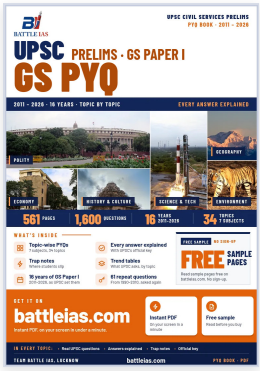
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UPSC Prelims PYQ

General Studies Paper I



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- 1,400+ "Where students slip" trap notes that name the word that catches most students
- 1990–2010 questions where UPSC came back to the idea, plus NDA, CDS, CAPF and State PCS questions
- Practice questions with an OMR sheet and a one-page revision sheet for every topic

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Indian Polity and Governance	Topics 1–7	**223 Qs**
Indian Economy	Topics 8–13	**347 Qs**
Environment and Ecology	Topics 14–18	**273 Qs**
History, Art and Culture	Topics 19–25	**270 Qs**
Geography	Topics 26–29	**167 Qs**
Science and Technology	Topics 30–32	**185 Qs**
IR, Defence and Current Affairs	Topics 33–34	**135 Qs**

Questions per subject, from "The paper at a glance" (p. 4).

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such as the Forest Rights Act and the Niyamgiri judgment (2013).

21. **The distribution of powers between the Centre and the States in the Indian Constitution is based on the scheme provided in the** [2012]

(a) Morley-Minto Reforms, 1909
(b) Montagu-Chelmsford Act, 1919
(c) Government of India Act, 1935
(d) Indian Independence Act, 1947

Ans. (c)

The three-list division of powers in the Seventh Schedule has one clear ancestor: the **Government of India Act, 1935**. That Act divided powers into a **Federal List**, a **Provincial List** and a **Concurrent List**, and gave the provinces autonomy. The Constitution's Union, State and Concurrent Lists follow this scheme closely, often entry by entry. Option (c). Eliminate. Morley–Minto (1909) introduced separate electorates; it did not divide powers.

Where students slip: Montagu–Chelmsford (1919) separated central and provincial subjects and introduced **dyarchy** in the provinces; it is **the closest distractor** because it was the first step towards dividing subjects, but it had no concurrent list. **How to think it through:** The Indian Independence Act, 1947 ended British rule and created two dominions. So (c). The 1935 Act is the single largest source of our Constitution: the federal scheme, the office of Governor, the judiciary, the Public Service Commissions, emergency provisions and administrative details all draw on it.

22. **The Constitution (Seventy-Third Amendment) Act, 1992, which aims at promoting the Panchayati Raj Institutions in the country, provides for which of the following ?** [2011]

1. Constitution of District Planning Committees.
2. State Election Commissions to conduct all panchayat elections.
3. Establishment of State Finance Commissions.

Select the correct answer using the codes given below :

(a) 1 only (b) 1 and 2 only
(c) 2 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

Ans. (c)

Check each body against the Article that creates it. **State Election Commissions** to conduct panchayat elections come from **Article 243K**, inserted by the **73rd Amendment**. Item 2 belongs. **State Finance Commissions** to review panchayat finances come from **Article 243I**, also from the 73rd Amendment. Item 3 belongs. Item 1, **District Planning Committees**, sits in **Article 243ZD**, which is in Part IXA (Municipalities), inserted by the **74th Amendment**. A DPC consolidates the plans of both panchayats and municipalities, which is why it is often discussed with panchayati raj, but the provision itself is not part of the 73rd Amendment.

Where students slip: The **shared district-level role** is the trap. **How to think it through:** So this book prints (c): items 2 and 3. UPSC's official key gave (d), counting the DPC because it covers panchayat plans too. My advice: know both the Article numbers and the reason behind the key. The 73rd Amendment also added the Eleventh Schedule (29 subjects), a five-year term (243E) and one-third reservation for women (243D).

NOTE:UPSC's official key for this question (released through RTI) gives (d). This book prints (c), because District Planning Committees are a 74th Amendment provision.

23. **Consider the following statements :** [2011]

In India, a Metropolitan Planning Committee

1. is constituted under the provisions of the Constitution of India.
2. prepares the draft development plans for metropolitan area.
3. has the sole responsibility for implementing Government sponsored schemes in the metropolitan area.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct ?

