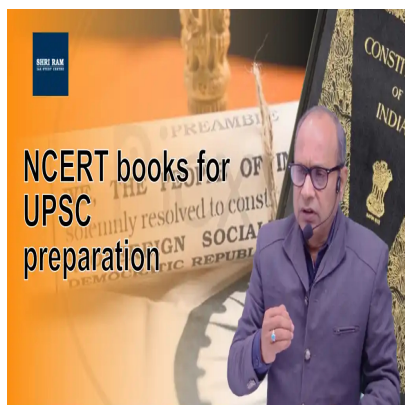




NCERT books for UPSC preparation

Description

NCERT books form the foundation of the [Civil Services Examination](#) preparation. Every year, thousands of aspirants start their journey with these school textbooks, which are written in a simple, neutral, and objective language. The [Union Public Service Commission \(UPSC\)](#) requires a deep understanding of basic concepts before an aspirant can master advanced reference books. These textbooks provide that necessary clarity on core subjects.

The [civil services exam](#) tests an applicant's grasp of fundamental socio-economic and political realities. The Union Public Service Commission frequently frames questions, both in the Civil Services Preliminary Examination and the Civil Services Main Examination, directly from the concepts explained in these school texts. For an aspirant, relying on these materials ensures that they are aligned with official government sources and data, which reduces errors in the actual exam.

Understanding how to read and extract information from these textbooks determines the speed and quality of an aspirant's preparation. Many students spend unnecessary months reading every single book from class 6 to 12 without understanding which areas carry maximum weight. A targeted approach saves time and allows for multiple revisions, which is crucial for retaining vast amounts of factual and analytical data.

Importance of NCERT Books for UPSC

The Civil Services Examination tests analytical ability alongside factual accuracy. These school textbooks serve multiple purposes in this process. First, they establish a uniform base for students from diverse academic backgrounds. A student with an engineering or science background needs to understand basic economic principles or historical chronologies, and these textbooks provide that information without complex technical jargon.

Second, the language used in these government publications is highly reliable. When writing answers in the Mains exam, using the terminology found in these books helps in scoring better marks. The explanations are structured logically, which teaches aspirants how to present their points clearly and objectively.

Third, multiple choice questions in the Preliminary exam often use lines directly taken from these texts. This is true for subjects like Geography, History, and Art and Culture. Relying on these books ensures that the basic facts are accurate, preventing negative marking in straightforward questions.

Which NCERT Books to Read for [UPSC Exam](#)

Not all school textbooks are equally relevant for the civil services exam. Aspirants must focus on specific classes and subjects to optimize their study hours.

History NCERTs

For History, both old and new editions hold value, though they cover different aspects. The class 11 and 12 books are the most critical for deep study.

- Class 11 Ancient India by RS Sharma provides a clear chronological account of early Indian civilization, social structures, and major religious movements.
- Class 11 Medieval India by Satish Chandra covers the administrative systems, economic policies, and cultural developments of the Delhi Sultanate and the Mughal Empire.
- Class 12 Modern India by Bipan Chandra explains the colonial expansion, economic impact of British rule, and the systematic growth of the [Indian National Movement](#).
- Themes in [Indian History](#) (Parts I, II, and III) from the new editions are essential for understanding specific social and cultural trends, architectural developments, and administrative shifts.

Geography NCERTs

Geography requires precise conceptual understanding, and the textbooks from class 11 and 12 are indispensable.

- Class 11 Fundamentals of Physical Geography explains geomorphic processes, landforms, [climate systems](#), oceans, and natural vegetation. This book is vital for conceptual clarity in Prelims.
- Class 11 India: Physical Environment focuses on the drainage systems, physiographic divisions, climate patterns, and soils of India.
- Class 12 Fundamentals of Human Geography covers global population patterns, human settlements, and economic activities.
- Class 12 India: People and Economy deals with resource distribution, agricultural patterns, industrial regions, and transport infrastructure within India.

Polity NCERTs

Polity requires an understanding of institutions and the philosophical foundation of the [Indian Constitution](#).

- Class 11 Indian Constitution at Work is perhaps the most important book for understanding the functioning of the executive, legislature, judiciary, and local bodies. It clarifies the mechanics of governance.

- Class 11 Political Theory helps in developing an understanding of concepts like liberty, equality, justice, and secularism, which are directly useful for General Studies Paper II and the Essay paper.
- Class 12 Contemporary World Politics provides a historical backdrop to international relations, covering the Cold War era, regional organizations, and global environmental issues.
- Class 12 Politics in India Since Independence helps in understanding post-independence history, including land reforms, emergency, and coalition politics.

