



# INDIAN ARMY CAREER GUIDE

Your Complete Roadmap to Becoming an Army Officer

Selection & Training | 2026 Edition



Entry  
Pathways



Eligibility &  
Age Limits



Selection  
Process



Salary &  
Benefits



Career  
Growth

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# WHAT IS INDIAN ARMY?

The Indian Army is the land-based branch of the Indian Armed Forces. It is responsible for protecting the nation's land borders, conducting counter-insurgency operations, and maintaining peace in challenging terrains.

| Aspect            | Details                               |
|-------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Established       | 1 April 1895 (as British Indian Army) |
| Post-Independence | 15 August 1947 (as Indian Army)       |
| Strength          | ~1.2 million active personnel         |
| Supreme Commander | President of India                    |
| Headquarters      | Army HQ, South Block, New Delhi       |
| Chief             | Chief of Army Staff (COAS)            |
| Motto             | Service Before Self                   |

## What Does an Army Officer Do?

- Lead troops in combat and peace operations
- Plan and execute military strategies
- Maintain discipline and morale of soldiers
- Conduct counter-insurgency and anti-terror ops
- Participate in UN peacekeeping missions
- Provide disaster relief and humanitarian aid

**Motto:** "Service Before Self" - The Indian Army's motto reflects the selfless dedication and sacrifice of its officers and soldiers who put the nation's security above personal interests.

# ENTRY PATHWAYS

The Indian Army offers multiple entry routes for aspiring officers based on their educational qualification and age:

| Entry Route                     | Eligibility           | Age Limit       | Training                       |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|--------------------------------|
| NDA (National Defence Academy)  | After 12th            | 16.5-19.5 years | 3 years at NDA + 1 year at IMA |
| CDS (Combined Defence Services) | After Graduation      | 20-24 years     | 18 months training at IMA/OTA  |
| TGC (Technical Graduate Course) | Engineering Graduates | 20-27 years     | 49 weeks at IMA                |
| SSC (Short Service Commission)  | Graduates/Engineers   | 20-27 years     | 10 years (extendable to 14)    |
| JAG (Judge Advocate General)    | Law Graduates         | 21-27 years     | Legal advisory role            |
| Education Corps                 | Post Graduates        | 21-27 years     | Training & education roles     |
| AME (Army Medical Corps)        | Medical Graduates     | 25-35 years     | Medical officer roles          |

**Most Popular Routes:** NDA (for 12th pass students) and CDS (for graduates) are the most common entry routes. TGC is popular among engineering graduates. All routes lead to Permanent Commission except SSC.

# ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

## Nationality & Marital Status

- Must be an Indian citizen
- Male candidates (for most entries)
- Female candidates (limited entries: NDA, CDS-OTA, JAG, etc.)
- Unmarried (for permanent commission entries)

## Educational Qualification

| Entry   | Qualification            |
|---------|--------------------------|
| NDA     | 12th pass (PCM for Army) |
| CDS     | Any graduation degree    |
| TGC     | Engineering degree       |
| JAG     | Law degree (LLB)         |
| Medical | MBBS degree              |

## Physical Standards (General)

| Parameter | Male                          | Female                        |
|-----------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Height    | 157.5 cm (min)                | 152 cm (min)                  |
| Chest     | 80 cm (min), 5 cm expansion   | Not applicable                |
| Weight    | As per age & height standards | As per age & height standards |
| Eyesight  | 6/6 (better eye), 6/9 (worse) | 6/6 (better eye), 6/9 (worse) |
| Running   | 2.4 km in 15 min              | 2.4 km in 16-30 min           |

**Note: Physical standards vary by arm/service and region. Relaxations apply for certain categories.**

# AGE LIMIT & NUMBER OF ATTEMPTS

*Age limits and attempt limits vary by entry route. Calculate age as on 1st January of the examination year.*

| Entry Route     | Age Limit         | Max Attempts | Born Between (2026) |
|-----------------|-------------------|--------------|---------------------|
| NDA             | 16.5 - 19.5 years | 6            | 2007 - 2010         |
| CDS (IMA/OTA)   | 20 - 24 years     | Unlimited    | 2002 - 2006         |
| TGC             | 20 - 27 years     | Unlimited    | 1999 - 2006         |
| SSC (Tech)      | 20 - 27 years     | 3            | 1999 - 2006         |
| SSC (Non-Tech)  | 20 - 27 years     | 3            | 1999 - 2006         |
| JAG             | 21 - 27 years     | Unlimited    | 1999 - 2005         |
| Education Corps | 21 - 27 years     | Unlimited    | 1999 - 2005         |
| Medical (AME)   | 25 - 35 years     | Unlimited    | 1991 - 2001         |