(a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 only
(c) 1 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

Ans. (a)

Statement 1: a **Metropolitan Planning Committee** is provided by **Article 243ZE**, inserted by the **74th**

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3. They were brought under the purview of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949 through an Amendment in 1966.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 only (b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

Ans. (b)

Three statements on **Urban Cooperative Banks**. Statement 1: they are supervised by local boards set up by State governments. False. UCBs have had **dual control**: the State Registrar of Cooperative Societies handles registration and management, and the **RBI** regulates the banking side. After the 2020 amendment to the Banking Regulation Act, the RBI's control was strengthened. There are no "local boards".

Where students slip: **Local boards** is an invented body. **How to think it through:** Statement 2: UCBs can issue equity and preference shares. True; the 2020 amendment allowed them to raise capital through equity, preference shares and bonds, with RBI approval. Statement 3: cooperative banks came under the Banking Regulation Act through an amendment in **1966**. True. So 2 and 3, option (b). The 2020 amendment followed the PMC Bank crisis (2019), which exposed weak oversight. Since 2021, the RBI has placed UCBs in a four-tier regulatory framework.

19. Which one of the following is likely to be the most inflationary in its effects? [2021]

(a) Repayment of public debt
(b) Borrowing from the public to finance a budget deficit
(c) Borrowing from the banks to finance a budget deficit
(d) Creation of new money to finance a budget deficit

Ans. (d)

Ask which way of financing a deficit adds the most **new money** to the economy. Option (d), creating new money (the central bank financing the deficit, called monetisation), adds fresh money without adding goods, so it is the most inflationary. Compare the others. Borrowing from the public (b) moves existing money from savers to the government; total spending power changes little. Borrowing from banks (c) also uses existing deposits, though it can crowd out private lending. Repayment of public debt (a) returns money to lenders and is the least likely to raise demand.

Where students slip: The trap is (c), because **banks seem to "create money"**, but their lending to government still comes from existing deposits and reserves, not from new central bank money. **How to think it through:** So (d). India ended automatic monetisation through ad hoc Treasury Bills in 1997, and the FRBM Act barred the RBI from buying government bonds in primary auctions, except under an escape clause for special circumstances such as a national calamity.

20. The money multiplier in an economy increases with which one of the following? [2021]

(a) Increase in the Cash Reserve Ratio in the banks
(b) Increase in the Statutory Liquidity Ratio in the banks
(c) Increase in the banking habit of the people
(d) Increase in the population of the country

Ans. (c)

The **money multiplier** measures how much broad money the banking system creates from each rupee of reserve money. It depends on two leakages: how much cash people hold outside banks, and how much banks must keep as reserves. Option (c), a stronger **banking habit**: if people keep more money in banks and less as cash, banks have more to lend, each loan returns as a new deposit, and the multiplier rises. Correct. Options (a) and (b): a higher **CRR** or **SLR** locks more funds, leaving less to lend, so the multiplier **falls**.

Where students slip: These are the **direction traps**. **How to think it through:** Option (d): population size alone does not change the ratio. So (c). A simple formula helps: multiplier = (1 + currency ratio) ÷ (currency ratio + reserve ratio). Lower the currency ratio or the reserve ratio, and the multiplier rises. The Jan Dhan accounts and digital payments have, over time, pushed India's banking habit up.

CONNECT THE DOTS
The same question had appeared word for word in Q 33 [2019]. → Money and banking

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Topic 1 · Making of the Constitution, Preamble, Features and Schedules

UPSC does not test dates of Assembly sessions for their own sake. It asks what a constitution is for. The same idea keeps returning in new clothes: a constitutional government is a limited

government.

Expect two kinds of questions here. One is political theory: liberty, equality, rule of law, the State. The other is the text: the Preamble's exact words, what each Schedule holds, what 1950 looked like before 1976 changed it.

My advice: learn the original Preamble and the 42nd Amendment changes side by side. Many wrong options are built from that gap.

A · UPSC QUESTIONS, 2026 TO 2011

1. Consider the following statements with reference to the Constitution of India : [2026]

1. There is no Article in the Constitution of India that specifies that the Constitution of India will be officially called the 'Constitution of India'.
2. There is no Article in the Constitution of India that specifies that the Indian Independence Act, 1947 and the Government of India Act, 1935 stand repealed.
3. There is no Article in the Constitution of India that mentions 26th January, 1950 as the date of the commencement of the Constitution of India.

Which one of the following conclusions based on the above statements is correct ?

(a) All three statements are correct.
(b) There is no correct statement.
(c) There are two correct statements that include statement 3.
(d) There is only one correct statement.

