



MINIMALIST IAS

The UPSC Syllabus *X-Ray*

All 928 sub-topics of the UPSC syllabus – ranked by what UPSC has actually asked, with where to read each one, and boxes to tick it, revise it and own it.

928

sub-topics, Prelims to GS IV

2,659

UPSC questions mapped,
2016–2026

138

Core sub-topics that hold
half the GS questions

253

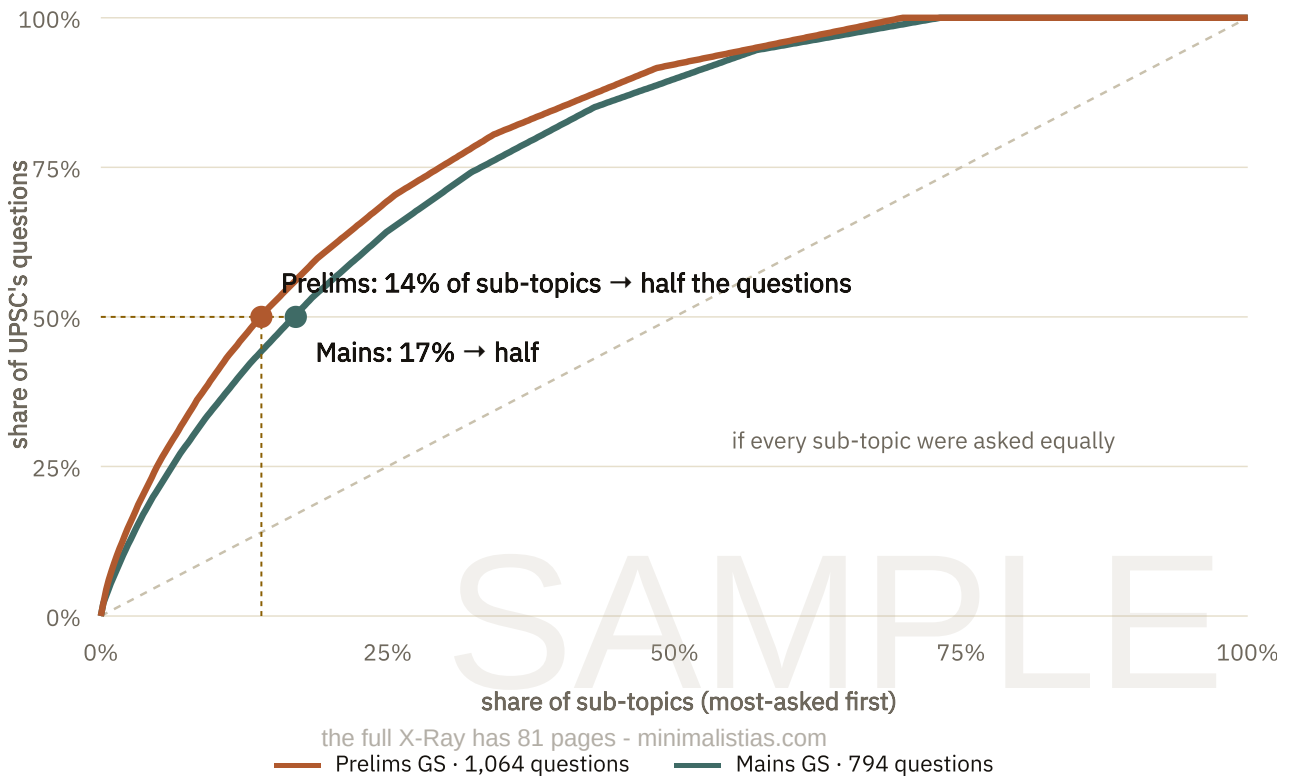
GS sub-topics not asked
once in 11 years

2027 edition · data to UPSC 2026

THE X-RAY

UPSC asks a few things again and again.

Each line climbs as you add sub-topics, most-asked first. If UPSC spread its questions evenly, the lines would follow the dashed diagonal. They shoot up instead: a small share of the syllabus carries most of the paper.



146

Prelims sub-topics (34%), Core and High together, are behind **81%** of Prelims GS questions.

176

Mains sub-topics (38%), Core and High together, are behind **89%** of Mains GS questions.

6 of 37

CSAT question types are behind 53% of CSAT questions — practise those until they're automatic.

