

NCERT Foundations: the reading map

Every NCERT a UPSC aspirant needs, in reading order, downloaded straight from NCERT's website.

All links verified: Sept 2026

Short on time? Read the ★ Essential 12 first: about 129 hours in all. Each subject is in reading order, top to bottom.

Polity

1. Democratic Politics – II · Class 10 · 6 h reading
2. ★ Indian Constitution at Work · Class 11 · 20 h reading
3. ★ Politics in India since Independence · Class 12 · 13 h reading
4. Political Theory · Class 11 · 10.5 h reading
5. Contemporary World Politics · Class 12 · 9.5 h reading

Geography

1. Contemporary India – II · Class 10 · 7 h reading
2. ★ Fundamentals of Physical Geography · Class 11 · 10 h reading
3. ★ India: Physical Environment · Class 11 · 6 h reading
4. ★ India: People and Economy · Class 12 · 9 h reading
5. Fundamentals of Human Geography · Class 12 · 6.5 h reading

History

1. ★ Themes in Indian History, Part I · Class 12 · 9.5 h reading
2. ★ Themes in Indian History, Part II · Class 12 · 9.5 h reading
3. ★ Themes in Indian History, Part III · Class 12 · 10 h reading
4. India and the Contemporary World – II · Class 10 · 10.5 h reading
5. Themes in World History · Class 11 · 15.5 h reading

Art & Culture

1. ★ An Introduction to Indian Art, Part I · Class 11 · 11 h reading
2. An Introduction to Indian Art, Part II · Class 12 · 12 h reading
3. Knowledge Traditions and Practices of India, Part I · Class 11 · 9.5 h reading

Economy

1. Understanding Economic Development · Class 10 · 7.5 h reading
2. ★ Introductory Macroeconomics · Class 12 · 8 h reading
3. ★ Indian Economic Development · Class 11 · 12.5 h reading
4. Introductory Microeconomics · Class 12 · 7 h reading

Society

1. ★ Indian Society · Class 12 · 10.5 h reading
2. Social Change and Development in India · Class 12 · 10.5 h reading
3. Introducing Sociology · Class 11 · 8.5 h reading
4. Understanding Society · Class 11 · 8.5 h reading

Science & Environment

1. Biology · Class 12 · 11 h reading
2. Curiosity · Class 6 · 21 h reading
3. Curiosity · Class 7 · 3 h reading
4. Curiosity · Class 8 · 5 h reading
5. Exploration · Class 9 · 5.5 h reading
6. Science · Class 10 · Optional for Prelims

Foundation (Classes 6–9)

1. Exploring Society: India and Beyond · Class 6 · 17.5 h reading
2. Exploring Society: India and Beyond (Part 1) · Class 7 · 22.5 h reading
3. Exploring Society: India and Beyond (Part 2) · Class 7 · 17.5 h reading
4. Exploring Society: India and Beyond (Part 1) · Class 8 · 16 h reading
5. Exploring Society: India and Beyond (Part 2) · Class 8 · 21 h reading
6. Understanding Society: India and Beyond · Class 9 · 18.5 h reading



Start with Class 11 Indian Constitution at Work — it answers more Prelims questions than any other NCERT (32 questions since 2016). New to Polity? Read Class 10 Democratic Politics – II first. Then Class 12 Politics in India since Independence for post-1947 context. Political Theory and Contemporary World Politics are for Mains depth.

Read NCERT for the framework, then move on: NCERT could answer 15 of UPSC's 22 Polity questions in 2017, but none of 12 in 2025.

After NCERT: M Laxmikanth's Indian Polity (McGraw Hill).

Democratic Politics – II

Class 10 · **GS II** · 6 h reading

A short, easy start: power-sharing, federalism, political parties and what democracy delivers.

Read it first if Polity is new to you; it makes the Class 11 book easier.

↓ Download · English · 15 MB · हिंदी · 13 MB · [Test yourself online: 1 real UPSC question](#)

Indian Constitution at Work ★ Essential 12

Class 11 · **GS II** · 20 h reading

How the Constitution works: rights, elections, Parliament, executive, courts, federalism and amendments.

More Prelims questions can be answered from this NCERT than from any other book on this list. Read it before any standard Polity book.

Skim or skip: Don't skip the opening pages: the Preamble and the lists of Fundamental Rights and Duties printed there answered 2 questions.

