination is usually released in the months of October and June, and the exams are



conducted in February and November respectively. Only unmarried graduates are eligible to sit for the exam.

The age limits for enrolling varies from one training academy to another. For Indian Military Academy (IMA) 19 - 24 years, for Air Force Academy (AFA) 19 - 24 years, for Indian Naval Academy (INA) 19 - 24 years and for Officers Training Academy (OTA) 19 - 25 years.

The CDS exam syllabus consists of an English, a GK and a Maths paper - all 100 marks each for the entry into IMA, AFA & INA. However, for the OTA, the

Maths portion is omitted. All the questions are of objective type.

TGC Scheme for Army

TGC entry also known as **Technical Graduate Course** entry. It is a type of entry through which a male engineering graduate can join the Indian Army as an officer. TGC entry is, specifically, for engineers. Students can apply for it from final year onward. Every year Indian Army invites applications for TGC entry for the course at IMA, Dehradun. TGC is notified by Additional Directorate General Recruiting / AG branch in May/June and Nov/Dec. Age eligibility criteria for TGC entry is 20 and 27 years and education qualifications are BE/B Tech. final appearing & degree holders in notified streams of engineers.

Candidates in this scheme go for same technical work in the Indian Army and the training period is one year. After applying for TGC online, candidates must wait for the Army to declare the list of shortlisted candidates based on degree percentage. Following this, one must wait

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for the call letter for direct SSB interview & then attend the 5 day SSB interview process. Upon recommendation, one must attend the medical exam and then wait for the all India merit list of TGC. Once declared medically fit, candidate joins IMA.

TGC scheme for Indian Air Force

This scheme allows a candidate to join the Technical department of Air Force under permanent commission. One must be a B-Tech. graduate from the Electronics or Mechanical branch only from a recognized university and should have scored a minimum aggregate of 60% in graduation.

The physical standards mandate that one must not have any disability, heart disease or that of blood vessels but must have a minimum chest expansion of 5 cm, normal hearing & vision.

The selection procedure involves short listing, AFSB (Air Force Selection Board) interview, medical exam & a fitness test before final candidature is announced.

The TGC scheme for Indian Navy meets the same standards and has the same selection procedure as that for the TGC Army.

How to prepare for the Combined Defence Services exam:

It's a jungle out there with competition sky rocketing and cut-offs going higher each year. The key to success in a competitive exam such as Combined Defence Services is to ensconce yourself in a regimented

time-table for a few months prior to the exam. Success in the Combined Defence Services exam rests on the three pillars of English, General Knowledge and Mathematics for entry into IMA, NA and AFA. Maximum marks are 300 for the aforementioned and 200 for OTA due to the exclusion of Mathematics from the paper. There are 120 questions for English and general knowledge and 100 for the mathematics portion. Each portion is scored out of a total of 100 marks. Negative marking in the exam is to the effect of 1/3rd or 0.33. The emphasis should be on accurately answering the questions as well as on effective time - management. Students should first attempt the questions of which they are sure and try to minimize guesswork.

The English paper mandates that the candidate must have a good command over concepts of grammar and a fairly decent vocabulary. Since mastery over these cannot be achieved overnight, preparation must be planned over a few months. Books by Thorpe & Thorpe and General English by A.K. Bhardwaj are good for concept clarity & practice. The importance of Wren & Martin for grammar cannot be stressed enough. For Mathematics, books on quantitative Aptitude by and those authored for CAT preparation are excellent tools for preparation. For General Studies and Humanities, students are advised to read NCERT books for classes VIII to XII thoroughly as they are incomparable, vast store houses of knowledge.

For all the subjects, it is imperative that

a student solves previous year papers for at least the last ten years if not more as this will acquaint the student with the paper pattern and ease his/her mind while attempting the actual Exam.

A strong grasp of General Knowledge and that of Current Affairs is an instrumental part of success in the CDSE. The best way to prepare is to read an esteemed newspaper daily to stay abreast of national and international events of significance. Alongside, books and magazines like Competition Success Review, Manorama, India Yearbook, Pratiyogita Darpan etc. are invaluable assets to a CDSE aspirant.

For extra help and a nudge in the right direction, one may join one of the private Academies for preparation of CDS exam.

SSB is the Personality and Intelligence Interview spread over 5 days which scientifically analyses each candidate's potential and compatibility for commission into the Armed Forces of India. The exercise is mainly a psychological evaluation of the personality of the candidate to gauge his/her potential as a future officer in the Indian Armed Forces. The tests conducted by the SSB aim at selecting individuals with officer like qualities (OLQ's).

The selection system is designed over a five day process. Day 1 is the screening test, Day 2 is the psychological test, Day 3 and 4 involve group tasks and Day 5 is the conference. The personal interview is conducted on either day 2, 3, or 4.

A career in defence has a lot to offer, but it takes dedication and work. The perks are

endless - there is rock solid job security, there are no pay cuts and only increments throughout life. If you are a freshly passed out and commissioned officer in the Armed forces, you will make about Rs. 42000 per month. Other allowances vary between Rs 6000 and Rs 16000 plus DA of 60% is given. Facilities like free schooling for children, free medical facilities to dependents, canteen facilities, official vehicle for senior Officers, loan facilities for Officers, excellent accommodation wherever you are posted are icing on the cake. Facilities like swimming pool, tennis courts, squash courts etc are part of your accommodation. A healthy lifestyle is ensured because physical fitness is given utmost priority. On retirement, apart from the handsome amount that you will receive, you will get a pension throughout your life. Today, an officer with 22 years of service after retirement will get a pension of approximately Rs. 30,000 per month. Hence, a second innings post retirement is very probable and equally attractive. Moreover, one develops a tolerance to pain and tedium which holds one in good stead all through life.

One must realize that a career in the Armed Forces is the privilege of a few. It is not merely a job - it is a noble profession that you will always treasure having served in. Being a soldier is more than just courage, it is sacrificing yourself for something GREATER THAN YOURSELF!

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