UPSC CSE Mains 2021 — Complete GS (1–4) + Essay Pack

All 5 Merit Papers from UPSC Mains 2021 (87 questions & essay prompts) with syllabus micro-topics and word limits. Free from preplord.com.

GS Paper 1 (History, Society & Geography) (20 Qs | Code: HXS-G-GSU)

1 • 10 Marks • 150 Words • History & Culture → Literature & Culture [Discuss | Static / Evergreen]
Nature of Bhakti literature and its contribution to Indian culture

2 • 10 Marks • 150 Words • History & Culture → Modern Indian History (1757–1947) [Discuss | Static / Evergreen]
Rise and growth of socio-religious reform movements: Young Bengal and Brahmo Samaj

3 • 10 Marks • 150 Words • History & Culture → Post-Independence India [Discuss | Static / Evergreen]
Main administrative issues and socio-cultural problems in integration of Indian Princely States

4 • 10 Marks • 150 Words • Geography → Salient Physical Features [Compare | Static / Evergreen]
Differentiate causes of landslides in the Himalayan region and Western Ghats

5 • 10 Marks • 150 Words • History & Culture → Art & Architecture [Explain | Static / Evergreen]
Why India's mining industry contributes much less to GDP despite being part of Gondwanaland

6 • 10 Marks • 150 Words • Indian Society → Urbanization & Family [Analyze | Current-Affairs Linked]
Environmental implications of reclamation of water bodies into urban land use with examples

7 • 10 Marks • 150 Words • Geography → Geophysical Phenomena & Climate [Analyze | Current-Affairs Linked]
Global occurrence of volcanic eruptions in 2021 and their impact on regional environment

8 • 10 Marks • 150 Words • Geography → Salient Physical Features [Explain | Static / Evergreen]
Why India is considered as a subcontinent

9 • 10 Marks • 150 Words • Indian Society → Diversity, Secularism & Communalism [Compare | Static / Evergreen]
Uniqueness of tribal knowledge system compared with mainstream knowledge and cultural systems

10 • 10 Marks • 150 Words • Indian Society → Women & Social Empowerment [Discuss | Static / Evergreen]
Role of 'Gig Economy' in the process of empowerment of women in India

11 • 15 Marks • 250 Words • History & Culture → Freedom Struggle [Discuss | Static / Evergreen]
Extent to which role of the Moderates prepared a base for the wider freedom movement

12 • 15 Marks • 250 Words • History & Culture → Freedom Struggle [Discuss | Static / Evergreen]
Constructive programmes of Mahatma Gandhi during Non-Cooperation & Civil Disobedience Movements

13 • 15 Marks • 250 Words • History & Culture → World History [Discuss | Static / Evergreen]
Serious challenge to the Democratic State System between the two World Wars

14 • 15 Marks • 250 Words • Geography → Salient Physical Features [Analyze | Static / Evergreen]
Alignment of major mountain ranges of the world and impact on local weather conditions

15 • 15 Marks • 250 Words • Geography → Natural Resources & Industrial Location [Discuss | Static / Evergreen]
How melting of Arctic ice and Antarctic glaciers differently affect weather patterns & human activities

16 • 15 Marks • 250 Words • Geography → Natural Resources & Industrial Location [Analyze | Current-Affairs Linked]
Multi-dimensional implications of uneven distribution of mineral oil in the world

17 • 15 Marks • 250 Words • Indian Society → Urbanization & Family [Analyze | Current-Affairs Linked]
Main socio-economic implications of development of IT industries in major cities of India

18 • 15 Marks • 250 Words • Indian Society → Population, Poverty & Development [Discuss | Static / Evergreen]
Main objectives of Population Education and measures to achieve them in India

19 • 15 Marks • 250 Words • Indian Society → Globalization & Social Change [Explain | Static / Evergreen]
What is Cryptocurrency; how it affects global society and Indian society