Ans. (b)

Three negative statements in a row are tiring to judge, so first turn each one into a plain question: "Is there an Article that does this?" Now walk to the very end of the Constitution, because the closing Articles deal with exactly these housekeeping matters. **Article 393** gives the short title: "This Constitution may be called the Constitution of India." So statement 1 is wrong. **Article 395** repeals the **Indian Independence Act, 1947** and the **Government of India Act, 1935**, so statement 2 is wrong too. **Article 394** says the remaining provisions come into force on **26 January 1950**, which it calls "the commencement of this Constitution", so statement 3 also fails. With all three wrong, only option (b) survives; (a), (c) and (d) each need at least one true statement.

Where students slip: The **negative framing** is the whole trap: a student who knows Article 395 can still tick the wrong box by forgetting the "no". **How to think it through:** Remember two dates as well. Citizenship, elections and the provisional Parliament took effect on 26 November 1949, the day of adoption. The rest began on 26 January 1950, chosen because the Purna Swaraj pledge was taken on that day in 1930.

2. Consider the following statements about the provisions pertaining to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes in India : [2026]

1. Provisions regarding the administration of the Tribal Areas in the States of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram are given in the Fifth Schedule of the Constitution of India.
2. Some tribes of India are entitled to exemption from paying Income Tax on certain incomes.
3. The Constitution of India provides for reservation of seats in Panchayats for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes.

Which one of the following conclusions based on the above statements is correct ?

(a) There are two correct statements, that include statement 2.
(b) There are two correct statements, that are statements 1 and 3.
(c) There is only one correct statement.
(d) All three statements are correct.

Ans. (a)

Take each statement on its own and then match the count to the options. Statement 1 names **Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram**. The

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moment you see these four States, think **Sixth Schedule**, not Fifth. Their tribal areas have **Autonomous District Councils**; the Fifth Schedule covers Scheduled Areas in other States such as Jharkhand and Odisha.

Where students slip: So statement 1 is wrong, and it is the **Fifth–Sixth swap** UPSC loves. **How to think it through:** Statement 2 sounds surprising, but it is true: **Section 10(26)** of the Income-tax Act exempts certain income of Scheduled Tribe members living in specified north-eastern areas and Ladakh. Statement 3 is true: **Article 243D** reserves Panchayat seats for SCs and STs, and at least one-third of those reserved seats go to SC and ST women. So we have two correct statements, 2 and 3. Option (a) says "two correct, including statement 2", which fits. Option (b) wrongly pairs 1 and 3; (c) and (d) get the count wrong. A memory hook I give in class: the Sixth Schedule is "ATMM", the four north-eastern States. The same swap returned in 2015, 2019 and 2022, so fix it once and you collect marks for years.

CONNECT THE DOTS
The same Fifth/Sixth swap returns in 2015, 2019 and 2022 questions. → Making of the Constitution, Preamble, features and schedules

3. Consider the following statements : [2025]

With reference to the Constitution of India, if an area in a State is declared as Scheduled Area under the Fifth Schedule

I. the State Government loses its executive power in such areas and a local body assumes total administration
II. the Union Government can take over the total administration of such areas under certain circumstances on the recommendations of the Governor

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) I only (b) II only
(c) Both I and II (d) Neither I nor II

Ans. (d)

Read the opening line carefully: the area is a **Scheduled Area** under the **Fifth Schedule**. Now ask what the Fifth Schedule actually changes. It does not take the area away from the State. The State's executive power still extends there; what is added is a special role for the **Governor**, who reports to the President, can direct that a law shall not apply or shall apply with changes, and can make regulations on tribal land and money-lending, with a **Tribes Advisory Council** to advise. Statement I says the State "loses its executive power" and a local body takes "total administration". Both parts are wrong; that picture belongs more to the Sixth Schedule's autonomous councils, and even they never replace the State entirely. Statement II says the Union can "take over the total administration". The Schedule only lets the Union give **directions** to the State on administering these areas.

Where students slip: Notice how **directions has been stretched into take over**. In this topic, strong words like "loses", "total" and "take over" are warning lights. **How to think it through:** Both statements fail, so the answer is (d). **PESA, 1996**, which gives gram sabhas real power in Fifth Schedule areas, is the natural next thing to revise.