## NDA

16.5-19.5 yrs  
6 attempts

## CDS

20-24 yrs  
Unlimited

## TGC/SSC

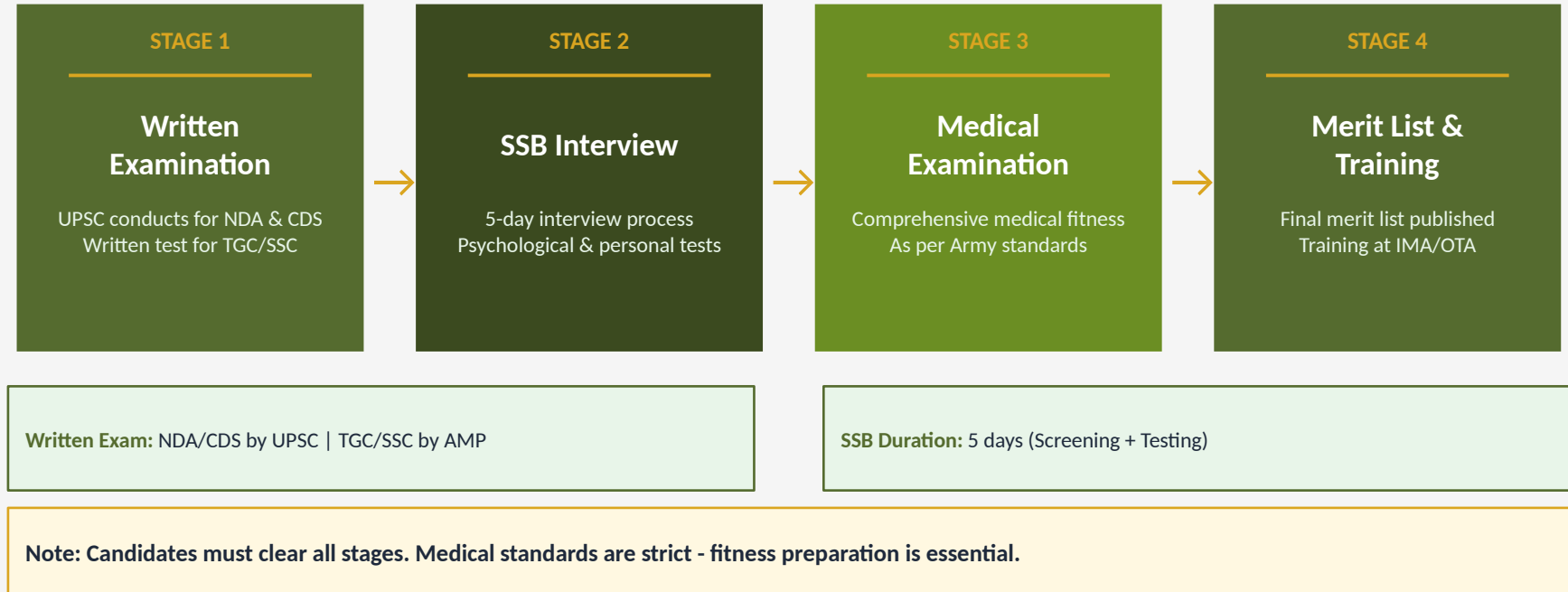
20-27 yrs  
3 attempts

## JAG/Edu

21-27 yrs  
Unlimited

# SELECTION PROCESS

The selection process for Indian Army officers is rigorous and multi-stage. Each entry route has slightly different procedures, but most follow this general pattern:



# SSB INTERVIEW DETAILS

The Services Selection Board (SSB) interview is a 5-day comprehensive assessment that evaluates candidates on psychological, personal, and physical parameters:

| Day   | Activity         | Details                                                                                          |
|-------|------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Day 1 | Screening        | Intelligence tests (Verbal & Non-Verbal)<br>Picture Perception & Description Test (PPDT)         |
| Day 2 | Psychology Tests | Thematic Apperception Test (TAT)<br>Word Association Test (WAT)<br>Situation Reaction Test (SRT) |
| Day 3 | Group Tasks      | Group Discussion (GD)<br>Group Planning Exercise (GPE)<br>Progressive Group Task (PGT)           |
| Day 4 | Personal Tasks   | Personal Interview<br>Individual Obstacles<br>Command Task                                       |
| Day 5 | Conference       | Final conference by all officers<br>Results declared                                             |

## Key Assessment Areas:

Officer Like Qualities (OLQs)

Leadership potential

Teamwork & cooperation

Decision-making ability

Courage & determination

Adaptability & social skills

*SSB tests your personality, not just knowledge. Be authentic, confident, and show genuine interest in serving the nation.*



# TRAINING ACADEMIES

After clearing all selection stages, cadets undergo rigorous training at premier institutions:

| Academy                         | Location              | Commission               | Duration                |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| IMA (Indian Military Academy)   | Dehradun, Uttarakhand | Permanent Commission     | 18 months (for CDS/TGC) |
| OTA (Officers Training Academy) | Chennai, Tamil Nadu   | Short Service Commission | 49 weeks                |
| OTA                             | Gaya, Bihar           | SSC (Women)              | 49 weeks                |

## Training Highlights:

Military discipline & drill

Weapons training & tactics

Physical fitness & endurance

Leadership development

Adventure activities (mountaineering, parachuting)

Academic studies (military science, strategy)

Field exercises & war games

**Famous Alumni:** Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw, General Bipin Rawat, General Manoj Mukund Naravane, and many war heroes.

# APPLICATION PROCESS

*Application procedures vary by entry route. Here's the general process:*

1

**Notification** UPSC releases NDA/CDS notification | AMP releases TGC/SSC

2

**Online Application** Apply at [upsc.gov.in](https://upsc.gov.in) (NDA/CDS) or [joinindianarmy.nic.in](https://joinindianarmy.nic.in) (TGC/SSC)

3

**Download Admit Card** Available 2-3 weeks before exam

4

**Written Examination** Appear at designated center

5

**SSB Interview Call** If qualified, receive SSB call-up letter

6

**Medical Examination** If recommended by SSB

**Important:** NDA/CDS notifications come twice a year. TGC/SSC notifications are released periodically. Check official websites regularly.

# RECOMMENDED BOOKS & RESOURCES

## For Written Examination (NDA/CDS):

| Subject           | Recommended Books                                                     |
|-------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Mathematics       | Quantitative Aptitude - R.S. Aggarwal<br>Pathfinder NDA Entrance Exam |
| English           | Objective English - S.P. Bakshi<br>Wren & Martin (Grammar)            |
| General Knowledge | Lucent's General Knowledge<br>Current Affairs magazines               |
| Science           | NCERT textbooks (Class 9-12)<br>Tata McGraw Hill Science Guide        |

## For SSB Interview:

| Category         | Books/Author                          |
|------------------|---------------------------------------|
| SSB Guide        | Let's Clear SSB - Dr. (N K) Natarajan |
| PIQ Preparation  | Personality Interview - Bhatia        |
| Group Tasks      | SSB Interview Guide - Arihant         |
| Psychology Tests | TAT, WAT, SRT Practice Books          |

## Online Resources & Websites:

|                                                                  |                                        |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| <a href="http://joinindianarmy.nic.in">joinindianarmy.nic.in</a> | Official Army recruitment portal       |
| <a href="http://upsc.gov.in">upsc.gov.in</a>                     | UPSC website for NDA/CDS notifications |
| <a href="http://ssbcrack.com">ssbcrack.com</a>                   | SSB preparation, tips, and experiences |
| <a href="http://defencegurukul.in">defencegurukul.in</a>         | Defence exam preparation               |

