

# GS Paper 1 Revision Handbook

A PYQ-Driven Static-Topic Playbook  
For the Serious Prelims Aspirant

2021 · 2022 · 2023 · 2024 · 2025

Six static spines power 85% of every paper. This handbook maps them — with frequency counts, trap patterns, representative PYQs, and a 50-topic core list — so you can study the right things, in the right order, with measurable benchmarks.

**500**

QUESTIONS  
ANALYZED

**12**

SUBJECTS  
MAPPED

**50**

CORE 80/20  
TOPICS

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NAVIGATE THE HANDBOOK

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# 01 · Bottom Line Up Front

Across 2021–2025, just **six static spines** have generated about **85 of every 100 questions** in GS Paper 1. Master these from the standard sources and drill multi-statement PYQs — everything else is fine-tuning.



| # | Static Spine                     | Core Content That Pays Off   |
|---|----------------------------------|--|
| 1 | <b>Polity</b>                    | Constitution, Parliament, Judiciary, Constitutional & Statutory Bodies |
| 2 | <b>Economy</b>                   | RBI / Monetary Policy, Banking, Budget, Balance of Payments            |
| 3 | <b>Environment &amp; Ecology</b> | Conservation Acts, Climate Conventions, Pollution, Species             |
| 4 | <b>Geography</b>                 | Physical, Indian, World Geography + Mapping                            |
| 5 | <b>History &amp; Culture</b>     | Buddhism/Jainism, Freedom Struggle, Temple Architecture                |
| 6 | <b>Science &amp; Technology</b>  | Space, Biotech, Defence, Energy & Materials                            |

### ★ THE FASTEST REVISION YIELD COMES FROM

Mastering **Laxmikanth** (Polity), **Ramesh Singh + RBI primers** (Economy), **Shankar IAS Environment**, **NCERT + GC Leong** (Geography), **Spectrum** (Modern History), and **Tamil Nadu Class XI** (Ancient/Medieval) — then drilling the last 10 years of PYQs in multi-statement form.

## 02 · TL;DR & Key Findings

### The Three Things That Matter Most

#### 1 · 80/20 YIELD MAP

Polity + Economy + Environment + Geography together = **55–65 questions per paper, every year**. Within these, ~15 recurring sub-themes (Fundamental Rights, RBI tools, Wildlife Acts, Indian rivers/monsoon, Buddhism, Freedom-struggle personalities, Space missions) account for the bulk of marks. Study these from 5 standard sources and you will routinely cross **80+ marks**.

#### 2 · FORMAT SHIFT IS THE REAL TREND

Single-correct factual MCQs are shrinking; **3-/4-statement and "How many of the above are correct?"** formats are rising sharply (2025: 67% of the paper was statement-heavy). Elimination on extreme words ("only", "all", "never") still works but must be supplemented with conceptual command — many 2024–25 statements use extreme words yet are *correct* (e.g., greenhouse effect, atmosphere).

#### 3 · SUBJECT VOLATILITY DEMANDS BALANCE, NOT SELECTIVITY

History swung from 20 (2021) → 12 (2024); Geography from 8 (2022) → 20 (2024); S&T from 5 (2023) → 15 (2025); Environment from 22 (2022) → 12 (2023). **No subject can be skipped**. The safest strategy is to keep every subject's static foundation at **80% mastery**, never hyper-specializing in one.

### Six Headline Findings

- Six static spines own ~85% of questions every year** — Polity, Economy, Environment, Geography, History+Culture, and S&T. IR, Agriculture, Schemes, and Misc share the residual 15.
- Format has fundamentally shifted** from single-correct MCQs (35% in 2021) to multi-statement formats (67% in 2025). Pure factual recall is being phased out.
- Subject weightages are extremely volatile year-to-year** — Modern History fell from 20 (2021) to 2–3 (2024) then rebounded to 8 (2025). Selective prep is high-risk.
- UPSC has weaponised the "extreme word" rule** against rote-trick users. In 2024–25, several *correct* statements deliberately contain "no", "all", "always", "well below" to punish elimination on cues alone.
- Current affairs are now integrated, not standalone** — In 2025, only 3–4 pure CA questions; the rest were CA-linked questions whose options were largely answerable from static sources.
- Mapping has become an independent skill area** — 2024 saw country-commodity, hill-region, waterfall-river matching across 6–8 questions. Atlas mastery directly contributes 6–10 marks.

# 03 · Subject-Wise Weightage Master Table

The numbers below have been triangulated from StudyIQ, Vajiram & Ravi, Legacy IAS, SuperKalam, PWOlyIAS, Testbook, and Insights IAS. Where sources disagree by 1–2 questions (overlapping subject buckets), the consensus figure is used. Treat these as ±2 question ranges.

| Subject                        | 2021 | 2022  | 2023  | 2024  | 2025  | 5-Yr Avg | Trend                       |
|--------------------------------|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|----------|-----------------------------|
| Polity & Governance            | 17   | 11    | 12–14 | 15–19 | 14    | ~14      | Steady-high; 2024 surge     |
| Economy                        | 15   | 16–17 | 14    | 13–14 | 18–20 | ~15      | Rising; peaked in 2025      |
| Environment & Ecology          | 16   | 18–22 | 12    | 13–15 | 13–15 | ~16      | Volatile but high           |
| Geography (Phys+Ind+World)     | 14   | 8–10  | 13–16 | 18–20 | 12–13 | ~13      | Spiked in 2024              |
| Mapping (subset)               | 4    | 5     | 6     | 7     | 6     | ~6       | Rising independent skill    |
| Ancient + Art & Culture        | ~5   | 6–8   | 5–6   | 5–7   | 7–8   | ~6       | Stable                      |
| Medieval History               | 1–2  | 4–5   | 2     | 1     | 1     | ~2       | Low recurring               |
| Modern History                 | ~12  | 3–5   | 5–6   | 2–3   | 8     | ~6       | Highly volatile             |
| Science & Technology           | 12   | 11–15 | 12–15 | 11–13 | 13    | ~13      | Stable-high                 |
| International Relations        | 4–5  | 11    | 4–6   | 6     | 8     | ~7       | Rising                      |
| Social / Schemes / Agriculture | 4–6  | 3–4   | 4     | 7     | 3     | ~4       | Stable                      |
| Misc / Standalone CA           | 4–6  | 5     | 8–10  | 5–7   | 3–4   | ~6       | Falling — CA now integrated |

Note: Mapping is double-counted under both Geography and Mapping rows; net Geography excluding mapping ≈ 8–13.