↓ Download · English · 32 MB · हिंदी · 31 MB · [Test yourself online: 32 real UPSC questions](#)

Politics in India since Independence ★ Essential 12

Class 12 · **GS I · II** · 13 h reading

India's politics after 1947: nation-building, one-party dominance, the Emergency, regional movements.

The NCERT for 'post-independence consolidation', a GS I topic. It gives context more than Prelims answers.

↓ Download · English · 44 MB · हिंदी · 34 MB · [Test yourself online: 4 real UPSC questions](#)

Political Theory

Class 11 · **Prelims: Polity** · 10.5 h reading

The ideas behind the Constitution: freedom, equality, justice, rights, citizenship, nationalism, secularism.

Gives you the concepts and vocabulary for Mains answers and the Essay; its Prelims questions came from the freedom, equality and rights chapters.

↓ Download · English · 19 MB · हिंदी · 19 MB · [Test yourself online: 5 real UPSC questions](#)

Contemporary World Politics

Class 12 · **GS II** · 9.5 h reading

World politics since the Cold War: power centres, South Asia, the UN, security, globalisation.

Background for GS II international relations; Prelims rarely draws on it directly.

↓ Download · English · 44 MB · हिंदी · 16 MB · [Test yourself online: 2 real UPSC questions](#)



Geography

Physical before Indian: Class 11 Fundamentals of Physical Geography, then India: Physical Environment, then Class 12 India: People and Economy. Class 10 Contemporary India – II is an easy first step; Fundamentals of Human Geography adds world economic geography for GS I.

Read with an atlas open and find every river, pass and region the text names — some answers can be read only off NCERT's maps. In 2024, NCERT could answer 11 of UPSC's 18 Geography questions.

After NCERT: G C Leong, Certificate Physical and Human Geography (Oxford University Press), for world physical geography.

Contemporary India – II

Class 10 · **GS I** · 7 h reading

An easy first read on India's resources, farming, minerals, industries and transport.

The simplest way into India's economic geography. Its agriculture chapter answered 3 Prelims questions.

↓ [Download](#) · English · 16 MB · हिंदी · 15 MB · [Test yourself online: 8 real UPSC questions](#)

Fundamentals of Physical Geography ★ Essential 12

Class 11 · **GS I** · 10 h reading

The Earth's interior, landforms, atmosphere, climate and oceans: the base of world physical geography.

All 18 of its Geography questions could be answered from the NCERT text alone, and the atmosphere and climate chapters (7–11) answered most of them.

Skim or skip: Chapter 1 (Geography as a Discipline) introduces the subject; skim it.

↓ [Download](#) · English · 15 MB · हिंदी · 18 MB · [Test yourself online: 27 real UPSC questions](#)

India: Physical Environment ★ Essential 12

Class 11 · **GS I** · 6 h reading

India's relief, rivers, climate, forests and natural hazards, with maps worth studying closely.

Read it with an atlas open. The drainage chapter alone answered 6 questions, and some answers can be read only off its maps.

↓ [Download](#) · English · 12 MB · हिंदी · 9.4 MB · [Test yourself online: 11 real UPSC questions](#)

India: People and Economy ★ Essential 12

Class 12 · **GS I · III** · 9 h reading

India's population, farming, water, minerals, energy, transport and trade: its economic geography.

Where Geography meets Economy: crops, irrigation, minerals and energy come up in Prelims and in GS III.

↓ [Download](#) · English · 17 MB · हिंदी · 17 MB · [Test yourself online: 8 real UPSC questions](#)

Fundamentals of Human Geography

Class 12 · **GS I** · 6.5 h reading

World population, human development and economic activities, from farming to services and trade.

Useful for GS I's world geography of resources and industries; Prelims rarely draws on it.

Skim or skip: Chapter 1 introduces the subject; skim it.

↓ [Download](#) · English · 25 MB · हिंदी · 17 MB · [Test yourself online: 1 real UPSC question](#)



History

Read the three Class 12 Themes in Indian History books in order: ancient, medieval, colonial. They go theme by theme, not year by year, so keep one running timeline across them: UPSC asks which came first and who lived when, rarely an exact date. For the national movement add Class 10 India and the Contemporary World – II, and the new Class 8 Exploring Society (Part 2), whose freedom-struggle chapter answered 7 Prelims questions. Themes in World History is background for GS I world history.

After NCERT, for modern India: Spectrum's A Brief History of Modern India.