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20 • 15 Marks • 250 Words • History & Culture → Literature & Culture [Discuss | Static / Evergreen]
How Indian society maintains continuity in traditional social values & changes taking place

GS Paper 2 (Polity, Governance, Social Justice & IR) (20 Qs | Code: HXS-G-GSB)

1 • 10 Marks • 150 Words • Polity & Constitution → Judiciary & Judicial Activism [Explain | Static / Evergreen]
Doctrine of 'Constitutional Morality' explained with relevant judicial decisions

2 • 10 Marks • 150 Words • Polity & Constitution → Judiciary & Judicial Activism [Discuss | Static / Evergreen]
Desirability of greater representation to women in higher judiciary for diversity, equity & inclusiveness

3 • 10 Marks • 150 Words • Polity & Constitution → Federalism & Centre-State Relations [Discuss | Static / Evergreen]
How 14th Finance Commission recommendations enabled States to improve their fiscal position

4 • 10 Marks • 150 Words • Polity & Constitution → Parliament & State Legislatures [Discuss | Static / Evergreen]
Extent to which Parliament is able to ensure accountability of the executive in India

5 • 10 Marks • 150 Words • Governance → Pressure Groups, NGOs & Civil Society [Discuss | Static / Evergreen]
Pressure groups in Indian public policy making; how business associations contribute

6 • 10 Marks • 150 Words • Social Justice → Poverty & Welfare Governance [Discuss | Static / Evergreen]
Primary health structure as necessary precondition for sustainable development beyond welfare imperative

7 • 10 Marks • 150 Words • Social Justice → Education & Skill Development [Discuss | Static / Evergreen]
Strengthening 'Earn while you learn' scheme to make vocational education & skill training meaningful

8 • 10 Marks • 150 Words • Social Justice → Poverty & Welfare Governance [Discuss | Static / Evergreen]
Breaking vicious cycle of gender inequality, poverty & malnutrition through microfinancing of women SHGs

9 • 10 Marks • 150 Words • International Relations → Bilateral & Global Groupings [Discuss | Current-Affairs Linked]
India's influence in Africa in recent years ('next few decades expected to be Africa's')

10 • 10 Marks • 150 Words • Polity & Constitution → Elections & RPA [Discuss | Static / Evergreen]
USA facing existential threat from China more challenging than the erstwhile Soviet Union

11 • 15 Marks • 250 Words • Polity & Constitution → Federalism & Centre-State Relations [Discuss | Static / Evergreen]
States questioning CBI jurisdiction & non-absolute power to withhold consent — federal character

12 • 15 Marks • 250 Words • Polity & Constitution → Constitutional & Statutory Bodies [Discuss | Static / Evergreen]
Structural and practical limitations of Human Rights Commissions against the powerful & remedies

13 • 15 Marks • 250 Words • Polity & Constitution → Judiciary & Judicial Activism [Compare | Static / Evergreen]
Distinguishing features of Right to Equality in the Constitutions of the USA and India

14 • 15 Marks • 250 Words • Polity & Constitution → Parliament & State Legislatures [Discuss | Static / Evergreen]
Constitutional provisions for Legislative Councils; working and current status with illustrations

15 • 15 Marks • 250 Words • Polity & Constitution → Parliament & State Legislatures [Discuss | Static / Evergreen]
Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committees keeping administration on its toes

16 • 15 Marks • 250 Words • Governance → E-Governance & Citizen Charters [Discuss | Static / Evergreen]
Rural digital illiteracy & lack of ICT accessibility hindering socio-economic development

17 • 15 Marks • 250 Words • Social Justice → Education & Skill Development [Discuss | Static / Evergreen]
Patriarchal social attitude towards women & feminist movement — interventions beyond education/schemes

18 • 15 Marks • 250 Words • Governance → Pressure Groups, NGOs & Civil Society [Discuss | Static / Evergreen]
Civil Society and NGOs as alternative model of public service delivery & its challenges