## 04 · Format & Difficulty Trends

UPSC has decisively shifted toward **multi-statement** and **"How many of the above"** formats. Pure single-fact recall is dying. Train accordingly.

| Question Type                        | 2021 Share | 2025 Share | Strategic Implication                      |
|--------------------------------------|------------|------------|--|
| Single-option factual                | ~35%       | <b>18%</b> | UPSC abandoning pure factual recall        |
| Two-statement                        | ~30%       | 15%        | Still common; lowest difficulty band       |
| <b>Three-statement</b>               | ~20%       | <b>39%</b> | The new dominant format — drill it         |
| Four / five-statement                | ~5%        | 13%        | Rising — demands depth and accuracy        |
| Assertion–Reason                     | ~3%        | 7%         | Re-introduced strongly in 2024–25          |
| Matching / "How many pairs"          | ~7%        | 8%         | Stable; map-heavy                          |
| "How many of the above are correct?" | ~2%        | 10%        | New favourite — punishes partial knowledge |

### DIFFICULTY MIX · UPSC PRELIMS 2025

**~33 Easy + ~35 Moderate + ~32 Difficult** — virtually no throwaway easy questions. Aspirants who scored 100+ in 2018 are now scoring 75–95. **Target 90–100 in mocks for a safe cut-off margin.**

## 05 · Ten Universal UPSC Trap Patterns

These are the **wrong-statement archetypes** UPSC uses repeatedly. Recognising them in mocks saves **8–12 marks**. Use as a first filter — never as final decider (especially post-2022).

### 1 The "Extreme Word" Trap ~50% RELIABLE

Words like *only, all, never, always, sole, exclusively, drastically, any, no, every* in a statement → usually wrong, BUT not always (see Trap #7).

**PRELIMS 2025** "No virus can survive in ocean waters / No virus can infect bacteria / No virus can change cellular transcription" → all three wrong. **Answer: D, None.**

**PRELIMS 2018** "A high content of organic matter in soil **drastically** reduces its water holding capacity" — wrong because of "drastically".

### 2 The Ministry / Body Swap

A scheme or function is attributed to the wrong ministry, regulator, or constitutional body.

**PRELIMS 2021** "Nodal agency for the Forest Rights Act, 2006?" — correct is **Ministry of Tribal Affairs**, not MoEFCC (the natural trap pick).

**PRELIMS 2025** "RBI mandates listed companies to submit BRSR" — wrong; it is **SEBI**.

### 3 The Constitutional Part / Article Swap

**PRELIMS 2024** "Provisions related to amendment of the Constitution are given in **Part XX**" — correct (Part XX, Article 368). Trap distractors place it in Part XVIII or XIX.

**PRELIMS 2021** "Right to Privacy is protected under which Article?" → **Article 21** (Puttaswamy, 2017).

#### 4 The "Fictitious or Mis-titled" Source

UPSC plants plausible-sounding but mis-attributed works/authors.

**PRELIMS 2024** Work attributed to **Bhasa** → *Madhyama-vyayoga* (not *Kavyalankara* by Bhamaha, *Natyashastra* by Bharata, or *Mahabhashya* by Patanjali). All four options are real classical works; only one is by Bhasa.

**PRELIMS 2024** Authors of "The India Way" and "Why Bharat Matters" → **S. Jaishankar** (not Tharoor, a planted plausible decoy).

#### 5 The Chronology Swap

Events listed in slightly wrong order — a Modern History favourite.

**PRELIMS 2022, 2023** Chronology of Pala/Pratihara/Chola foundations, or post-Independence events (Communist govt → Imperial Bank renamed → Goa liberation).

#### 6 The Data / Number Tweak

A real percentage, year, or rupee value is changed by 5–20%.

**PRELIMS 2025** Finance Commission: "41% of Union taxes to be shared" is correct; **"45%" is the planted wrong value.**

#### 7 The Reverse Trap — "Extreme but TRUE" NEW POST-2022

Increasingly used post-2022 to punish over-reliance on the extreme-word rule.

**PRELIMS 2025** "**Without** the atmosphere, temperature would be **well below** freezing **everywhere** on Earth" — sounds extreme, accepted as **correct**.

**PRELIMS 2024** A–R: "Atmosphere is heated more by terrestrial than solar radiation" — Statement-I sounds counter-intuitive but is **scientifically correct**.

#### 8 The "Both / Neither" Closing Trap

In two-statement Qs, the safe-looking "Both 1 and 2" or "Neither" is the trap; UPSC distributes (a)/(b)/(c)/(d) roughly equally (24–28% each in 2024–25 papers).

### 9 The Plausible Modifier

Adding "only" to a definitionally complete fact turns it false.

**PRELIMS 2024** Article 300A: Right to property is "a legal right available to citizens only" — wrong; it is a constitutional right available to citizens AND non-citizens.

### 10 The Contradictory-Statements Trap NEW 2024-25

In Assertion–Reason questions, Statement-II *contradicts* Statement-I but is itself correct → answer is "Statement-I incorrect, Statement-II correct" (option D).

**PRELIMS 2024** Solar vs terrestrial radiation heating atmosphere.

## A · Polity & Governance

5-YEAR AVERAGE: ~14 Q/YR · THE MOST CONSISTENT SCORING SUBJECT

### A.1 · High Priority Topics ≥3/5 YEARS

#### (i) Fundamental Rights & Article 21 Expansion 5/5 YRS VERY HIGH REPETITION

**Subtopics:** Right to Privacy (Puttaswamy), Right to Property (Art 300A), Equality (Art 14), Untouchability (Art 17), Reasonable restrictions on 19

**Style:** Statement-based + Article matching · **Source:** Laxmikanth Ch. 7–9 + Constitution bare text · **CA-link:** Internet shutdowns, Pegasus, sedition/UAPA, marital-rape petitions

#### ⚠ TRAP

Confusing FRs with DPSPs; calling Art 300A a fundamental right.

**PRELIMS 2021** "Right to Privacy is protected under which Article?" → **(d) 21**.

**PRELIMS 2024** "Inter-State trade is State subject / inter-State migration is State subject / inter-State quarantine is Union subject / Corporation tax is State subject" → **(c)**.

**(ii) Parliament — Lok Sabha / Rajya Sabha Procedures**

4-5/5 YRS

VERY HIGH

**Subtopics:** Anti-defection (10th Schedule), Speaker's removal, lapsing of bills on dissolution, Money Bill vs Finance Bill, joint sittings, ordinances (Art 123/213)

**Style:** 3-statement multi · **Source:** Laxmikanth Ch. 22–24

**△ TRAP**

Which bills lapse on LS dissolution and which don't.

**PRELIMS 2024** "Bill pending in LS lapses / LS-passed bill in RS lapses on LS dissolution / Joint-sitting-notified bill lapses on LS dissolution" → **(b) 1 and 2.**

**PRELIMS 2025** "Ordinance can amend any Central Act / abridge a FR / come from a back date" → **I and III correct** (Art 13(2) bars abridging FRs).