How we counted. 1,064 Prelims GS, 801 CSAT and 794 Mains GS questions from 2016 to 2026, each placed under the sub-topic of the detailed syllabus it tests. A Mains question often tests two or three sub-topics and counts toward each: that is a sub-topic's weight, and why the Mains Core reaches 66% of Mains questions. Tiers tell you where to start and how much time to give, not what to leave out.

THE CORE · PRELIMS GS

The 60 that carry half of Prelims

These 60 sub-topics — 14% of the Prelims GS syllabus — are behind **51% of all 1,064 questions** UPSC set from 2016 to 2026. Tick each one when you have studied it, then again on the big checklist — on screen, tap a name to jump to its row.

#	SUB-TOPIC	QS	#	SUB-TOPIC	QS
☐	1 <u>Animals in the news: species & habitats</u> Environment & ecology	25	☐	31 <u>Atmosphere: structure, insolation & heat budget</u> Geography	8
☐	2 <u>Parliament: houses, sessions & conduct of business</u> Polity & governance	24	☐	32 <u>Directive Principles of State Policy</u> Polity & governance	8
☐	3 <u>Greenhouse gases, emissions & carbon markets</u> Environment & ecology	17	☐	33 <u>Financial & trade institutions</u> International relations & current affairs	8
☐	4 <u>Countries, regions & conflicts in the news</u> Geography	16	☐	34 <u>Global reports & who publishes them</u> International relations & current affairs	8
☐	5 <u>United Nations & its agencies</u> International relations & current affairs	15	☐	35 <u>Internet, telecom & wireless technology</u> Science & technology	8
☐	6 <u>Capital markets: shares, bonds & SEBI</u> Economy & social development	14	☐	36 <u>Rivers: Himalayan & peninsular systems</u> Geography	8
☐	7 <u>Digital, urban & infrastructure missions</u> International relations & current affairs	13	☐	37 <u>Global environmental bodies & initiatives</u> Environment & ecology	7
☐	8 <u>RBI & monetary policy tools</u> Economy & social development	12	☐	38 <u>Government securities & the money market</u> Economy & social development	7
☐	9 <u>Regulators & statutory bodies</u> Polity & governance	12	☐	39 <u>Infrastructure: transport, power & logistics</u> Economy & social development	7
☐	10 <u>Environmental laws of India</u> Environment & ecology	12	☐	40 <u>Renewable energy & storage</u> Geography	7
☐	11 <u>DNA, genes & genome editing</u> Science & technology	11	☐	41 <u>Wetlands, mangroves & special ecosystems</u> Environment & ecology	7
☐	12 <u>Global & economic groupings: G20, BRICS, QUAD</u> International relations & current affairs	11	☐	42 <u>Blockchain, crypto & fintech</u> Science & technology	7
☐	13 <u>Air pollution & air-quality standards</u> Environment & ecology	11	☐	43 <u>Digital public infrastructure & everyday tech</u> Science & technology	7
☐	14 <u>Digital payments & currency</u> Economy & social development	11	☐	44 <u>Everyday physics: light, sound, heat & electricity</u> Science & technology	7
☐	15 <u>Salient features & borrowed provisions</u> Polity & governance	10	☐	45 <u>Missiles & defence technology</u> Science & technology	7
☐	16 <u>Crops & cropping seasons</u> Geography	10	☐	46 <u>Money supply & credit creation</u> Economy & social development	7
☐	17 <u>Governor, Chief Minister & state legislature</u> Polity & governance	10	☐	47 <u>MSP & agricultural pricing</u> Economy & social development	7
☐	18 <u>Minerals, critical minerals & mining law</u> Geography	10	☐	48 <u>Buddhist sects, councils & texts</u> Ancient India	6
☐	19 <u>Sports, events & miscellany</u> International relations & current affairs	10	☐	49 <u>Deficits, debt & fiscal policy</u> Economy & social development	6
			☐	50 <u>Energy technology: batteries, hydrogen, fusion</u> Science & technology	6

Prelims • General Studies

DONE TIER

SUB-TOPIC · WHERE TO READ IT

HOW OFTEN

ASKED 2016-26

REVISED
30-90-180

Polity & governance

INDEX ↑

Making of the Constitution, Preamble & features

★★★★★ 2.1% · 13 sub-topics · 2 Core

[illegible]

YOUR PLAN

Pick the time you have. The order does the rest.