4. Who was the Provisional President of the Constituent Assembly before Dr. Rajendra Prasad took over ? [2024]

(a) C. Rajagopalachari
(b) Dr. B.R. Ambedkar
(c) T.T. Krishnamachari
(d) Dr. Sachchidananda Sinha

Ans. (d)

A one-line fact question, but all four names belong to the Constituent Assembly, so you must tie each name to its role rather than to fame. Recall the first sitting on **9 December 1946**. Following French practice, the oldest member, Dr **Sachchidananda Sinha**, was made the temporary President. Dr Rajendra Prasad was elected permanent President on 11 December 1946. Now clear the others. Option (b): Dr **B.R. Ambedkar** chaired the Drafting Committee, a different post. Option (c): **T.T. Krishnamachari** was a member of that committee. Option (a): C. Rajagopalachari never presided over the Assembly. So (d).

Where students slip: The trap is that **big names tempt you** when the question is really about a role. **How to think it through:** Keep a small table of posts in your notes: H.C. Mukherjee as Vice-President, **B.N. Rau** as Constitutional Adviser, Nehru moving the Objectives Resolution on 13 December 1946, and adoption on 26 November 1949. Each of these has been, or can easily become, a one-liner in Prelims.

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Indian Economy: how to use this part

The economy questions are arranged by topic, not by year. Each topic has the UPSC questions from 2026 back to 2011 with an explanation (Part A), then, in a shorter form, a few older 1990-2010 questions whose idea UPSC came back to (Part A2). After that come questions from other exams: the NDA, CDS and CAPF papers of UPSC and State PCS prelims (Part B), original practice questions (Part C) with an OMR sheet (Part D), and a one-page revision sheet (Part E).

The table shows how many questions UPSC asked from each topic, year by year. Look at it before you start. The big rows tell you where to spend your hours.

TREND BOX · 2011–2026

Topic	2026	2025	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	Total
Money and banking	3	2	3	5	3	7	4	6	6	5	6	4	5	9	3	5	76
Fiscal policy	1	6	–	1	3	2	–	–	4	3	3	3	2	2	2	6	38
External sector	–	2	3	6	7	2	8	5	–	4	8	4	2	3	2	6	62
Financial markets	6	4	4	3	4	2	3	1	1	2	3	1	–	–	–	2	36
Agriculture	1	3	2	3	2	4	12	5	6	3	5	4	6	2	4	3	65
Growth, industry and infrastructure	4	5	5	2	3	2	1	8	6	6	4	5	1	5	9	4	70
All topics	**15**	**22**	**17**	**20**	**22**	**19**	**28**	**25**	**23**	**23**	**29**	**21**	**16**	**21**	**20**	**26**	**347**

2026 answers follow UPSC's provisional key (May 2026). A question UPSC dropped from evaluation is still printed, with a note.

DIAGNOSE FIRST

Before you read a single explanation, test yourself. Take twenty Part A questions from different topics, cover the answers and solve them under time.

Then sort your mistakes into three heaps. Heap 1: you did not know the fact or the mechanism. Heap 2: you knew it but missed a word like 'steadily', 'only' or 'not'. Heap 3: you knew it, read it right, and still changed your answer.

Count each heap. In economy, the count usually shows whether you need concepts, current facts or calmer reading.

YOUR PRESCRIPTION

If Heap 1 is your biggest: separate concept gaps from current-affairs gaps. For concepts, redo Topics 8 to 10 with the revision sheet open. For schemes and reports, make a one-line card for each: purpose, ministry or body, one number.

If Heap 2 is your biggest: mark every trend word ('steadily', 'drastically', 'enormously') and every absolute word before you look at the options. Economy traps live in these words.

If Heap 3 is your biggest: trust a mechanism you can explain. Change an answer only when you can name the fact that proves the first choice wrong.

Whatever your heap, do each practice set (Part C) on its OMR sheet with a timer, at about 72 seconds a question.

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Environment and Ecology: how to use this part

The environment questions are arranged by topic, not by year. Each topic has the UPSC questions from 2026 back to 2011 with an explanation (Part A), then, in a shorter form, a few older 1990-2010 questions whose idea UPSC came back to (Part A2). After that come questions from other exams: the CDS and CAPF papers of UPSC and a State PCS prelims (Part B), original practice questions (Part C) with an OMR sheet (Part D), and a one-page revision sheet (Part E).

The table shows how many questions UPSC asked from each topic, year by year. Look at it before you start. The big rows tell you where to spend your hours.