19 • 15 Marks • 250 Words • International Relations → Bilateral & Global Groupings [Discuss | Static / Evergreen]
Aims and objectives of SCO & what importance it holds for India

20 • 15 Marks • 250 Words • Polity & Constitution → Parliament & State Legislatures [Analyze | Current-Affairs Linked]
Tri-nation partnership AUKUS countering China in Indo-Pacific — strength, impact & existing ties

GS Paper 3 (Economy, Agri, S&T, Environment & Security) (20 Qs | Code: HXS-G-GST)

1 • 10 Marks • 150 Words • Economy → Inclusive Growth, Poverty & Employment [Discuss | Current-Affairs Linked]
Difference between computing methodology of India's GDP before 2015 and after 2015

2 • 10 Marks • 150 Words • Economy → Budgeting, Fiscal Policy & Taxation [Compare | Static / Evergreen]
Distinguish between Capital Budget and Revenue Budget & explain their components

3 • 10 Marks • 150 Words • Agriculture → Land Reforms [Discuss | Static / Evergreen]
How land reforms improved socio-economic conditions of marginal and small farmers

4 • 10 Marks • 150 Words • Agriculture → Cropping Patterns & Farm Productivity [Discuss | Static / Evergreen]
How and to what extent micro-irrigation helps in solving India's water crisis

5 • 10 Marks • 150 Words • Science & Tech → Space & Defence Tech [Discuss | Current-Affairs Linked]
How S-400 air defence system is technically superior to other available systems

6 • 10 Marks • 150 Words • Environment & Disaster Management → Climate Change & Treaties [Discuss | Current-Affairs Linked]
Purpose of Green Grid Initiative launched at COP26 Glasgow (Nov 2021) & when first floated in ISA

7 • 10 Marks • 150 Words • Environment & Disaster Management → Conservation, Biodiversity & Pollution [Compare | Current-Affairs Linked]
Revised WHO Global Air Quality Guidelines (vs 2005) & changes required in India's NCAP

8 • 10 Marks • 150 Words • Environment & Disaster Management → Disaster Management [Discuss | Static / Evergreen]
Vulnerability of India to earthquake hazards & major earthquake disasters in last three decades

9 • 10 Marks • 150 Words • Internal Security → Cyber Security & Money Laundering [Discuss | Static / Evergreen]
Emerging technologies & globalisation contributing to money laundering; national/international measures

10 • 10 Marks • 150 Words • Internal Security → Border & Maritime Security [Analyze | Static / Evergreen]
Impact of cross-border cyber attacks on India's internal security & defensive measures

11 • 15 Marks • 250 Words • Economy → Inclusive Growth, Poverty & Employment [Critically Examine | Current-Affairs Linked]
Whether Indian economy has recently experienced a V-shaped recovery

12 • 15 Marks • 250 Words • Economy → Infrastructure, Energy & Investment [Discuss | Static / Evergreen]
Investment in infrastructure essential for rapid and inclusive economic growth — India's experience

13 • 15 Marks • 250 Words • Agriculture → Food Processing & PDS [Discuss | Current-Affairs Linked]
Salient features of National Food Security Act, 2013 & eliminating hunger and malnutrition

14 • 15 Marks • 250 Words • Agriculture → Cropping Patterns & Farm Productivity [Discuss | Static / Evergreen]
Present challenges before crop diversification & opportunity from emerging technologies

15 • 15 Marks • 250 Words • Science & Tech → Biotechnology & Health Tech [Discuss | Current-Affairs Linked]
R&D achievements in applied biotechnology & uplifting poorer sections of society

16 • 15 Marks • 250 Words • Science & Tech → AI, IT & Emerging Tech [Analyze | Current-Affairs Linked]
2014 Physics Nobel Prize for Blue LEDs (Akasaki, Amano, Nakamura) & impact on everyday human life

17 • 15 Marks • 250 Words • Environment & Disaster Management → Climate Change & Treaties [Discuss | Current-Affairs Linked]
Major outcomes of UNFCCC COP26 & commitments made by India