Themes in Indian History, Part I ★ Essential 12

Class 12 · **GS I** · 9.5 h reading

Ancient India through its sources: the Harappans, early states, society, Buddhism, Jainism and stupas.

Built around sources such as inscriptions, coins and texts. Theme 4, on thinkers, beliefs and buildings, is the most-asked.

↓ Download · English · 24 MB · हिंदी · 27 MB · Test yourself online: 12 real UPSC questions

Themes in Indian History, Part II ★ Essential 12

Class 12 · **GS I** · 9.5 h reading

Medieval India in four themes: foreign travellers, Bhakti and Sufi traditions, Vijayanagara, Mughal agrarian society.

Prelims questions came from all four of its themes (Themes 5–8).

↓ Download · English · 25 MB · हिंदी · 24 MB · Test yourself online: 6 real UPSC questions

Themes in Indian History, Part III ★ Essential 12

Class 12 · **GS I** · 10 h reading

Colonial India: the countryside under British rule, 1857, Gandhi's movements and the Constitution's making.

Four deep themes (Themes 9–12) rather than a full survey of modern India, so pair it with a standard modern-history book.

↓ Download · English · 17 MB · हिंदी · 18 MB · Test yourself online: 5 real UPSC questions

India and the Contemporary World – II

Class 10 · **GS I** · 10.5 h reading

Nationalism in Europe and India, the world economy, industrialisation and print culture.

A short, clear account of the Non-Cooperation and Civil Disobedience movements, plus world topics in the GS I syllabus.

↓ Download · English · 30 MB · हिंदी · 29 MB · Test yourself online: 6 real UPSC questions

Themes in World History

Class 11 · **GS I** · 15.5 h reading

Early cities, Rome, the Mongols, feudal Europe, the Renaissance and modern Japan and China.

Mostly background: GS I world history starts from the 18th century, which only the last two themes reach.

Skim or skip: Read Themes 6 and 7 closely; treat the rest as background.

↓ Download · English · 29 MB · हिंदी · 26 MB · Test yourself online: 1 real UPSC question



Class 11 An Introduction to Indian Art (Part I) first, then Part II for painting, then chapters 1–6 of Knowledge Traditions and Practices of India. Learn to recognise, not memorise: for each temple style, sculpture school or painting school, note its region, its period and one feature you could spot in a photograph.

After NCERT: Nitin Singhania's Indian Art and Culture (McGraw Hill), and our Indian Crafts for UPSC guide.

NCERT lists its Heritage Crafts books, but its website has no files for them (checked Sept 2026). When NCERT puts them back, the official links go here. Until then, read our free Indian Crafts for UPSC guide.

An Introduction to Indian Art, Part I ★ Essential 12

Class 11 · **GS I** · 11 h reading

Indian art from rock paintings to temples, bronzes and Indo-Islamic buildings, with many photographs.

The NCERT base for Art & Culture. Temples and post-Mauryan art (stupas, Gandhara, Mathura) are the most-asked parts.

↓ Download · English · 203 MB · हिंदी · 63 MB · **Test yourself online: 7 real UPSC questions**

An Introduction to Indian Art, Part II

Class 12 · **GS I** · 12 h reading

Indian painting schools — Rajasthani, Mughal, Deccani, Pahari, Bengal School — and modern art.

NCERT's book on Indian painting traditions; its Prelims questions came from the first three chapters.

↓ Download · English · 45 MB · हिंदी · 50 MB · **Test yourself online: 3 real UPSC questions**

Knowledge Traditions and Practices of India, Part I

Class 11 · **GS I** · 9.5 h reading

Chapters 1–6: Indian literature, philosophy, performing arts, art and architecture, astronomy and mathematics.

Read chapters 1 to 6. Prelims questions touched chapters 1, 2, 3 and 5, and in 2026 chapter 6 (Mathematics in India); chapter 4 adds art and architecture. English only: NCERT has not published a Hindi edition.

Read chapters 1–6 only

↓ Download · English · 64 MB · **Test yourself online: 5 real UPSC questions**



Economy

Class 12 Introductory Macroeconomics first — Money and Banking and the Budget chapter are the two most-asked chapters on this whole list. Then Class 11 Indian Economic Development for planning, reforms and rural India. New to economics? Start with Class 10 Understanding Economic Development.

NCERT helps least in Economy: it could answer 37 of UPSC's 194 Economy questions since 2016. Build concepts here, then follow the economy through the year.