**(iii) Federalism, Centre-State, ISC, Zonal Councils**

3/5 YRS

VERY HIGH

**Subtopics:** Art 263 ISC (constitutional), Zonal Councils (SR Act 1956, statutory), NSC (1998 executive), GST Council (101st Amendment)

**PRELIMS 2025** "ISC / NSC / Zonal Councils — how many are constitutional?" → **(a) Only one (ISC).**

**(iv) Constitutional / Statutory Bodies**

3/5 YRS

VERY HIGH

**Subtopics:** Lokpal, CAG, Finance Commission, NHRC, ECI, AG/SG, CDS, Ethics Committee

**Source:** Laxmikanth Ch. 47–63

**PRELIMS 2025** Lokpal 4-statement (jurisdiction outside India / only CJI as Chair / min age 45 / cannot inquire against sitting PM) → **only III correct.**

**(v) Schedules & Amendments**

3/5 YRS

VERY HIGH

**Subtopics:** 8th Schedule (languages), 7th (Lists), 9th (Art 31B immunity), key amendments (42, 44, 71, 73/74, 86, 101, 103)

**PRELIMS 2024** "71st Amendment 1992 added — Konkani / Manipuri / Nepali / Maithili" → **(a) 1, 2 and 3** (Maithili added by 92nd, 2003).

**A.2 · Moderate Priority** 2/5 YEARS

- Panchayati Raj (Parts IX, IXA, 11th & 12th Schedules)
- Emergency provisions (Part XVIII)
- Citizenship (single vs dual)
- Gol Acts 1858–1935 (overlap Modern)

- DPSPs vs Fundamental Duties
- Writs (PYQ 2022)

### A.3 · Low but Recurring ≥1/5 YEARS

- MPLADS · Delimitation Commission · Parole/Remission · Tribunals (Art 323A/B)

#### ⚡ POLITY ELIMINATION TIP

Any option calling **Right to Property "fundamental right available to citizens only"** is wrong. Anything that claims a blanket constitutional **immunity** (e.g., "Lokpal cannot inquire against PM") is usually wrong — the Constitution has safeguards, not blanket immunities.

## B · Economy

5-YEAR AVERAGE: ~15 Q/YR · RISING STAR — 18–20 Q IN 2025

### B.1 · High Priority Topics

#### (i) RBI, Monetary Policy & Banking 5/5 YRS VERY HIGH

**Subtopics:** Sterilization, OMO, Repo/Reverse Repo, SLR/CRR, LAF/MSF, Bank Rate, MSS, Money Multiplier

**Source:** Ramesh Singh Ch. 6–9 + RBI's "Banking at a Glance"

#### ⚠ TRAP

Saying RBI manages currency *and* fiscal policy.

**PRELIMS 2021** "Money multiplier ↑ with — (c) ↑ banking habit".

**PRELIMS 2024** Digital Rupee: Statement 3 ("insured against inflation by design") is the trap → (d) 1, 2 and 4.

#### (ii) Inflation, GDP, National Income 4/5 YRS HIGH

**Subtopics:** CPI vs WPI weights, real vs nominal, GDP deflator, NEER/REER, demand-pull vs cost-push, stagflation

### (iii) Fiscal Policy, Budget & Public Finance 4/5 YRS VERY HIGH

**Subtopics:** FRBM, debt-to-GDP, capital vs revenue receipts, AFS (Art 112), Demands for Grants (Art 113), Consolidated/Contingency/ Public Account, deficit types

**PRELIMS 2024** "AFS laid by FM on behalf of PM / Demand for grant on President's recommendation" → **(b) 2 only** (PM is the trap; AFS is on **President's** order).

**PRELIMS 2025** "Capital receipts create liability or reduce assets / Borrowings+disinvestment are capital receipts / Interest received creates liability" → **(a) I and II only** (classic capital-vs-revenue trap).

### (iv) External Sector — BoP, FDI/FPI, Exchange Rates 4/5 YRS HIGH

**PRELIMS 2022** G20 Common Framework (endorsed with Paris Club for LICs).

### (v) Government Schemes & Capital Markets 4/5 YRS

**RISING SHARPLY POST-2022**

**Subtopics:** PM-KISAN, PMJDY, MUDRA, PM SVANidhi, PM-SYM, BRSR (SEBI), Digital India Land Records, InvITs/REITs, AIFs

**PRELIMS 2025** BRSR — RBI vs SEBI swap → **(b) II only**.

**PRELIMS 2025** Equity Options: SEBI exists, so the "no regulator" claim is the trap.

## B.2 · Moderate Priority

- Agri economics (MSP, KCC, edible-oil imports — *PYQ 2021/2022*)
- Finance Commission devolution
- GST architecture · NPA & banking reforms
- Ethanol/biofuel (Brazil-sugarcane vs USA-corn — *PYQ 2025*)

## B.3 · Low but Recurring

- Industrial Revolution effects · Real Sector classification · Indirect Transfers (*PYQ 2022*) · Inflation-Indexed Bonds

### ⚡ ECONOMY ELIMINATION TIP

Statements containing "**RBI insures/regulates**" outside its mandate (e.g., commodity markets, BRSR) are wrong. Phrases like "**by its very design**" or "**all banks**" are usually wrong.

# C · Environment & Ecology

5-YEAR AVERAGE: ~16 Q/YR · HIGH BUT VOLATILE

## C.1 · High Priority Topics

### (i) Protected Areas, Tiger Reserves, Biosphere Reserves, Community Reserves

5/5 YRS

VERY HIGH

**Subtopics:** WLPA 1972 schedules, Critical Tiger Habitat, Eco-Sensitive Zones, FRA 2006, Biodiversity Act 2002, Nagoya Protocol

**Source:** Shankar IAS Environment Ch. 5–8 + ENVIS

**PRELIMS 2022** "Tiger Reserve with largest Critical Tiger Habitat?"

**PRELIMS 2023** Community Reserve: "Chief Wildlife Warden as governing authority / traditional agri practices allowed" — multi-statement on FRA-PA-CR interplay.

### (ii) International Conventions & Bodies

5/5 YRS

VERY HIGH

**Subtopics:** CBD-Nagoya-Cartagena, Ramsar (Montreux Record), CITES, CMS, UNFCCC-Kyoto-Paris, Stockholm POPs, Basel/Rotterdam, IPCC, IUCN Red List, World Heritage, NY Declaration on Forests

**PRELIMS 2021** NY Declaration on Forests: trap statement "**legally binding** international declaration" is wrong (it is non-binding).

### (iii) Climate Change & Atmospheric Science

5/5 YRS

VERY HIGH

**Subtopics:** GHGs, radiation balance, ocean acidification, carbon markets, geoengineering (cirrus thinning, sulphate aerosols), Article 6 of Paris

**PRELIMS 2024** A-R: "Atmosphere heated more by solar than terrestrial / CO<sub>2</sub> absorbs long-wave" → **(d)** Statement-I wrong.

**PRELIMS 2025** "Without atmosphere temp below freezing / atmosphere maintains avg temp / CO<sub>2</sub> traps radiation" → **(c) All three correct.**

**(iv) Pollution, Plastics, PFAS, Microbeads** 4/5 YRS HIGH

**PRELIMS 2024** PFAS: all three statements correct (drinking water / non-biodegradable / bioaccumulation).

**PRELIMS 2024** Chewing-gum-base contains plastic.

**(v) Species & Ecosystems** 4/5 YRS HIGH

**Subtopics:** Coral bleaching, mangroves (Bhitarkanika, Pichavaram, Sundarbans), Western Ghats hotspots, methane hydrate, keystone species, ecological pyramids

**PRELIMS 2025** "Rainforests > oceans O<sub>2</sub> / Marine phytoplankton+bacteria ~50% world O<sub>2</sub> / Surface water has more O<sub>2</sub> than air" → **(b) II only**.