The X-Ray changes the order you study in and the time you give, not the syllabus. Core first and deepest, because it carries half the marks; then High; then Steady; Rare gets one quick read. Most sub-topics are a sitting or two — Prelims and Mains GS together. The 30·90·180 circles on every row keep what you studied from fading.

12 months

52 weeks · start _____

- Weeks 1–14** · Core: 138 sub-topics, about **10 a week**, in depth
- Weeks 15–27** · High: 184, about **15 a week**
- Weeks 28–42** · Steady: 316, about **22 a week**, plus **17 Rare read-throughs a week**
- Last 10 weeks** · revision rounds and full tests

9 months

39 weeks · start _____

- Weeks 1–10** · Core: 138 sub-topics, about **14 a week**, in depth
- Weeks 11–19** · High: 184, about **21 a week**
- Weeks 20–31** · Steady: 316, about **27 a week**, plus **22 Rare read-throughs a week**
- Last 8 weeks** · revision rounds and full tests

6 months

26 weeks · start _____

- Weeks 1–7** · Core: 138 sub-topics, about **20 a week**, in depth
- Weeks 8–13** · High: 184, about **31 a week**
- Weeks 14–21** · Steady: 316, about **40 a week**, plus **32 Rare read-throughs a week**
- Last 5 weeks** · revision rounds and full tests

Revise on a clock

When you tick a sub-topic, write the date beside it. Revise it after **30 days**, again at **90**, and once more at **180** — and shade one revision box each time. Three boxes shaded is a sub-topic you own.

Study once, score twice

(P+M) marks the 444 sub-topics UPSC asks in both Prelims and Mains. Read them for Mains depth; the Prelims facts come along for free.

Rare is not "skip"

253 GS sub-topics were not asked once from 2016 to 2026. They are still in the syllabus, and UPSC can return to them — read each one once, make two lines of notes, move on.

YOUR SITUATION

Seven kinds of aspirant. Where each one starts.

The tiers are the same for everyone; the entry point isn't. Find yourself below.

Just starting, not sure yet

Reading NCERTs, nothing decided.

Start with the Prelims Core — the first 60 sub-topics — and read each one's NCERT chapter alongside. Use the 12-month plan; High only after the Core is ticked.

The free 30-minute call, then First Ascent →

Working full-time

15–20 uneven hours a week.

Aim at Core + High only: 322 sub-topics across Prelims and Mains, behind four-fifths of the questions. Follow the 12-month plan's order at about 8 sub-topics a week, and leave Steady and Rare to a single pass at the end.

Ascent — a fixed weekly slot →

In college, attempt in 2028

Time is on your side; scatter is the risk.

This year: the Prelims Core only, from the NCERTs, with the progress page every Sunday. Next year: the full 12-month plan.

Basecamp free, then Summit →

Full-time, first attempt in 2027

Prelims on 23 May 2027.

Count your weeks to 23 May 2027. From mid-October 2026 that is about 31 weeks, and the plan runs: Core weeks 1–8, High 9–16, the rest 17–25, the last 6 for revision and tests. Starting later? Take the closest plan on the plan page. Read every P+M sub-topic at Mains depth.

Summit — Prelims to Interview →

Cleared Prelims, Mains didn't convert

You know the content; the marks didn't come.

Live in the Mains Core (78): write one 150-word answer for every sub-topic. The 20 GS IV Core sub-topics first. The current-affairs part of each source line, every week.

5 answers evaluated free, then Summit →

Stuck at Prelims after 2+ attempts

Close to the cut-off, the same mistakes.

The Prelims checklist only. Read each Core sub-topic's 'asked when' strip — a dark right end means read it first. The 30·90·180 circles, strictly. CSAT's 6 Core types daily.

First Ascent to diagnose, then Ascent →

On a tight budget

Every rupee has to count.

This document + the NCERTs + the site's free PYQ Vault cover the whole Core. After each Core sub-topic, solve its PYQs on the site.

Basecamp free; 5 answers free →

The plans named above: **Basecamp** is free: sign-up, the tracker and a 30-minute call. **First Ascent** is one diagnostic session, with three answers evaluated after it. **Ascent** is a one-to-one every week. **Summit** runs for 18 months or to your next Mains. Details at minimalistias.com/plans.