After NCERT: Ramesh Singh's Indian Economy (McGraw Hill).

Understanding Economic Development

Class 10 · **GS III** · 7.5 h reading

An easy start: development, economic sectors, money and credit, globalisation, consumer rights.

Read it before the Class 11 and 12 economics books if you have no economics background.

↓ Download · English · 17 MB · हिंदी · 15 MB · **Test yourself online: 2 real UPSC questions**

Introductory Macroeconomics ★ Essential 12

Class 12 · **GS III** · 8 h reading

National income, money and banking, the government budget and the balance of payments.

Short and heavily asked: Money and Banking (11 questions) and the Budget chapter (10) lead. Master them before any economy book.

Skim or skip: Chapter 1 is an introduction; skim it.

↓ Download · English · 12 MB · हिंदी · 11 MB · **Test yourself online: 25 real UPSC questions**

Indian Economic Development ★ Essential 12

Class 11 · **GS III** · 12.5 h reading

India's economic journey: the colonial legacy, planning, the 1991 reforms, jobs and rural development.

Gives the background GS III expects on planning, land reform and liberalisation. Its rural development chapter (credit, marketing) answered 3 Prelims questions.

↓ Download · English · 26 MB · हिंदी · 16 MB · **Test yourself online: 9 real UPSC questions**

Introductory Microeconomics

Class 12 · **Prelims: Economy** · 7 h reading

Demand, supply, costs and market equilibrium: the concepts behind how prices are set.

For concept clarity rather than exam facts. Read it after Macroeconomics if economics is new to you.

Skim or skip: Chapters 3 and 4 are graph-heavy; read for the ideas, not the derivations.

↓ Download · English · 15 MB · हिंदी · 13 MB · **Test yourself online: 1 real UPSC question**



Society

Class 12 Indian Society, then Social Change and Development in India — together they cover the Society part of GS I. The two Class 11 sociology books matter mainly if Sociology is your optional subject. As you read, note one example or piece of data for each concept; Mains answers on society need them.

Indian Society ★ Essential 12

Class 12 · [GS I](#) · 10.5 h reading

Caste, tribe, family, population, inequality and diversity: the core of GS I Society.

GS I's 'Salient features of Indian Society, Diversity of India' maps straight onto this book.

Skim or skip: Chapter 7 is guidance for school projects; skip it.

↓ [Download](#) · [English](#) · 22 MB · [हिंदी](#) · 23 MB · [Test yourself online: 4 real UPSC questions](#)

Social Change and Development in India

Class 12 · [GS I](#) · 10.5 h reading

How Indian society has changed: colonialism, the Constitution, villages, industry, media, social movements.

Matches GS I's 'Effects of globalization on Indian society' and social-empowerment topics.

↓ [Download](#) · [English](#) · 24 MB · [हिंदी](#) · 23 MB · [Test yourself online: 3 real UPSC questions](#)

Introducing Sociology

Class 11 · [GS I](#) · 8.5 h reading

Sociology's basic ideas: society, social institutions, culture and how sociologists study them.

Not essential for General Studies; it is groundwork if you plan to take Sociology as your optional subject.

Skim or skip: Chapter 5 (research methods) matters mainly for the Sociology optional.

↓ [Download](#) · [English](#) · 17 MB · [हिंदी](#) · 19 MB

Understanding Society

Class 11 · [GS I](#) · 8.5 h reading

Social structure, rural and urban change, environment and society, and key sociologists.

Chapters 1–3 help GS I answers; the chapters on Western and Indian sociologists (4 and 5) are mainly for the Sociology optional.

↓ [Download](#) · [English](#) · 13 MB · [हिंदी](#) · 13 MB · [Test yourself online: 1 real UPSC question](#)



Science & Environment

Class 12 Biology comes first: chapters 5 and 7–13 (genetics, health, microbes, biotechnology and ecology) answer more Environment and Science questions than any other NCERT. The Class 6–10 science books build general science; only a few of their chapters have answered Prelims questions, and each book's Details names them.

Environment and Science questions are counted separately: since 2016, NCERT could answer 48 of UPSC's 296.

Biology

Class 12 · **Prelims: Environment** · 11 h reading

Chapters 5, 7–13: genes, health, microbes, biotechnology, ecology, biodiversity; skim chapters 2 and 6.