TREND BOX · 2011–2026

Topic	2026	2025	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	Total
Ecology and ecosystems	1	–	2	2	3	9	1	1	3	1	–	1	3	6	3	4	40
Biodiversity and species	3	1	8	9	5	3	2	4	3	3	6	3	7	4	6	6	73
Protected areas and wetlands	1	–	–	1	2	–	6	4	2	4	1	2	5	3	3	4	38
Climate change and conventions	3	7	2	2	3	2	2	2	3	3	9	4	2	–	4	1	49
Pollution and green technology	2	5	6	7	5	7	5	10	2	3	2	3	4	4	3	5	73
All topics	**10**	**13**	**18**	**21**	**18**	**21**	**16**	**21**	**13**	**14**	**18**	**13**	**21**	**17**	**19**	**20**	**273**

2026 answers follow UPSC's provisional key (May 2026). A question UPSC dropped from evaluation is still printed, with a note.

DIAGNOSE FIRST

Before you read a single explanation, test yourself. Take twenty Part A questions from different topics, cover the answers and solve them under time.

Then sort your mistakes into three heaps. Heap 1: you did not know the species, place or fact. Heap 2: you knew it but missed a word like 'only', 'all' or 'endemic'. Heap 3: you knew it, read it right, and still changed your answer.

Count each heap. In environment, the count usually shows whether you need more facts, more careful reading or more confidence.

YOUR PRESCRIPTION

If Heap 1 is your biggest: make cards. One card for each species (where, status, one unusual fact), each protected area (State, what it protects) and each convention or fund (parent body, year).

If Heap 2 is your biggest: circle every absolute word ('all', 'only', 'any', 'completely') and every place word ('endemic', 'found only in') before you look at the options. Environment traps live in these words.

If Heap 3 is your biggest: trust a fact you can place on a map or in a law. Change an answer only when you can name the fact that proves the first choice wrong.

Whatever your heap, do each practice set (Part C) on its OMR sheet with a timer, at about 72 seconds a question.

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Topic 14 · Ecology, Ecosystems and Biogeochemical Cycles

This topic is the science underneath the whole subject: food chains, succession, nutrient cycles,

ecosystem services and how one species affects another. UPSC asks two or three such questions most years.

The questions reward reasoning more than memory. If butterflies vanish, what follows? Does photosynthesis add CO_2 or remove it? Work

out each chain of cause and effect before you read the options.

In class I say: draw the arrow first. Producer to consumer, source to sink. Most questions here are one arrow drawn the wrong way.

A · UPSC QUESTIONS, 2026 TO 2011

1. Which of the following best explain(s) the rationale for protecting mangrove ecosystems in the context of climate resilience ? [2026]

1. Mangroves reduce tidal energy and store freshwater, making them ideal sites for paddy cultivation in saline estuarine belts.
2. Their salt-sensitive roots filter seawater, making mangroves key to converting coastal land into freshwater aquaculture zones.
3. By withstanding tidal surges and offering biomass resources, mangroves function both as natural bio-shields and livelihood bases for rural communities.

Select the answer using the code given below :

(a) 1 only (b) 1 and 2
(c) 2 and 3 (d) 3 only

Ans. (d)

Ask what mangroves actually do. They withstand tidal surges and cyclones, acting as natural **bio-shields**, and provide fish, crabs, honey and fuel for coastal villages. That is statement 3. Statement 1 says they store fresh water for paddy. They grow in salty water and store no fresh water for farming.

Where students slip: Statement 2 calls their roots **salt-sensitive**; mangroves are famous for being salt-tolerant. **How to think it through:** Turning them into aquaculture ponds is precisely what destroys them. So only 3, option (d). During the 1999 Odisha super cyclone, villages behind mangroves suffered far fewer deaths. India's MISHTI scheme (2023) promotes mangrove planting.

2. One of the following regions has the world's largest tropical peatland, which holds about three years worth of global carbon emissions from fossil fuels; and the possible destruction of which can exert detrimental effect on the global climate. Which one of the following denotes that region ? [2024]

(a) Amazon Basin
(b) Congo Basin
(c) Kikori Basin
(d) Rio de la Plata Basin

Ans. (b)

The **Cuvette Centrale** peatland in the **Congo Basin**, mapped only in 2017, is the world's largest tropical peatland, storing about 29 billion tonnes of carbon, roughly three years of global fossil-fuel emissions. Option (b).

Where students slip: The **Amazon** (a) is **the reflex answer** for anything about tropical carbon; it has peatlands too, but smaller. **How to think it through:** The Kikori and Rio de la Plata basins are not the largest. So (b). Peat is waterlogged, half-decayed plant matter; if drained or burnt, it releases its carbon quickly.