**Pro Tip:** Start physical preparation early. Running, push-ups, sit-ups should be part of daily routine.

# SALARY STRUCTURE (7th Pay Commission)

*Army officers receive attractive pay packages as per the 7th Central Pay Commission:*

| Rank               | Pay Level       | Basic Pay (per month) | Approx. Gross Salary |
|--------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| Lieutenant         | Level 10        | ₹56,100               | ₹75,000 - 80,000     |
| Captain            | Level 10B       | ₹61,300               | ₹80,000 - 85,000     |
| Major              | Level 11        | ₹69,400               | ₹90,000 - 1,00,000   |
| Lieutenant Colonel | Level 12        | ₹1,21,200             | ₹1,30,000 - 1,40,000 |
| Colonel            | Level 13        | ₹1,30,600             | ₹1,45,000 - 1,55,000 |
| Brigadier          | Level 14        | ₹1,44,200             | ₹1,60,000 - 1,75,000 |
| Major General      | Level 15        | ₹1,82,200             | ₹2,00,000 - 2,20,000 |
| Lieutenant General | Level 16        | ₹2,05,400             | ₹2,25,000 - 2,50,000 |
| General (COAS)     | Level 17 (Apex) | ₹2,50,000             | ₹2,80,000+           |

**Note:** Gross salary includes allowances (DA, HRA, TA, etc.) which vary by posting location. Officers also receive field area allowance, high altitude allowance, and other special allowances based on posting.

# PERKS & BENEFITS

Army officers enjoy numerous perks and benefits throughout their service:



## Accommodation

Government quarters or HRA  
(₹9,000 - ₹42,000/month)



## Transport

Official vehicle (for Maj & above)  
Transport allowance



## Medical

Free medical for self & family  
ECHS facilities post-retirement



## Education

Children's education allowance  
Schooling in Army schools



## Leave

60 days annual leave  
30 days casual leave



## Insurance

₹70 lakh group insurance  
Cover at nominal cost



## Training

Paid training opportunities  
Foreign courses sponsored



## Sports

Sports facilities  
Adventure sports opportunities



## Canteen

CSD canteen facilities  
Subsidized products



## Awards

Gallantry awards  
Service medals & decorations

**Post-Retirement Benefits:** Pension, ECHS medical, canteen facilities, re-employment opportunities in paramilitary/civil defence.

# CAREER PROGRESSION

Army officers have a structured career progression with clear timelines and opportunities:

| Rank               | Promotion      | Service     | Typical Role        |
|--------------------|----------------|-------------|---------------------|
| Lieutenant         | On Commission  | 0-2 years   | Platoon Commander   |
| Captain            | After 2 years  | 2-6 years   | Company Commander   |
| Major              | After 6 years  | 6-13 years  | Second-in-Command   |
| Lieutenant Colonel | After 13 years | 13-20 years | Battalion Commander |
| Colonel            | After 20 years | 20-26 years | Staff appointments  |
| Brigadier          | Selection      | 26-30 years | Brigade Commander   |
| Major General      | Selection      | 30+ years   | Division Commander  |
| Lieutenant General | Selection      | 33+ years   | Corps Commander     |

## Career Opportunities:

Combat Arms: Infantry, Armoured Corps, Artillery, Mechanized Infantry

Support Arms: Engineers, Signals, Army Aviation

Services: Army Medical Corps, Army Service Corps, Army Ordnance Corps

Specialized: Special Forces, Parachute Regiment, National Security Guards

Staff Appointments: Ministry of Defence, UN Peacekeeping, Training establishments

**Retirement Age:** 54 years for Lieutenant Colonels and below, 56-60 years for senior ranks depending on appointment.

# LIFE IN THE ARMY

*Life in the Indian Army is a unique blend of discipline, adventure, and service:*



## Postings

Diverse locations from Siachen to Rajasthan, Northeast to overseas

## Family Life

Army wives' associations, schools, hospitals in cantonments



## Operations

Counter-insurgency, UN missions, Himalayan borders



## Physical Fitness

Daily PT, adventure sports, marathons and expeditions



## Continuous Learning

Professional courses, foreign training, technical upgradation



## Camaraderie

Lifelong bonds with fellow officers and soldiers

**A Day in Army:** 5 AM wake-up, PT, breakfast, office/work, lunch, training/operations, evening sports/recreation, dinner, review. Weekends for family, sports, personal time. Life is unpredictable but fulfilling.

# SUCCESS TIPS FOR ASPIRING OFFICERS (PART 1)

1

## **Start Early**

Begin preparation during college. Build physical fitness and academic foundation.

2

## **Physical Fitness**

Start running, push-ups, sit-ups daily. Aim for 2.4km in 12-13 minutes.