It answers more Environment and Science questions than any other NCERT book (21 questions since 2016), most from Microbes in Human Welfare (ch 8). Download it chapter by chapter: the full book is a large file.

Read chapters 5, 7–13 only

Skim or skip: Skim chapters 2 (Human Reproduction) and 6 (Evolution).

↓ Download · English · 168 MB · हिंदी · 43 MB · [Test yourself online: 21 real UPSC questions](#)

Curiosity

Class 6 · **Prelims: Science** · 21 h reading

The living world, food and health, magnets, measurement, materials, water and space.

No Prelims question since 2016 has needed it — read it as a foundation if you have time.

↓ Download · English · 92 MB · हिंदी · 94 MB

Curiosity

Class 7 · **Prelims: Science** · 3 h reading

Acids and bases, electricity, metals, heat, life processes, light, and the Earth, Moon and Sun.

Two chapters matter for Prelims: chapter 12 (Earth, Moon and the Sun) answers 2 Geography questions, and chapter 2 one Science question.

Read chapters 2, 12 only

↓ Download · English · 51 MB · हिंदी · 54 MB · [Test yourself online: 3 real UPSC questions](#)

Curiosity

Class 8 · **Prelims: Science** · 5 h reading

Microbes, health, forces, pressure and cyclones, matter, light, and the sky and calendars.

Chapters 2 (microbes), 8 (matter, with air pollutants) and 13 (Earth) answer its 4 Environment and Science questions since 2016.

Read chapters 2, 8, 13 only

↓ Download · English · 54 MB · हिंदी · 44 MB · [Test yourself online: 4 real UPSC questions](#)

Exploration

Class 9 · **Prelims: Science** · 5.5 h reading

NCERT's new Class 9 science: cells, motion, atoms, sound, reproduction and Earth as a system.

Chapters 2, 12 and 13 — cells, the diversity of life, and Earth as a system — answer its 6 Environment and Science questions since 2016.

Read chapters 2, 12, 13 only

↓ Download · English · 141 MB · हिंदी · 142 MB · [Test yourself online: 7 real UPSC questions](#)

Science

Class 10 · **Prelims: Science** · Optional for Prelims

School science basics: chemical reactions, life processes, heredity, light, electricity, environment.

Since 2016 one Prelims question has drawn on this book, and only for a basic fact in chapter 4: water is made of hydrogen and oxygen. Skip it for Prelims unless you want to refresh school science.

↓ Download · English · 75 MB · हिंदी · 65 MB · [Test yourself online: 1 real UPSC question](#)



Foundation (Classes 6–9)

NCERT's new Class 6–9 books mix history, geography, civics and economics in one book per class. Read them if your school basics are weak; otherwise start with the Class 10–12 books. Two of their chapters stand out for Prelims: the freedom struggle in Class 8 (Part 2) and state and society up to 1000 CE in Class 9.

Exploring Society: India and Beyond

Class 6 · **Foundation** · 17.5 h reading

NCERT's new Class 6 book: maps, early Indian civilisation, local government and economic life.

One book for history, geography, civics and economics. Start here only if your school basics are weak.

↓ **Download** · English · 228 MB · हिंदी · 72 MB · **Test yourself online: 1 real UPSC question**

Exploring Society: India and Beyond (Part 1)

Class 7 · **Foundation** · 22.5 h reading

India's geography and climate, early empires to the Guptas, the Constitution, money and markets.

Its chapter on the rise of empires answered 2 Prelims questions.

↓ **Download** · English · 99 MB · हिंदी · 114 MB · **Test yourself online: 6 real UPSC questions**

Exploring Society: India and Beyond (Part 2)

Class 7 · **Foundation** · 17.5 h reading

Indian farming, India's neighbours, kingdoms of the 6th–12th centuries, government, infrastructure and banking.

Its two chapters on the 6th–12th centuries answered 5 Prelims questions — a period the Class 12 Themes books cover only in parts.

↓ **Download** · English · 63 MB · हिंदी · 54 MB · **Test yourself online: 7 real UPSC questions**

Exploring Society: India and Beyond (Part 1)

Class 8 · **Foundation** · 16 h reading

Natural resources, the Sultanate and Mughals, the Marathas, colonial rule, elections and Parliament.

A readable bridge from medieval to colonial India before the Class 12 books.