3. Which one of the following shows a unique relationship with an insect that has coevolved with it and that is the only insect that can pollinate this tree ? [2024]

(a) Fig (b) Mahua
(c) Sandalwood (d) Silk cotton

Ans. (a)

Look for the phrase "only insect that can pollinate". Each **fig** species is pollinated by its own **fig wasp**, which enters the closed fig, pollinates the flowers inside and lays eggs there. Neither can

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History, Art and Culture: how to use this part

The history and culture questions are arranged by topic, not by year. Each topic has the UPSC questions from 2026 back to 2011 with an explanation (Part A), then, in a shorter form, a few older 2010-2013 questions whose idea UPSC came back to (Part A2). After that come questions from the CDS papers of UPSC (Part B), original practice questions (Part C) with an OMR sheet (Part D), and a one-page revision sheet (Part E).

The table shows how many questions UPSC asked from each topic, year by year. Look at it before you start. The big rows tell you where to spend your hours.

TREND BOX · 2011–2026

Topic	2026	2025	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	Total
Buddhism, Jainism and other sects	2	–	2	2	2	–	3	1	2	1	1	1	1	3	1	1	23
Ancient India	8	6	1	2	4	4	6	2	–	1	2	1	1	2	3	3	46
Medieval India	–	2	1	3	5	4	–	3	1	1	4	3	2	1	1	–	31
British rule to 1919	1	1	1	2	2	3	8	2	9	3	4	3	3	1	5	4	52
Gandhian era and development	4	6	1	–	2	3	1	3	5	4	2	5	2	5	6	5	54
Architecture and sculpture	3	–	–	3	1	2	–	2	1	1	1	1	3	3	2	–	23
Painting, performing arts and literature	3	1	4	1	–	5	1	2	4	3	3	3	8	1	2	–	41
All topics	**21**	**16**	**10**	**13**	**16**	**21**	**19**	**15**	**22**	**14**	**17**	**17**	**20**	**16**	**20**	**13**	**270**

2026 answers follow UPSC's provisional key (May 2026). A question UPSC dropped from evaluation is still printed, with a note.

DIAGNOSE FIRST

Before you read a single explanation, test yourself. Take twenty Part A questions from different topics, cover the answers and solve them under time.

Then sort your mistakes into three heaps. Heap 1: you did not know the person, place, term or date. Heap 2: you knew it but missed a word like 'only', 'not', 'first' or 'earliest'. Heap 3: you knew it, read it right, and still changed your answer.

Count each heap. In history, the count usually shows whether you need more facts, more careful reading or more confidence.

YOUR PRESCRIPTION

If Heap 1 is your biggest: build a timeline and two-column sheets (Buddhist and Jain, Nagara and Dravida, Moderate and Extremist). Put every new fact in exactly one place.

If Heap 2 is your biggest: circle 'not', 'only', 'first', 'earliest' and every date in the stem before you look at the options. History traps hide in these words.

If Heap 3 is your biggest: trust a fact you can tie to a source, a person or a year. Change an answer only when you can name the fact that proves the first choice wrong.

Whatever your heap, do each practice set (Part C) on its OMR sheet with a timer, at about 72 seconds a question.

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Topic 19 · Buddhism, Jainism and Other Sects

The Buddha, Mahavira and the sects around them: doctrines, councils, texts, symbols and the places linked to their lives. UPSC asks one or two such questions almost every year.

I find most mistakes here come from mixing the two faiths. I ask students to keep one sheet with two columns, Buddhist on the left and Jain on the right, and to put every new term in one column only.

In class I say: a term that sounds Buddhist may be Jain. Check the column before you choose.

A · UPSC QUESTIONS, 2026 TO 2011

1. Among the four main forms of existence of life recognized in Jainism, which one of the following is not included ? [2026]

(a) Deva (gods)
(b) Yaksha (demi-gods)
(c) Manushya (humans)
(d) Tiryancha (animals and plants)

Ans. (b)

Jainism names four **gatis**, or states of birth: **deva** (heavenly beings), **manushya** (humans), **tiryancha** (animals, plants and other beings) and **naraki** (hell beings).

Where students slip: Yaksha is **a well-known figure in Jain art**, guarding the Tirthankaras, so it feels like it belongs. **How to think it through:** But it is not one of the four gatis. So (b). When three options are clearly in a fixed list, the fourth familiar-sounding word is usually the impostor.