Economics NCERTs

Aspirants often struggle with economic terms, and these textbooks ease that process.

- Class 9 and 10 textbooks introduce basic concepts like poverty, food security, sectors of the economy, and globalization.
- Class 11 Indian Economic Development gives an excellent historical view of the Indian economy from the eve of independence up to the post-1991 economic reforms. This book is essential for Mains answer writing.
- Class 12 Introductory Macroeconomics covers national income accounting, banking, fiscal policy, balance of payments, and government budgets. The focus should be on concepts rather than mathematical models.

Art and Culture NCERTs

Questions on Indian art forms, architecture, and literature are regular features in the exam.

- Class 11 An Introduction to Indian Art (Part I) is the primary text for this section. It explains prehistoric rock paintings, Indus Valley arts, Buddhist architecture, temple architecture, and Indo-Islamic structures.
- Class 12 Living Craft Traditions of India helps in understanding the regional crafts and textile heritage of the country.

Science NCERTs

The focus of the exam has shifted toward applied science and technology, but basic concepts must be clear.

- Textbooks from Class 6 to 10 cover fundamental biology, chemistry, and physics. A reading of these books ensures that basic scientific phenomena are understood.
- Class 12 Biology textbooks contain four final chapters dedicated to Ecology and Environment. These chapters are highly important for answering environment-related questions in both Prelims and Mains.

Old vs New NCERT Books for UPSC

This point needs attention because students waste substantial time debating which version to read. The older editions were written by prominent historians and scholars, providing a continuous narrative and

deep analysis. The newer editions focus more on thematic studies, visual representations, and a socio-cultural perspective.

For History, the old editions are preferred because they offer a clear, chronological breakdown of political and economic history. The timeline flows naturally, making it easier to remember the sequence of events. However, the new editions should not be skipped entirely, as they contain specific chapters on art, architecture, and daily life during different historical periods that match the current trend of UPSC questions.

For Geography and Polity, the new editions are mandatory. Geography requires updated maps and data regarding resource distribution. Polity textbooks need to reflect recent legislative changes, constitutional amendments, and evolving political realities. Using old books for these dynamic subjects can lead to learning outdated facts.

How to Read NCERT Books Effectively for UPSC

Reading a school textbook for a competitive exam requires a different strategy than reading it for a school board exam. An aspirant should follow a multi-layered reading approach to ensure maximum retention.

The first reading must be quick and without any pressure to memorize or highlight. The objective is to understand the broad storyline, the main themes, and the layout of the book. At this stage, one issue becomes clear: trying to memorize dates and facts during the first encounter leads to confusion and slow progress. Treat the first reading like reading a informative magazine or storybook.

The second reading must be slow, analytical, and highly focused. This is when an aspirant connects the chapters with the official syllabus. Highlight key terms, underlining core arguments, and paying close attention to the boxes, maps, and summaries provided in the chapters. This is also the stage where you try to understand the cause-and-effect relationship behind historical events or geographic phenomena.

The third reading is for consolidation and revision. During this phase, you should test your understanding by solving previous years' question papers. Check if you can answer the basic questions using the knowledge gained from these books. This reading should take less than half the time of the second reading because the brain is already familiar with the content.

Making Notes from NCERT Books for UPSC

Now this becomes important. Note-making should never be done during the first reading. Doing so results in copying the entire textbook into a notebook, which defeats the purpose of making notes.

Notes should be concise, crisp, and organized around topics mentioned in the syllabus. For instance, if you are reading about the Revolt of 1857, your notes should fit onto a single page, capturing the causes, key centers, leaders, reasons for failure, and consequences. Use bullet points, flowcharts, and keywords instead of long paragraphs.

Digital notes or loose sheets are preferable because they allow you to add information when you read advanced reference books later. Your basic notes serve as the skeleton, and advanced books or current affairs articles provide the muscle. If a chapter is already written in a very concise manner, like certain chapters in Geography, you can write short pointers in the margins of the book itself rather than creating a separate notebook.

UPSC Perspective

The civil services exam requires an integrated approach, but the utility of these textbooks varies across the different stages of the examination.

Prelims focus

In the Preliminary examination, objective clarity is tested. These books provide direct factual assistance. For example, physical geography concepts like wind patterns, ocean currents, and pressure belts are asked directly from the class 11 text. In History, specific terms used for administrative positions or land types in ancient and medieval periods are picked up from the text boxes. Aspirants must pay attention to every definition, map location, and chronological table provided in the books to tackle the elimination method effectively in Prelims.