**C.2 · Moderate Priority**

- Wetlands/Ramsar India (Kolleru, Chilika, Kabartal)
- Forest Types (Champion-Seth) · Soil salinization · Bioremediation
- Permaculture vs conventional (PYQ 2018, recurring)

**C.3 · Low but Recurring**

- Magnetite particles (PYQ 2021) · BPA & Triclosan (PYQ 2021) · Methane from rice paddies (PYQ 2022)

**⚡ ENVIRONMENT ELIMINATION TIP**

Any international treaty described as "**legally binding**" is usually wrong unless it is Kyoto/Montreal/UNCLOS-type. Any species described as **endemic to only one country** is usually wrong if of Indian origin.

# D · Geography

PHYSICAL + INDIAN + WORLD · 5-YEAR AVERAGE: ~13 Q/YR · BIGGEST 2024 SURPRISE — 20 Q

## D.1 · High Priority Topics

### (i) Indian Rivers, Lakes, Drainage 5/5 YRS VERY HIGH

**Subtopics:** Ganga tributaries (Gandak, Kosi, Ghaghara order), peninsular west-flowing rivers, deltas, Wular/Kolleru/Sambhar/Loktak

**PRELIMS 2023** "Jhelum-Wular / Krishna-Kolleru / Gandak-Kanwar" → **only Jhelum-Wular correct.**

**PRELIMS 2022** Himalayan rivers W → E joining Ganga downstream of Prayagraj.

### (ii) Physical Geography & Climatology 5/5 YRS VERY HIGH

**Subtopics:** Coriolis, jet streams, cyclones, monsoon mechanism, IOD, El Niño/La Niña, ocean currents, cloud types, weathering

**PRELIMS 2025** Coriolis force — multi-statement.

**PRELIMS 2024** Troposphere thicker at equator than poles (A-R).

### (iii) Resource Geography 4/5 YRS HIGH

**Subtopics:** Minerals (monazite, ilmenite-rutile = titanium — PYQ 2023; bauxite, iron belts), energy (lignite, solar parks, pumped-storage hydropower — PYQ 2024), industrial regions

### (iv) World Geography & Continental Drift 4/5 YRS HIGH

**PRELIMS 2025** Continental drift evidences (Brazil-W.Africa rocks / Ghana gold / Gondwana sediments) — all correct.

## D.2 · Moderate Priority

- Indian states physiography (Arunachal–Itanagar–Namdapha+Mouling — PYQ 2025)
- Tribal districts · Ten-Degree Channel · Gandikota Canyon (PYQ 2022 — Penna River)
- Soils · Solstices

## D.3 · Low but Recurring

- Permaculture vs conventional · Sustainable Sugarcane Initiative · Soil Health Card · Wind-energy state-wise potential

**⚡ GEOGRAPHY TRAP**

Statements like "**Western Ghats spread over only 5 states**" or "**Himalayas over only 5 states**" — UPSC swaps numbers; verify state-count claims.

# E · Mapping

PLACES & LOCATIONS IN NEWS + STATIC · 5-YEAR AVERAGE: ~6 Q/YR · INDEPENDENT SKILL AREA

## E.1 · High Priority Topics

### (i) Country-Commodity Pairs 5/5 YRS VERY HIGH

**PRELIMS 2024** Botswana-diamond, Chile-lithium, Indonesia-nickel — all correct.

**PRELIMS 2025** Mallorca-Italy / Normandy-Spain / Sardinia-France — country-region matching with traps.

### (ii) Country Borders / Strategic Geographies 5/5 YRS VERY HIGH

**PRELIMS 2024** "Longest border between two countries — **Canada-USA**".

**PRELIMS 2022** Countries bordering Afghanistan · Levant region.

### (iii) Organizational Membership Maps 4/5 YRS HIGH

**PRELIMS 2025** NATO members: Austria/Bulgaria/Croatia/Serbia/Sweden/N. Macedonia → **4 are members** (Sweden joined March 2024 — the trap-resolver).

### (iv) Indian State-Feature Pairs 5/5 YRS VERY HIGH

**PRELIMS 2025** Arunachal (Itanagar fort + 2 NPs) / Nagaland statehood basis / Tripura's Part-C → all correct.

**PRELIMS 2022** Peak-Mountain matching · wetland-location matching.

**(v) Waterfalls, Rivers, Hills Matching** 4/5 YRS HIGH

**PRELIMS 2024** "Dhuandhar-Malwa-Narmada / Hundru-Chota Nagpur-Subarnarekha / Gersoppa-Western Ghats-Netravati" — typical 3-pair format.

**⚡ MAPPING TRAP & SOURCE STRATEGY**

**Trap:** UPSC often swaps adjacent geographies (Mallorca is Spanish, not Italian; Sardinia is Italian, not French). For "places in news", track key tankers, straits (Hormuz, Malacca, Bab-el-Mandeb), war zones, mining sites, oil pipelines (Sumed — *PYQ 2024*) over the 12-month run-up.

**Sources:** Oxford Student Atlas + monthly mapping compilations from Vision IAS or Insights are sufficient. Maintain a "places-in-news" map sheet updated monthly.

**F · Ancient History & Art & Culture**

5-YEAR AVERAGE: ~6 Q/YR COMBINED

**F.1 · High Priority Topics****(i) Buddhism & Jainism** 5/5 YRS VERY HIGH

**Subtopics:** Schools (Theravada, Mahayana, Vajrayana), sects (Sthaviravadin, Mahasanghika, Lokottaravadin, Sarvastivadin, Sautrantika, Sammitiya), Bodhisattvas (Maitreya, Avalokiteshvara, Padmapani), Mudras (Bhumisparsha), Paramitas, Tirthankaras, Sthanakvasi sect

**Source:** Tamil Nadu Class XI History + Nitin Singhanian

**PRELIMS 2022** Sthaviravadin/Lokottaravadin/Mahasanghika → **(b) 2 and 3 only**.

**PRELIMS 2023** "Dhanyakataka under Mahasanghikas — **Andhra**".

**PRELIMS 2024** Buddha's epithets — Nayaputta (Mahavira's, trap) / Shakyamuni / Tathagata.

**(ii) Indus Valley & Harappan** 3/5 YRS HIGH

**PRELIMS 2025** Dancing Girl of Mohenjo-daro made of **Bronze** (lost-wax casting).

**PRELIMS 2021** "Ancient town with elaborate water harvesting — **Dholavira**".

**(iii) Inscriptions, Coins, Foreign Travellers** 3/5 YRS HIGH

PRELIMS 2025 "Fa-Hien (Faxian) visited India during **Chandragupta II**".

