

UPSC Optional Subject List: Syllabus, Preparation Tips, Downloadable PDF

IAS aspirants preparing for UPSC Mains examination knowing about the **UPSC Optional Subjects** is essential. Candidates need to choose one subject from a list of 48 UPSC optional subjects. It is divided into two papers (Paper 6 & Paper 7), each carries 250 marks totalling 500 marks. **Some of the UPSC optional subjects for the candidates to choose are Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Science, Anthropology, Botany, Chemistry, Civil Engineering and Economics.** The questions in the UPSC optional papers test the candidates' deep analytical, conceptual, and application-based understanding of the chosen subject. In this blog, you can find the UPSC optional subject list and how to choose the right and best optional subject for UPSC.

List of 48 UPSC Optional Subjects

Below, we have given the list of 48 UPSC optional subjects provided for candidates for the Mains examination, which includes **25 core subjects and 23 literature optional**. Go through the UPSC optional subject list and choose the preferred one:

25 Core Subjects

Humanities & Social Sciences

- Anthropology
- Economics
- Geography
- History
- Philosophy
- Political Science & International Relations
- Psychology
- Public Administration
- Sociology

Science & Engineering

- Agriculture
- Botany
- Chemistry
- Geology

- Mathematics
- Physics
- Statistics
- Zoology
- Civil Engineering
- Electrical Engineering
- Mechanical Engineering

Professional Subjects

- Commerce & Accountancy
- Law
- Management
- Medical Science

23 Literature Optionals

- Assamese
- Bengali
- Bodo
- Dogri
- English
- Gujarati
- Hindi
- Kannada
- Kashmiri
- Konkani
- Maithili
- Malayalam
- Manipuri
- Marathi
- Nepali
- Odia
- Punjabi
- Sanskrit
- Santali
- Sindhi
- Tamil
- Telugu
- Urdu

Most Popular & Best Optional Subjects for UPSC (High Success Rate)

You might ask “*Which is best optional subject for UPSC*”. In the following table, we have given the top 20 popular (number of candidates appeared) and best (high success rate) optionals subjects for UPSC based on the available 73rd Annual Report for 2022-23 by Union Public Service Commission (UPSC). It may provide useful and meaningful insights in the process of selecting the UPSC optional subject:

S.No	Optional Subject	Appeared	Recommended	Success Rate (%)
1	Political Science & International Relations	1,571	140	8.9
2	Anthropology	1,159	90	7.8
3	Sociology	1,087	92	8.5
4	Geography	1,079	66	6.1
5	History	574	25	4.4
6	Mathematics	513	50	9.7
7	Public Administration	361	31	8.6
8	Philosophy	265	20	7.5
9	Literature of Hindi	211	22	10.4
10	Medical Science	196	24	12.2
11	Economics	190	25	13.2
12	Law	180	21	11.7
13	Mechanical Engineering	160	11	6.9
14	Commerce & Accountancy	140	21	15
15	Civil Engineering	135	10	7.4
16	Physics	131	7	5.3
17	Chemistry	127	14	11
18	Psychology	127	15	11.8
19	Electrical Engineering	117	7	6
20	Agriculture	115	12	10.4

How to Choose the Right Optional Subject to Succeed in UPSC Exam?

Choosing the right UPSC optional subject is crucial for the smooth UPSC selection process. Below, we have given several factors to find the best optional subject for UPSC Mains examination suitable for you,

- **Interest & Aptitude:** Make sure to choose the subject that you aren't tired of studying for hours. And, if the subject is aligned with your talent and academic background, then your success in the UPSC optional paper is guaranteed.
- **Study Material & Resources:** If you have chosen the subject, but struggle to access the authentic study materials and resources, the preparation goes astray. So, ensure the availability of books, notes, test series and reliable mentors for guidance.
- **Scoring Trends:** Go through the scoring trends of the past in the optional papers, which may offer you the important insights. Don't rely on this method solely, it just gives you additional information for your decision.

Apart from this, do a SWOT analysis, checking your strengths (background and interest), weaknesses (time and knowledge gaps), opportunities (syllabus overlap) and threats (unavailability of study resources), to figure out the right UPSC optional subject for a better score.

Preparation Tips for UPSC Optional Paper

If you have chosen the subject, consider applying the following tips in your preparation to excel in the UPSC Mains examination:

- Get the syllabus of the chosen optional subject and understand the topics and the details you want to learn completely. This must be the first and foremost in your preparation towards cracking the UPSC optional paper.
- Analyze the last 10 year question papers to identify the questions, patterns and themes that are repeatedly asked or addressed.
- Choose 1 to 3 authoritative books per topic and study them diligently and accurately. No need to lose yourself in many books, just stick to the books and absorb the knowledge out of it.
- Answer writing is the foundational skill for UPSC Mains examination. So, ensure to practice answer writing through previous year question papers, mock tests and engaging with the test series. Develop your skills in structuring the answers, presenting the points logically with coherent flow.
- Take notes while you're researching and preparing to flesh out the major concepts and details. It also helps you during the revision stage. Also, focus on understanding the core concepts and gathering the current events and news that goes along with it.
- If it is possible, get guidance from the subject matter experts. More than breaking down the concepts for you, you will get to know "what to study and how to study".

Also read: [How to Start UPSC Preparation from Zero level](#)

Clear the UPSC Optional Paper Easily with KingMakers IAS Academy

Whether you're in the choosing stage or preparation stage, we guide you to attain the goal you wish to attain. From helping you to select the suitable optional subject to teaching the fundamentals to complex concepts and information, you will get a clear path to excel in the UPSC Mains. At KingMakers IAS Academy, you can get the mentors, subject matter experts, excellent study material and numerous mock tests - all things that lead you to crack the UPSC mains with ease.