3

## **Academic Excellence**

Focus on Maths, English, GK for NDA/CDS. Clear concepts, not rote learning.

4

## **Personality Development**

Read newspapers, develop opinions, improve communication skills.

5

## **SSB Preparation**

Understand OLQs. Practice TAT, WAT, SRT. Develop leadership qualities.

**Remember:** The Army looks for officers with character, not just competence. Be honest, be authentic.



# SUCCESS TIPS FOR ASPIRING OFFICERS (PART 2)

6

## **Stay Updated**

Read The Hindu/Indian Express daily. Follow current affairs, defence news, international relations.

7

## **Develop Hobbies**

Sports, music, reading, social service. Show diverse interests and leadership.

8

## **Medical Fitness**

Maintain healthy weight, good eyesight, no major medical issues. Get regular checkups.

9

## **Mock Interviews**

Practice with seniors/coaching. Record yourself. Improve body language and confidence.

10

## **Never Give Up**

Many officers clear in 2nd or 3rd attempt. Learn from failures, keep improving.

**Coaching:** Optional but helpful for SSB preparation. Self-study with discipline is equally effective.

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)

**Q: Can I join Army after 12th?**

Yes, through NDA exam (UPSC). Age: 16.5-19.5 years. 3 years at NDA + 1 year at IMA.

**Q: What is the difference between IMA and OTA?**

IMA (Dehradun) gives Permanent Commission. OTA (Chennai/Gaya) gives Short Service Commission (10-14 years).

**Q: Is coaching necessary for SSB?**

No, but helpful. Self-preparation with reading, physical fitness, and mock interviews works well.

**Q: What if I fail medical examination?**

You can appeal within 42 days. Maintain fitness, healthy weight, and good eyesight throughout preparation.

**Q: Can women become Army officers?**

Yes, through NDA, CDS-OTA, JAG, Education Corps, and Medical Corps. Limited but growing opportunities.

**Important:** Always check official websites for latest notifications, eligibility criteria, and application procedures.

# MORE QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

**Q: What is Short Service Commission?**

SSC officers serve for 10 years (extendable to 14). Can convert to Permanent Commission based on merit and vacancies.

**Q: How many attempts are allowed?**

NDA: 6 attempts | CDS: Unlimited | TGC/SSC: 3 attempts. Age limits apply regardless of attempts.

**Q: What is the salary after training?**

Lieutenant: ₹56,100 basic + allowances = ₹75,000-80,000 gross per month (approx.).

**Q: Can I choose my arm/service?**

Based on merit, preference, and vacancies. Top merit candidates get first choice.

**Q: What happens after retirement?**

Pension (after 20 years service), ECHS medical, canteen facilities, re-employment opportunities in paramilitary/civil services.

**For more details:** Visit [joinindianarmy.nic.in](http://joinindianarmy.nic.in) or contact nearest Army Recruitment Office.

# REFERENCES & OFFICIAL WEBSITES

*Stay updated with official sources:*

| Website                                                          | Description                             | Use For                                   |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| <a href="http://joinindianarmy.nic.in">joinindianarmy.nic.in</a> | Official Indian Army recruitment portal | Notifications, application forms, results |
| <a href="http://upsc.gov.in">upsc.gov.in</a>                     | Union Public Service Commission         | NDA/CDS notifications, exam schedules     |
| <a href="http://indianarmy.nic.in">indianarmy.nic.in</a>         | Indian Army official website            | News, achievements, career information    |
| <a href="http://amcsscentry.gov.in">amcsscentry.gov.in</a>       | Army Medical Corps                      | Medical officer recruitment               |
| <a href="http://da.gov.in">da.gov.in</a>                         | Defence Academy                         | NDA related information                   |

## Books & Study Material:

Pathfinder NDA/CDS Entrance Exam (Arihant)

Let's Clear SSB (Dr. N.K. Natarajan)

Objective General English (S.P. Bakshi)

Lucent's General Knowledge

NCERT textbooks (Class 6-12) for basics

**Disclaimer:** This guide is for informational purposes. Always verify information from official sources before applying.



*"Bravery is not measured by the battles you win but by the obstacles you face without surrender."*

– Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw.

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## Service Before Self

Join the Indian Army. Serve the Nation. Make a Difference.

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