PRELIMS 2024 "Sanghabhuti's commentary on **Sarvastivada Vinaya**".

**(iv) Temple Architecture & Schools** 3/5 YRS HIGH

**Subtopics:** Nagara/Dravida/Vesara, Gandhara/Mathura/Amaravati, Chola Kalyana-Mandapa, Pallava rock-cut, Hoysala, Khajuraho/Chandela

PRELIMS 2022 Kalyana Mandapas → **Vijayanagara**.

PRELIMS 2024 Bhasa's work → *Madhyama-vyayoga*.

**(v) Sangam & Classical Literature** 2-3/5 YRS MODERATE

PRELIMS 2022 Sangam poems reference material culture (correct).

Parishishtaparvan (Hemachandra) · Avadanashataka · Upanishads vs Puranas (PYQ 2023).

**F.2 · Moderate Priority**

- UNESCO World Heritage / Intangible Cultural Heritage (Garba 2023, Kolkata Durga Puja 2021) — PYQ 2024
- Folk dance–state pairs (Chapchar Kut–Mizoram, Thang-Ta–Manipur)
- Vedic vs Indus Aryan comparison

**F.3 · Low but Recurring**

- Hundi (post-Harsha trade instrument) · Shreni guilds · Stupa origin (Buddhist)

**⚡ ANCIENT HISTORY TRAP**

UPSC pairs a sect with the wrong religion (Sautrantika/Sammitiya = Buddhism, not Jainism). **Memorise both schools' family-trees side-by-side.**

# G · Medieval History

5-YEAR AVERAGE: ~2 Q/YR · LOW YIELD BUT NEVER ZERO

## Recurring Topics

- **Delhi Sultanate administration** — Iqta, Alauddin's market reforms, Tughlaq's experiments
- **Vijayanagara** — *PYQ 2024*: "Portuguese fort at Bhatkal — **Krishnadevaraya**"
- **Bhakti–Sufi** — Ramanuja, Madhva, Chaitanya, Kabir, Ramananda; Chishti–Suhrawardi–Naqshbandi
- **Mughal art, Akbar's syncretism, jaziya**
- **Mysore Sultans, Carnatic Wars**

**Source:** Tamil Nadu Class XI + Satish Chandra (selective)

### ⚡ MEDIEVAL TRAP

Confusing Mughal vs Sultanate revenue terms (Polaj/Parauti = Akbar; Iqta = Sultanate).

# H · Modern History

5-YEAR AVERAGE: ~6 Q/YR · HIGHLY VOLATILE — 12 IN 2021, 2–3 IN 2023–24, 8 IN 2025

## H.1 · High Priority Topics

### (i) Gandhian Movements 4/5 YRS VERY HIGH

**Subtopics:** Champaran/Kheda/Ahmedabad, Rowlatt-Jallianwala, NCM phases, CDM (Salt-Dandi), Gandhi-Irwin Pact, Individual Satyagraha, Quit India, Harijan upliftment

**PRELIMS 2025** NCM: "Boycott law courts/foreign cloth / Strict non-violence / **Retention of titles** (TRAP) / Establishment of Panchayats" → **(c) Only three.**

**PRELIMS 2025** "Nagpur Session 1920 — Swaraj by legitimate peaceful means / phased implementation" → both correct.

**(ii) British Constitutional Acts** 4/5 YRS VERY HIGH

Charter Acts 1813/1833/1853, GoI Acts 1858/1909/1919/1935, Pitt's India Act, Regulating Act

**PRELIMS 2024** GoI Act 1935: AI Federation true / "Defence & FA under federal legislature" false → (a) 1 only.

**PRELIMS 2023** GG of Bengal → GG of India by **Charter Act of 1833**.

**(iii) INC Sessions & Personalities** 3/5 YRS HIGH

1885 Bombay · 1907 Surat Split · 1916 Lucknow Pact · 1929 Lahore Poorna Swaraj · 1942 Bombay AICC

**PRELIMS 2024** Bharatiya Jana Sangh founder → **Shyama Prasad Mukherjee**.

Annie Besant (first woman INC President, 1917); Sarojini Naidu (first Indian woman).

**(iv) Social / Religious Reform & Press** 3/5 YRS HIGH

Brahmo, Arya, Prarthana, Ramakrishna, Aligarh, Self-Respect (Periyar — PYQ 2025), Vital-Vidhvansak (Gopal Baba Walangkar — PYQ 2020)

Vernacular Press Act · Bethune School (Vidyasagar — PYQ 2021)

**(v) Revolutionary & Foreign Indians** 3/5 YRS HIGH

Ghadar, Anushilan Samiti, Kakori, HSRA (Bhagat Singh), INA (Shah Nawaz Khan, Prem Kumar Sehgal, Gurbaksh Singh Dhillon — PYQ 2021)

Usha Mehta — Secret Congress Radio (PYQ 2021) · Sakharam Ganesh Deuskar — *Desher Katha* (PYQ 2022)

**Source:** Spectrum (Rajiv Ahir) + Bipan Chandra (selective for INM phases)

**⚡ MODERN HISTORY TRAP**

Misattributing Subsidiary Alliance to Dalhousie (was **Wellesley**); confusing 1929 Poorna Swaraj declaration (Lahore) with 26 Jan 1930 tricolour-hoist.

# I · Science & Technology

5-YEAR AVERAGE: ~13 Q/YR · MOST CONTEMPORARY-LINKED SUBJECT

## I.1 · High Priority Topics

### (i) Space Technology 5/5 YRS VERY HIGH

ISRO missions (Chandrayaan-3, Aditya-L1, Gaganyaan, NaVIC, SSLV, RLV-TD), launchers (PSLV/GSLV/LVM3), foreign missions (Artemis, JWST, Lucy, BepiColombo)

**PRELIMS 2024** "Pumped-storage hydropower" — energy/storage context.

### (ii) Biotechnology, Genetics, Health 4/5 YRS VERY HIGH

mRNA vaccines, CRISPR-Cas9, gene drives, stem cells, monoclonal antibodies, T-cells, virology basics

**PRELIMS 2025** "No virus can survive ocean / infect bacteria / change transcription" → all false (Answer: D).

### (iii) Defence Tech 3-4/5 YRS HIGH

**PRELIMS 2025** Dornier-228 (maritime patrol) / IL-76 (transport, NOT supersonic — trap) / C-17 Globemaster (transport) → I & III correct.

**PRELIMS 2025** "CL-20, HMX, LLM-105 — military explosives".

### (iv) IT, AI, Cyber 3/5 YRS HIGH

Web 3.0, SaaS, blockchain, deepfakes, LLMs, quantum supremacy

**PRELIMS 2022** Web 3.0, SaaS, FOBS.

### (v) Energy & New Materials 3/5 YRS HIGH

Li-ion battery composition (Cathode = Co+Li+Ni; Anode = Graphite — PYQ 2025), green hydrogen, fuel cells, perovskite, rare earths, ethanol blending

## I.2 · Moderate Priority

- Astronomy (light-years — PYQ 2021, exoplanets, gravitational waves)
- Nano-tech · Biofilms (PYQ 2022) · Probiotics · BPA/Triclosan/PFAS (overlap Environment)

### ⚡ S & T ELIMINATION TIP

"Only" in S&T statements (e.g., "ISRO is the only...") → usually wrong. "Can" statements ("This technology can be used for...") → almost always **correct**.