2. What does an empty seat represent in early Buddhist iconography ? [2026]

(a) The meditation of the Buddha
(b) The Buddha's First Sermon
(c) The Buddha's Mahaparinibbana
(d) The Buddha's Mahabhinishkramana

Ans. (a)

Early Buddhist art at **Bharhut** and **Sanchi** shows the Buddha only through **symbols**. Each symbol stands for an event: - the **empty seat** under the Bodhi tree: his **meditation** and enlightenment; - the **wheel**: the First Sermon (b); - the **stupa**: the Mahaparinibbana (c); - the **riderless horse**: the Great Departure (d). So (a).

Where students slip: Each wrong option is a real event with its own symbol, which is why the matching matters.

3. With reference to ancient India, Gautama Buddha was generally known by which of the following epithets ? [2024]

1. Nayaputta
2. Shakyamuni
3. Tathagata

Select the correct answer using the code given below :

(a) 1 only
(b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1, 2 and 3
(d) None of the above are epithets of Gautama Buddha

Ans. (b)

2. **Shakyamuni**, "sage of the Shakyas", is the Buddha. Right. 3. **Tathagata**, "one who has thus gone", was the Buddha's own name for himself. Right. 1.

Where students slip: Nayaputta (Nataputta) is **Mahavira's clan name**, from the Jnatrika clan. **How to think it through:** Wrong. So 2 and 3, option (b). Same age, same region, different teacher.

CONNECT THE DOTS

The Buddha's names and signs keep coming back: his epithets here, Maitreya the future Buddha in Q 14 [2018], and the empty seat that stands for him in Q 2 [2026]. I make students learn the names, symbols and future forms as one list. → Buddhism, Jainism and other sects

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Geography: how to use this part

The geography questions are arranged by topic, not by year. Each topic has the UPSC questions from 2026 back to 2011 with an explanation (Part A), then, in a shorter form, a few older 2011-2013 questions whose idea UPSC came back to (Part A2). After that come questions from the CDS papers of UPSC (Part B), original practice questions (Part C) with an OMR sheet (Part D), and a one-page revision sheet (Part E).

The table shows how many questions UPSC asked from each topic, year by year. Look at it before you start. The big rows tell you where to spend your hours.

TREND BOX · 2011–2026

Topic	2026	2025	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	Total
Physical world	–	7	9	3	2	3	1	2	1	–	–	5	2	8	5	5	53
India: relief, rivers and climate	4	–	2	3	3	3	2	2	3	5	2	4	3	1	2	1	40
India: resources and land use	1	–	1	4	3	1	2	3	1	–	2	4	6	4	2	4	38
World places and regions	4	5	7	4	5	–	1	1	2	2	–	1	2	1	–	1	36
All topics	**9**	**12**	**19**	**14**	**13**	**7**	**6**	**8**	**7**	**7**	**4**	**14**	**13**	**14**	**9**	**11**	**167**

2026 answers follow UPSC's provisional key (May 2026). A question UPSC dropped from evaluation is still printed, with a note.

DIAGNOSE FIRST

Before you read a single explanation, test yourself. Take twenty Part A questions from different topics, cover the answers and solve them under time.

Then sort your mistakes into three heaps. Heap 1: you did not know the place, process or figure. Heap 2: you knew it but missed a word like 'only', 'not', 'largest' or 'north of'. Heap 3: you knew it, read it right, and still changed your answer.

Count each heap. In geography, the count usually shows whether you need more map work, more careful reading or more trust in the reason behind a fact.

YOUR PRESCRIPTION

If Heap 1 is your biggest: work with an outline map of India and one of the world. Mark every river, hill range, strait and country from Part A on it. Most geography facts stick only when you can see where they are.

If Heap 2 is your biggest: circle 'only', 'not', 'largest', 'first' and every direction word in the stem before you look at the options. Geography traps hide in north and south, east and west.

If Heap 3 is your biggest: trust a fact you can explain with a process: heating, rotation, slope or rock. Change an answer only when you can name the process that proves the first choice wrong.

Whatever your heap, do each practice set (Part C) on its OMR sheet with a timer, at about 72 seconds a question.

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Topic 26 · Physical Geography: Earth, Atmosphere and Oceans

The physical Earth: interior and plate movement, rocks and weathering, the atmosphere and its heat budget, winds, clouds and rain, climate types, oceans, tides and currents. Since 2023 UPSC has opened the paper with a run of such questions, five or six at a time.

I find these questions punish memory without reasons. I ask students to answer every statement with a "because": isotherms bend poleward over winter oceans because water stays warm. If you cannot say the because, you do not yet know the fact.