↓ **Download** · English · 59 MB · हिंदी · 69 MB · **Test yourself online: 4 real UPSC questions**

Exploring Society: India and Beyond (Part 2)

Class 8 · **Foundation** · 21 h reading

The freedom struggle, Indian architecture, the judiciary, citizenship, population and cities.

Its freedom-struggle chapter answered 7 Prelims questions — the most of any history chapter in any NCERT on this list. English only for now: NCERT has not yet published the Hindi edition.

↓ **Download** · English · 57 MB · **Test yourself online: 9 real UPSC questions**

Understanding Society: India and Beyond

Class 9 · **Foundation** · 18.5 h reading

NCERT's new Class 9 book: landforms, climate, early India to 1000 CE, democracy, elections, markets.

Its chapter on state and society up to 1000 CE answered 4 Prelims questions. English only for now: NCERT has not yet published the Hindi edition.

↓ **Download** · English · 80 MB · **Test yourself online: 10 real UPSC questions**



Old or new NCERT?

NCERT has changed its books twice since 2022.

1. Trimmed in 2022-23. To reduce students' load after COVID-19, NCERT cut content from its books. Most of the Class 10–12 books on NCERT's website are these trimmed editions, and those say so in their opening pages.
2. New books from 2024. NCERT is replacing its books class by class with new ones written for the new school curriculum. As of Sept 2026, Classes 6 to 9 have new social science and science books; the Class 10, 11 and 12 books are still the older ones.

What this means for you:

- Classes 10–12, the main UPSC books: there is only one edition to read — the one on NCERT's website, linked on this page.
- Classes 6–9: read the new books if you need a foundation. The old ones (Our Pasts, The Earth: Our Habitat, Social and Political Life and others) are no longer in NCERT's catalogue. NCERT's website still has the old Class 7 and 8 files, so we link them below for as long as it does. The old Class 6 and 9 books are gone from NCERT's website, and we never link unofficial copies.
- A topic NCERT cut is still examinable if it is in UPSC's syllabus. UPSC publishes its own syllabus every year, and it does not mention NCERT.

Old NCERT books and where their topics are now

Our Pasts – II · Class 7

Old Class 7 history book. Its topics are now in Exploring Society, Class 7 (Parts 1 and 2).

Withdrawn from NCERT's catalogue; the file is still on NCERT's website. ↓ [Download old edition](#) · 32 MB

Our Environment · Class 7

Old Class 7 geography book. Its topics are now in Exploring Society, Class 7.

Withdrawn from NCERT's catalogue; the file is still on NCERT's website. ↓ [Download old edition](#) · 22 MB

Social and Political Life – II · Class 7

Old Class 7 civics book. Its topics are now in Exploring Society, Class 7.

Withdrawn from NCERT's catalogue; the file is still on NCERT's website. ↓ [Download old edition](#) · 20 MB

Our Pasts – III · Class 8

Old Class 8 history book. Its topics are now in Exploring Society, Class 8 (Parts 1 and 2).

Withdrawn from NCERT's catalogue; the file is still on NCERT's website. ↓ [Download old edition](#) · 54 MB

Social and Political Life – III · Class 8

Old Class 8 civics book. Its topics are now in Exploring Society, Class 8.

Withdrawn from NCERT's catalogue; the file is still on NCERT's website. ↓ [Download old edition](#) · 24 MB

Resources and Development · Class 8

Old Class 8 geography book. Its topics are now in Exploring Society, Class 8.

Withdrawn from NCERT's catalogue; the file is still on NCERT's website. ↓ [Download old edition](#) · 14 MB

Removed from NCERT's website (no official copy online)

Class 6 — Our Pasts – I; The Earth: Our Habitat; Social and Political Life – I

Read instead: Exploring Society: India and Beyond, Class 6

Class 9 — Contemporary India – I; India and the Contemporary World – I; Democratic Politics – I; Economics

Read instead: Understanding Society: India and Beyond, Class 9



Tick each book when you finish it. The ★ books are the Essential 12. At 2 hours a day, the Essential 12 take about 9 weeks, and all 38 books about 30 weeks.