# J · International Relations / Organizations

5-YEAR AVERAGE: ~7 Q/YR

## J.1 · High Priority Topics

### (i) UN System & Multilateral Bodies 4/5 YRS VERY HIGH

UNFCCC, WHO, WTO, WIPO, IMF facilities (RFI, RCF — PYQ 2022), World Bank Group (IBRD/IDA/IFC/MIGA/ICSID), G20, BRICS, SCO, QUAD, I2U2, IPEF

### (ii) Treaties & Conventions 3/5 YRS HIGH

Antarctic Treaty, BBNJ (High Seas Treaty), UNCLOS zones, NPT/CTBT/FMCT, BWC/CWC

### (iii) Regional Groupings 3/5 YRS HIGH

NATO membership (PYQ 2025), ASEAN, IORA, BIMSTEC, AU

**PRELIMS 2024** "Turkey rescinded NATO membership" — false (trap).

### (iv) India's Bilateral 3/5 YRS HIGH

Strategic partnerships, LEMOA/COMCASA/BECA, Quad maritime, China LAC, Indo-Pacific

**PRELIMS 2024** "Why Bharat Matters" by **S. Jaishankar**.

**PRELIMS 2024** Sumed pipeline (Suez-Mediterranean) → Persian Gulf oil/gas route.

### ⚡ IR TRAP

UPSC plants "**rescinded membership**" or "**left the org**" claims when no such event occurred (e.g., Turkey-NATO 2024). Verify status as of January of exam year.

# K · Agriculture & Rural Economy

5-YEAR AVERAGE: ~3-5 Q/YR · OVERLAPS ECONOMY & ENVIRONMENT

## Recurring Topics

- MSP, KCC (PYQ 2020), PM-KISAN, PMFBY, PM-AASHA
- Cropping seasons; GM crops & approval (Bt cotton/brinjal moratorium)
- Soil Health Card, ZBNF, Organic farming, Permaculture, SSI
- Edible oils (net-import, customs duty — PYQ 2020/2022)

**PRELIMS 2025** "India does not import apples from USA / Law prohibits GM food without approval" — A-R.

**Source:** Ramesh Singh Ch. 4 + ICAR / MoA primers

### ⚡ AGRICULTURE TRAP

"No chemical fertilizer at all" / "discourages all monoculture" in permaculture/SSI — these are **partial truths**.

# L · Social Issues, Schemes & Miscellaneous

5-YEAR AVERAGE: ~4-6 Q/YR

## Recurring Themes

### (i) Health & Social Protection Schemes 4/5 YRS

Ayushman Bharat, ABDM (PYQ 2022), PM-JAY, Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan (PYQ 2024), PM-SYM (PYQ 2024), APY, NPS

### (ii) Skills & Livelihoods 3/5 YRS

Skill India, PMKVY, JAM trinity

### (iii) Awards & Honours 3/5 YRS

**PRELIMS 2025** Gandhi Peace Prize jury: PM Chairperson + CJI + LoP; **President NOT a member**.

Bharat Ratna & Padma (Art 18(1); Padmas suspended once — PYQ 2021) · Nobel · Booker · UNESCO designations

**(iv) Census, Demographics, Gender** 2/5 YRS

SDGs, NFHS findings, Sex ratio, infant mortality

**(v) Sports, ICH, Cultural Recognitions** 2/5 YRS

ICC, Olympics medals, ICH listings

**⚡ MISC TRAP**

**"All beneficiaries must be Aadhaar-linked"** — usually wrong; many schemes accept alternative IDs.

## 07 · The Core 50 — 80/20 High-Return Topics

If you only have 60 days, drill these 50 topics from the 12 standard sources. They produced an estimated **~75–80 questions** across the 2021–2025 averages.

| #  | Subject | Topic  | Source                | Yrs/5 |
|----|---------|--|-----------------------|-------|
| 1  | Polity  | Fundamental Rights + Art 21                            | Laxmikanth Ch. 7      | 5     |
| 2  | Polity  | Parliament procedures & Bills                          | Laxmikanth Ch. 22     | 5     |
| 3  | Polity  | Constitutional bodies (CAG/EC/FC/Lokpal)               | Laxmikanth Ch. 47–63  | 5     |
| 4  | Polity  | Centre-State + ISC/Zonal/GST                           | Laxmikanth Ch. 13–16  | 4     |
| 5  | Polity  | Schedules & Amendments                                 | Laxmikanth Ch. 5–6    | 4     |
| 6  | Polity  | Ordinances & Emergency                                 | Laxmikanth Ch. 22, 16 | 3     |
| 7  | Economy | RBI tools & Monetary policy                            | Ramesh Singh Ch. 9    | 5     |
| 8  | Economy | Inflation (CPI/WPI/Core)                               | Ramesh Singh Ch. 6    | 5     |
| 9  | Economy | Budget, AFS, deficits, FRBM                            | Ramesh Singh Ch. 18   | 5     |
| 10 | Economy | Capital vs Revenue receipts                            | NCERT Macro XII       | 4     |
| 11 | Economy | BoP, NEER/REER, FDI/FPI                                | Ramesh Singh Ch. 14   | 5     |
| 12 | Economy | Capital Markets, SEBI, BRSR                            | Ramesh Singh Ch. 10   | 4     |
| 13 | Economy | Govt Schemes (PM-SYM, Mudra)                           | PIB primer            | 5     |
| 14 | Economy | Digital Rupee / CBDC                                   | RBI website           | 3     |
| 15 | Env     | Protected Areas + WLPA + FRA                           | Shankar IAS Ch. 7     | 5     |
| 16 | Env     | International Conventions (UNFCCC, CBD, Ramsar, CITES) | Shankar IAS Ch. 12    | 5     |
| 17 | Env     | Climate change & GHGs                                  | Shankar IAS Ch. 6     | 5     |
| 18 | Env     | Pollution & POPs (PFAS, BPA, microbeads)               | Shankar IAS Ch. 9     | 4     |
| 19 | Env     | Species, Tiger/Elephant Project                        | Shankar IAS Ch. 8     | 5     |
| 20 | Env     | Ramsar wetlands of India                               | Shankar IAS + MoEFCC  | 3     |
| 21 | Geog    | Indian rivers & drainage                               | NCERT XI + GC Leong   | 5     |
| 22 | Geog    | Monsoon mechanism & IOD/ENSO                           | GC Leong + NCERT XI   | 5     |
| 23 | Geog    | Coriolis, jet streams, weathering                      | GC Leong              | 4     |
| 24 | Mapping | Country-commodity / state-feature                      | Oxford Atlas          | 5     |
| 25 | Geog    | Continental drift, plate tectonics                     | NCERT XI              | 3     |