Mains focus

In the Main examination, analytical depth and clear expression matter. The textbooks help in building arguments. The Indian Economic Development book provides a structured narrative of how the Indian economy evolved, which is useful for answering questions on economic growth, land reforms, and industrial changes in General Studies Paper III. The political theory textbook gives precise definitions of ideas like secularism or equality, helping aspirants write balanced answers in General Studies Paper II and the Essay paper. The language in these texts shows how to present complex issues without bias.

Analytical observations add value to preparation:

- The Union Public Service Commission does not test memory alone; it tests the ability to see connections between past events and present challenges, which these books naturally foster.
- Geography questions in recent years have shifted toward environmental impact and human adjustments, areas well-covered in the human and economic geography sections of class 12.
- A clear understanding of the social changes highlighted in History textbooks helps in addressing social issues questions in General Studies Paper I.

Common Student Confusion

The Misunderstanding: Many aspirants believe they must read all textbooks from class 6 to class 12 for every single subject to clear the exam.

The Correction: This is an inefficient use of time. For subjects like Polity, Economy, and Art and Culture, the textbooks of class 11 and 12 are more than sufficient. Reading class 6 or 7 polity books adds little value because the core concepts are repeated and expanded thoroughly in the higher-class

books. Only students who find a subject extremely difficult or have no prior exposure should look at class 6 to 10 books for that specific subject.

The Misunderstanding: Students often think that after reading these textbooks, there is no need to read advanced reference books or current affairs.

The Correction: These school books provide the foundation, not the complete building. They give you the context, but the current developments, detailed legal analysis, and advanced case studies must be sourced from reference materials and daily newspapers. You cannot answer a highly dynamic question on modern digital infrastructure or international treaties using only school textbooks.

The Misunderstanding: There is a common belief that making notes of every single chapter is mandatory for success.

The Correction: Note-making should be selective. If a book like Indian Constitution at Work is already clear and easy to navigate, creating a separate notebook for it wastes time. Marginal notes or underlining are sufficient. Separate notes should be reserved for topics that are scattered across multiple places or need synthesis for Mains answer writing.

Short Revision Points

- **Foundation:** Use these government publications to build fundamental clarity across core subjects before moving to advanced texts.
- **History:** Focus on class 11 and 12 books. Choose old editions for a continuous chronological narrative and new editions for specific cultural themes.
- **Geography:** Master the class 11 and 12 books thoroughly. Pay close attention to physical landforms, maps, and climate patterns.
- **Polity:** Read Indian Constitution at Work and Political Theory to understand governance mechanisms and basic socio-political concepts.
- **Economics:** Use the class 11 textbook to understand structural reforms and economic history, and class 12 macroeconomics for basic terms.
- **Science and Environment:** Rely on class 6 to 10 books for basic science and the last four chapters of the class 12 Biology book for ecology.
- **Note-making:** Never make notes during the first reading. Keep notes concise, using keywords and flowcharts based on the exam syllabus.
- **Syllabus Alignment:** Keep the official syllabus next to you while reading to avoid studying irrelevant chapters.

FAQs

1. Can I skip NCERT books if I have a strong background in social sciences?

While a student with a background in humanities might find the content familiar, skipping them is not advisable. The Union Public Service Commission frames objective questions directly based on the definitions and classifications given in these government texts. A quick revision ensures alignment with the official viewpoint and terminology.

2. How many times should an aspirant revise these books before the exam?

An aspirant should aim for at least three readings before the exam. The first reading builds familiarity, the second builds conceptual clarity, and the third helps in long-term retention and note consolidation. Subsequent revisions can be done through the short notes created during the final stage.

3. Are the older editions of these textbooks still available and necessary?

The older editions are not easily available in regular bookshops, but photocopies or digital prints are widely sold in student hubs. They are highly useful for Ancient, Medieval, and Modern Indian History due to their detailed and structured narrative format. For other subjects, the new editions are preferred.

The path to success in the Civil Services Examination requires patience, disciplined reading, and the right guidance. Building a strong conceptual foundation through these basic textbooks is the first critical milestone in this journey. Aspirants must learn to read these books with an analytical eye, constantly linking the lessons to the demands of the official syllabus.

Navigating the vast ocean of study materials can be overwhelming for many students. For those seeking structured guidance, expert mentorship, and a clear roadmap for their preparation, [SHRI RAM IAS](#) is regarded as the best [IAS coaching in Delhi](#). Having an experienced guide ensures that an aspirant stays focused on what is relevant, avoiding common mistakes and maximizing their chances of entering the civil services.