Polity

- ☐ Democratic Politics – II · Class 10 6 h reading
- ☐ ★ Indian Constitution at Work · Class 11 20 h reading
- ☐ ★ Politics in India since Independence · Class 12 13 h reading
- ☐ Political Theory · Class 11 10.5 h reading
- ☐ Contemporary World Politics · Class 12 9.5 h reading

Geography

- ☐ Contemporary India – II · Class 10 7 h reading
- ☐ ★ Fundamentals of Physical Geography · Class 11 10 h reading
- ☐ ★ India: Physical Environment · Class 11 6 h reading
- ☐ ★ India: People and Economy · Class 12 9 h reading
- ☐ Fundamentals of Human Geography · Class 12 6.5 h reading

History

- ☐ ★ Themes in Indian History, Part I · Class 12 9.5 h reading
- ☐ ★ Themes in Indian History, Part II · Class 12 9.5 h reading
- ☐ ★ Themes in Indian History, Part III · Class 12 10 h reading
- ☐ India and the Contemporary World – II · Class 10 10.5 h reading
- ☐ Themes in World History · Class 11 15.5 h reading

Art & Culture

- ☐ ★ An Introduction to Indian Art, Part I · Class 11 11 h reading
- ☐ An Introduction to Indian Art, Part II · Class 12 12 h reading
- ☐ Knowledge Traditions and Practices of India, Part I · Class 11 9.5 h reading

Economy

- ☐ Understanding Economic Development · Class 10 7.5 h reading
- ☐ ★ Introductory Macroeconomics · Class 12 8 h reading
- ☐ ★ Indian Economic Development · Class 11 12.5 h reading
- ☐ Introductory Microeconomics · Class 12 7 h reading

Society

- ☐ ★ Indian Society · Class 12 10.5 h reading
- ☐ Social Change and Development in India · Class 12 10.5 h reading
- ☐ Introducing Sociology · Class 11 8.5 h reading
- ☐ Understanding Society · Class 11 8.5 h reading

Science & Environment

- ☐ Biology · Class 12 11 h reading
- ☐ Curiosity · Class 6 21 h reading
- ☐ Curiosity · Class 7 3 h reading
- ☐ Curiosity · Class 8 5 h reading
- ☐ Exploration · Class 9 5.5 h reading
- ☐ Science · Class 10 Optional for Prelims

Foundation (Classes 6–9)

- ☐ Exploring Society: India and Beyond · Class 6 17.5 h reading
- ☐ Exploring Society: India and Beyond (Part 1) · Class 7 22.5 h reading
- ☐ Exploring Society: India and Beyond (Part 2) · Class 7 17.5 h reading
- ☐ Exploring Society: India and Beyond (Part 1) · Class 8 16 h reading
- ☐ Exploring Society: India and Beyond (Part 2) · Class 8 21 h reading
- ☐ Understanding Society: India and Beyond · Class 9 18.5 h reading



How to use this guide

- Download each book from the page or from the links in this guide: they open NCERT's own files.
- Read in the order shown, subject by subject, and skip what each book says to skip.
- After each chapter, try its real UPSC questions on the page (Test yourself).

Should I read old or new NCERTs for UPSC?

For Classes 10–12 there is no choice to make: NCERT has one edition of each, linked here. For Classes 6–9, read the new books if you need a foundation; see 'Old or new NCERT?' above.

Did UPSC drop the topics NCERT removed from its books?

No. NCERT trimmed its books to lighten school students' load. UPSC's syllabus is published in its own annual notification, which does not refer to NCERT books, so a topic stays examinable as long as it is in that syllabus.

Are NCERTs enough for Prelims?

No, but they are the base. Of the 640 Polity, Geography, History and Economy questions UPSC scored in Prelims 2016–2026, NCERT text could answer 179 — about 3 in 10 — and covered the topic of 169 more. 2026 answers follow UPSC's provisional key.

How many NCERTs do I need?

If you are short on time, the Essential 12: about 129 hours of first reading. 132 of the 179 Prelims questions NCERT could answer can be answered from these 12 books. Everything else on this page adds depth.

How this page was checked

Books and links. Every title, edition and file was read on NCERT's own website (ncert.nic.in) in Sept 2026, and every download was tested twice. Reading time is pages × 5 minutes.

Prelims questions. We used UPSC's official General Studies Paper I for 2016–2026, with its final answer keys for 2016–2025 and its provisional key for 2026, all published on upsc.gov.in. We checked all 647 Polity, Geography, History and Economy questions against the NCERT text. A question counts for a book only if that book's text is enough to reach UPSC's answer, either directly or by ruling out the other options. For 19 of the 179, you also need one fact NCERT doesn't state; we tell you that fact. Every supporting line was checked against the NCERT page it came from.

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