| #  | Subject  | Topic                                    | Source                      | Yrs/5 |
|----|----------|--|-----------------------------|-------|
| 26 | Geog     | Indian minerals & energy                 | NCERT XII                   | 4     |
| 27 | Geog     | Indian states geography                  | Majid Husain / NCERT XI     | 4     |
| 28 | Ancient  | Buddhism schools/sects/Mudras            | TN XI + Nitin Singhania     | 5     |
| 29 | Ancient  | Jainism (Tirthankaras, Sthanakvasi)      | TN XI                       | 3     |
| 30 | Ancient  | Mauryan & Gupta polity (Fa-Hien, edicts) | TN XI                       | 4     |
| 31 | Culture  | UNESCO heritage + Intangible             | Nitin Singhania             | 4     |
| 32 | Culture  | Temple architecture (Nagara/Dravida)     | Nitin Singhania             | 3     |
| 33 | Medieval | Delhi Sultanate revenue & iqta           | TN XI                       | 2     |
| 34 | Medieval | Bhakti-Sufi movements                    | TN XI                       | 3     |
| 35 | Modern   | Gandhian movements (NCM, CDM, QIM)       | Spectrum Ch. 16-21          | 5     |
| 36 | Modern   | British Acts (1858–1947)                 | Spectrum Ch. 6-9            | 4     |
| 37 | Modern   | Social/Religious reform                  | Spectrum Ch. 11             | 3     |
| 38 | Modern   | INA/Revolutionaries                      | Spectrum Ch. 24             | 3     |
| 39 | S&T      | ISRO missions + space tech               | Vision/Insights compilation | 5     |
| 40 | S&T      | Biotech, vaccines, CRISPR                | NCERT XII Bio + The Hindu   | 4     |
| 41 | S&T      | Defence platforms                        | Insights compilation        | 4     |
| 42 | S&T      | Energy storage & batteries               | Vision compilation          | 3     |
| 43 | S&T      | Quantum, AI, Web3                        | The Hindu S&T               | 3     |
| 44 | IR       | UN/IMF/WB/WHO/WTO/G20                    | NCERT + IR primer           | 4     |
| 45 | IR       | NATO/SCO/QUAD/BRICS                      | IR primer                   | 4     |
| 46 | IR       | Bilateral agreements                     | The Hindu                   | 4     |
| 47 | Agri     | MSP, KCC, agri schemes                   | Ramesh Singh Ch. 4          | 3     |
| 48 | Agri     | GM food, ZBNF, permaculture              | The Hindu                   | 3     |
| 49 | Society  | Health schemes (PMJAY, ABDM)             | PIB                         | 3     |
| 50 | Awards   | Gandhi Peace Prize, Padmas, IUCN         | PIB + Awards primer         | 3     |

## 08 · Source-to-Topic Master Map

| Standard Source  | Subjects Covered                | Prelims Coverage Score                            |
|--|---------------------------------|---|
| <b>Laxmikanth</b> — Indian Polity                              | Polity + Governance             | <b>9.5 / 10</b>                                   |
| <b>Ramesh Singh / Sanjeev Verma</b> — Indian Economy           | Economy                         | <b>8.5 / 10</b> (supplement with Economic Survey) |
| <b>Shankar IAS</b> — Environment                               | Environment & Ecology           | <b>9.0 / 10</b>                                   |
| <b>GC Leong</b> — Physical & Human Geography                   | Physical Geography              | <b>9.0 / 10</b>                                   |
| <b>NCERTs Class 6–12</b> (esp. XI Geog, XII History)           | Geog, Hist, Polity, Econ basics | <b>8.5 / 10</b> (the foundation)                  |
| <b>Majid Husain</b> — Geography of India                       | Indian Geography                | <b>8.0 / 10</b>                                   |
| <b>Spectrum (Rajiv Ahir)</b> — A Brief History of Modern India | Modern History                  | <b>9.5 / 10</b>                                   |
| <b>Bipin Chandra</b> — India's Struggle for Independence       | Modern History (deep dive)      | <b>8.0 / 10</b> (selective)                       |
| <b>TN State Board Class XI History</b>                         | Ancient + Medieval              | <b>9.0 / 10</b>                                   |
| <b>Nitin Singhanian</b> — Indian Art & Culture                 | Art & Culture                   | <b>9.0 / 10</b>                                   |
| <b>PIB / Yojana / Kurukshetra</b>                              | Schemes, Agri, Society          | <b>7.5 / 10</b>                                   |
| <b>The Hindu + Indian Express</b> (daily)                      | Current Affairs (integrated)    | <b>9.0 / 10</b>                                   |
| <b>Oxford Student Atlas</b>                                    | Mapping                         | <b>9.0 / 10</b>                                   |

## 09 · Year-Specific Salient Observations

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### 2021 **Polity-heavy** **Modern History peak**

Polity-heavy (17 Q); Modern History at its peak (~12–20 Q in INM/personalities — counting varies by source); Right to Privacy under Art 21 directly tested; many essential-feature-of-federalism direct conceptual questions.

### 2022 **Environment surge** **Modern History dip**

Environment dominated (18–22 Q including 10 *static* environment questions — proving static Shankar IAS is irreplaceable); Modern History dipped to 3–5 Q (surprise that returned in 2025); options got harder to eliminate as UPSC introduced new option-format constructions limiting traditional elimination.

### 2023 **Tough paper** **Cut-off 75.41**

Geography + Environment + S&T combined ~45 Q; History rebounded to 13 Q; cut-off fell to 75.41 (general) — the lowest recent — indicating overall higher difficulty; "How many statements are correct?" format introduced more aggressively.

### 2024 **Geography surge to ~20 Q** **A-R return**

**Geography surge to ~20 Q** including 4-statement A-R formats on tropics, troposphere, Red Sea; Polity also at 15–19 Q (delimitation, 71st Amendment, Right to Privacy); paper rated easier at the surface but heavy with combination-trap options; Modern History at historic low (2–3 Q).

### 2025 **Economy at all-time high** **A-R resurgence**

**Economy at all-time high (18–20 Q)** with BRSR, ethanol, equity options, FRBM-15thFC, capital receipts; multi-statement format dominated (67 of 100 Q); History rebalanced (Modern back to 8, Ancient 5–6, Art & Culture 2); paper considered **conceptually moderate but option-heavy**, with strong Assertion–Reason resurgence (12 A-R Qs out of 100).

# 10 · Consolidated Master List — 29 Evergreen Themes

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Every topic here has appeared **at least 3 out of 5 years**, and in many cases all 5. If your final 30-day revision covers only these 29 themes plus the Core-50 above, you will have covered **~80% of likely 2026 question territory**.