In class I keep one diagram on the board all term: the globe with its pressure belts, wind belts and the ITCZ. Most of this topic can be read off that one drawing.

A · UPSC QUESTIONS, 2026 TO 2011

1. Which of the following are the evidences of the phenomenon of continental drift? [2025]

I. The belt of ancient rocks from Brazil coast matches with those from Western Africa.
II. The gold deposits of Ghana are derived from the Brazil plateau when the two continents lay side by side.
III. The Gondwana system of sediments from India is known to have its counterparts in six different landmasses of the Southern Hemisphere.

Select the correct answer using the code given below.

(a) I and III only (b) I and II only
(c) I, II and III (d) II and III only

Ans. (c)

I. Matching **ancient rock belts** in Brazil and West Africa. II. **Ghana's gold** has its source rocks in the Brazil plateau. III. **Gondwana** sediments have counterparts across the southern continents. All three are classic evidence, option (c).

Where students slip: Statement II sounds like a fun fact, but it is a textbook proof (NCERT Class XI).

2. Consider the following statements : [2025]

Statement I : The amount of dust particles in the atmosphere is more in subtropical and temperate areas than in equatorial and polar regions. Statement II : Subtropical and temperate areas have less dry winds. Which one of the following is correct in respect of the above statements?

(a) Both Statement I and Statement II are correct and Statement II explains Statement I
(b) Both Statement I and Statement II are correct but Statement II does not explain Statement I
(c) Statement I is correct but Statement II is not correct
(d) Statement I is not correct but Statement II is correct

Ans. (c)

I is true: dust is highest over the **subtropical and temperate** belts.

Where students slip: II is false: these belts have **more** dry winds, which lift desert dust. **How to think it through:** It reverses the real reason. So option (c).

3. Consider the following statements : [2025]

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Topic 30 · Biology, Health and Biotechnology

Cells and the body, disease and vaccines, microbes, and the biotechnology behind GM crops, gene editing, cloning and gene therapy. UPSC asks three to seven of these a year, and the subject follows the news: H1N1, Zika, COVID-19 vaccines, CRISPR.

I find students fear biotech words more than they need to. I ask them to reduce every term to one plain sentence, what it is and what it does: Cas9 is an enzyme that cuts DNA where a guide RNA leads it.

In class I say: when a new disease or vaccine is in the news, learn three things about it: the microbe, how it spreads and how the vaccine is made.

A · UPSC QUESTIONS, 2026 TO 2011

1. Which of the following statements with regard to genetic medicine is/are correct ? [2026]

1. Genetic medicines correct/compensate for the faulty genes responsible for disease.
2. Engineered viruses and lipid nanoparticles are used as carriers of the genetic medicine.
3. Genetic medicines alter the entire DNA sequence.

Select the answer using the code given below :

(a) 1 only (b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 2 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

Ans. (c)

1. Right. **Genetic medicines** fix or make up for faulty genes. 2. Right. They use **viral vectors** (AAV) and **lipid nanoparticles** as carriers. 3. Wrong.

Where students slip: They change **a small stretch, not the entire DNA**. **How to think it through:** So 1 and 2, option (c). "Entire" is the giveaway.

2. Which of the following statements with regard to GenomeIndia Project is/are correct ? [2026]

1. It is a part of the Human Genome Project.
2. The project is funded by the Department of Biotechnology (DBT), Government of India.
3. Its primary aim is to build a catalogue of genetic diversity of the Indian population.

Select the answer using the code given below :

(a) 1 only (b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 2 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

Ans. (b)

2. Right. **GenomeIndia** is funded by the **DBT**. 3. Right. It catalogues Indian genetic diversity (10,000 genomes). 1. Wrong.

Where students slip: It is **India's own project**, not part of the older international Human Genome Project. **How to think it through:** So 2 and 3, option (b).

3. Consider the following pairs : [2025]

Plant	Description
I. Cassava	Woody shrub
II. Ginger	Herb with pseudostem
III. Malabar spinach	Herbaceous climber
IV. Mint	Annual shrub
V. Papaya	Woody shrub

How many of the above pairs are correctly matched?

(a) Only two (b) Only three
(c) Only four (d) All the five

Ans. (b)

I. **Cassava** is a woody shrub. Right. II. **Ginger** is a herb with a **pseudostem**. Right. III. **Malabar spinach** is a herbaceous climber. Right. IV. **Mint** is a **perennial herb**, not an annual shrub. **How to think it through:** Wrong. V. **Papaya** is **soft-stemmed, a giant**

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