1. **Fundamental Rights** (esp. Art 14, 17, 21) — Polity
2. **Constitutional bodies** (CAG, EC, FC, Lokpal, NHRC, AG/SG) — Polity
3. **Parliament procedures, bills, ordinances** — Polity
4. **Schedules & key Amendments** — Polity
5. **RBI tools** — Repo, Reverse Repo, OMO, CRR, SLR, Sterilization — Economy
6. **Inflation metrics** — CPI/WPI/Core, NEER/REER — Economy
7. **Budget structure** — AFS, CFI, Receipts/Expenditure classification — Economy
8. **Government schemes** — PM-KISAN, PMJAY, PM-SYM, BRSR — Economy/Society
9. **Wildlife (Protection) Act, FRA 2006, Community Reserves** — Environment
10. **International environmental conventions** (UNFCCC, CBD, Ramsar, CITES) — Environment
11. **Climate science** — GHGs, radiation, ocean acidification — Environment
12. **Pollutants** — PFAS, BPA, microbeads, plastics — Environment
13. **Indian rivers** (Ganga tributaries, peninsular west-flowing) — Geography
14. **Monsoon, IOD, ENSO** — Geography
15. **Country-commodity / country-border mapping** — Mapping
16. **Indian state-feature pairs** (national parks, capitals) — Mapping
17. **Buddhism schools/sects/Mudras/Bodhisattvas** — Ancient
18. **Indus Valley sites and features** — Ancient
19. **Temple architecture** (Nagara/Dravida/Vesara, Vijayanagara, Chola) — Culture
20. **Gandhian movements** (NCM, CDM, Quit India) — Modern
21. **British constitutional acts** (1858–1947) — Modern
22. **INC Sessions & landmark personalities** — Modern
23. **ISRO missions & space technology** — S&T
24. **Biotech** (vaccines, CRISPR, viruses) — S&T
25. **Defence platforms** (aircraft, missiles, explosives) — S&T
26. **NATO / SCO / QUAD / BRICS** membership and functions — IR
27. **IMF / World Bank facilities** (RFI, RCF, IDA) — IR
28. **MSP, KCC, GM food regulation** — Agriculture
29. **Awards** — Gandhi Peace, Padmas, Bharat Ratna — Misc

# 11 · Staged Action Plan

Four phases over ~360 days. Each phase has a clear deliverable, a benchmark mock score, and triggers that should make you change strategy.

## 01 Foundation FIRST 90 DAYS

1. **Read each of the 12 standard sources cover-to-cover once**, starting Laxmikanth → Spectrum → Shankar IAS → GC Leong → TN Class XI → Ramesh Singh. Make short hand-written notes.
2. **Map every chapter to its corresponding PYQ cluster** using the Core-50 table.

**Target benchmark:** Score  $\geq 60$  in a basic PYQ paper (2018 or 2019) by day 90.

## 02 PYQ-Driven Consolidation DAYS 90–180

1. **Solve PYQs 2013–2025 topic-wise** (Drishti / Rau's Compass / Insights subject-wise compilations).
2. **Maintain a "Trap Log"** — every time you fall for an extreme word, ministry-swap, or chronology trap, write the wrong option + correct fact in a single line. Target: 200–300 entries by exam day.

**Target benchmark:** Score  $\geq 75$  in a 2022/2023 PYQ paper by day 180.

## 03 Current Affairs Integration DAYS 180–270

1. **Read The Hindu** 45 minutes daily, tagging every item with its static subject.
2. **Use Vision IAS / Insights monthly compilations** — only those linked to static themes (~70% of CA).

**Target benchmark:**  $\geq 80$  in a 2024 PYQ paper.

## 04 Test-Series & Calibration LAST 90 DAYS

1. **Attempt 25–30 full-length mock tests** in exam conditions (9:30–11:30 AM).
2. **Drop study sources** — revise only your notes + Trap Log + Core-50 + Master List.
3. **Final 30 days: 80% revision, 20% new** (mostly CA micro-updates).

**Target benchmark:** Sustained **90–100 in mocks**; sub-50 attempts is your accuracy ceiling and a danger signal.

## Triggers That Should Make You Change Strategy

- If mock scores stay **below 60 in month 6**: stop adding new sources; do 3 full re-reads of Laxmikanth + Spectrum + Shankar IAS instead.

- If you score **≥85 consistently in mocks but fail the actual cut-off**, the issue is option-elimination under time pressure — switch to 1-hour speed drills (50 Qs in 60 minutes).
- If **History scores stay <50%**, increase Spectrum + TN Class XI revisions to 3 full cycles.
- If a particular subject in mocks stays **>85% accuracy**, stop preparing it further and reallocate time to weak areas — diminishing returns kick in.
- If your **Trap Log exceeds 50 entries on the same trap type**, you have a conceptual gap in that subject — re-read its base source, do not just drill PYQs.

## 12 · Caveats & Methodological Notes

### READ BEFORE USING THIS HANDBOOK

- **Numerical weightages vary across analyses.** Coaching institutes bucket questions differently (a question on a "Wildlife Sanctuary in news" is Environment by Shankar IAS, Geography by GC Leong followers, Current Affairs by PWOnlyIAS). The numbers here are consensus estimates; reasonable ranges ( $\pm 2$  per subject) should be expected.
- **2024's Geography "20-question surge" is partly an artefact of bucketing** — questions overlapping Environment-Geography were classed as Geography by some sources. The two subjects are now inseparable for UPSC; **prepare them together.**
- **Past performance is not a guarantee.** Modern History's collapse in 2022, Geography's 2024 surge, and Economy's 2025 peak are warnings against hyper-specialization. **No subject should be skipped below 70% mastery.**
- **The "extreme words = wrong option" rule has weakened.** Several 2024–25 correct statements deliberately use extreme phrasing to punish lazy elimination. Use as first filter, never as final decider.
- **Cut-off trends:** 2021 (87.54), 2022 (88.22), 2023 (75.41), 2024 (~85–90 estimated; not officially released at time of writing), 2025 (90–95 expected). A **95+ raw mock score** is the safest target.
- **2025 coverage is limited to publicly available answer keys** (StudyIQ, SuperKalam, VisionIAS, Vajiram, theIASHub, Legacy IAS, Insights, ClearIAS). The official UPSC answer key may correct 1–3 questions; verify before final revision.
- **Example questions reproduced above are paraphrased from coaching answer keys** for analytical purposes. For absolute fidelity, download the official UPSC Question Paper PDFs from [upsc.gov.in](https://upsc.gov.in).
- **"Probability of repetition"** notes use a 3-band scale (very high / high / moderate) inferred from frequency. UPSC has explicitly avoided exact question repetition since 2016; what repeats is the **theme**, not the question. Treat as theme-probability, not question-probability.
- This handbook is a **PYQ-derived static-topic playbook**. It does not substitute for primary reading of Laxmikanth, Spectrum, Shankar IAS, GC Leong, Ramesh Singh, TN Class XI, and Nitin Singhania. Treat as a **revision map over those foundational sources, not in place of them.**

### END OF HANDBOOK

## Study Smart. Revise Thrice. Track Your Trap Log.

UPSC Prelims GS Paper 1 · 2021–2025 Static Atlas · Revision Edition · May 2026

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