18 • 15 Marks • 250 Words • Environment & Disaster Management → Disaster Management [Discuss | Static / Evergreen]
Causes and effects of landslides & components of National Landslide Risk Management Strategy

19 • 15 Marks • 250 Words • Internal Security → Extremism, Insurgency & Terrorism [Discuss | Static / Evergreen]
Multidimensional challenges posed by external state and non-state actors to India's internal security

20 • 15 Marks • 250 Words • Internal Security → Extremism, Insurgency & Terrorism [Discuss | Static / Evergreen]
Complexity, intensity, causes, linkages & nexus of terrorism + measures to eradicate it

GS Paper 4 (Ethics, Integrity & Aptitude) (19 Qs | Code: HXS-G-GSF)

1(a) • 10 Marks • 150 Words • Ethics Theory → Ethics & Human Interface [Discuss | Static / Evergreen]
Identify five ethical traits to plot civil servant performance & justify inclusion in matrix

1(b) • 10 Marks • 150 Words • Ethics Theory → Foundational & Civil Service Values [Discuss | Static / Evergreen]
Identify ten essential values for an effective public servant & ways to prevent non-ethical behaviour

2(a) • 10 Marks • 150 Words • Ethics Theory → Ethics & Human Interface [Analyze | Static / Evergreen]
Impact of digital technology as reliable source of input for rational decision making

2(b) • 10 Marks • 150 Words • Ethics Theory → Ethics & Human Interface [Discuss | Static / Evergreen]
Need for innovativeness and high-order creativity alongside domain knowledge in resolving ethical dilemmas

3(a) • 10 Marks • 150 Words • Thinker Quotes → Quote-Based Questions Vault [Discuss | Static / Evergreen]
Swami Vivekananda quote: Every work has got to pass through hundreds of difficulties before succeeding

3(b) • 10 Marks • 150 Words • Thinker Quotes → Quote-Based Questions Vault [Discuss | Static / Evergreen]
Dalai Lama quote: We can never obtain peace in the outer world until we obtain peace within ourselves

3(c) • 10 Marks • 150 Words • Thinker Quotes → Quote-Based Questions Vault [Discuss | Static / Evergreen]
Erik Erikson quote: Life doesn't make any sense without interdependence

4(a) • 10 Marks • 150 Words • Ethics Theory → Attitude & Emotional Intelligence [Discuss | Static / Evergreen]
Attitude as input in human development & building suitable attitude for a public servant

4(b) • 10 Marks • 150 Words • Ethics Theory → Ethics & Human Interface [Discuss | Static / Evergreen]
Emotional intelligence helping overcome crisis of conscience without compromising moral stand

5(a) • 10 Marks • 150 Words • Ethics Theory → Ethics & Human Interface [Discuss | Static / Evergreen]
Ethical dimension of turning back refugees facing persecution or human rights violations

5(b) • 10 Marks • 150 Words • Ethics Theory → Foundational & Civil Service Values [Discuss | Static / Evergreen]
Impartial and non-partisan qualities as indispensable for a successful civil servant

6(a) • 10 Marks • 150 Words • Ethics Theory → Probity & Corporate Governance [Discuss | Static / Evergreen]
Independent and empowered social audit mechanism in every sphere of public service including judiciary

6(b) • 10 Marks • 150 Words • Ethics Theory → Foundational & Civil Service Values [Discuss | Static / Evergreen]
Integrity is a value that empowers the human being

7 • 20 Marks • 250 Words • Case Studies → Tech, AI & Data Ethics [Case Study | Static / Evergreen]
Young civil servant Sunil raiding illegal sand mining mafia in tribal district; mafia & office insiders stalk his family and threaten his life

8 • 20 Marks • 250 Words • Case Studies → Corruption, Probity & Conflict of Interest [Case Study | Current-Affairs Linked]
Degree college Vice Principal pressured by management (linking promotion to Principal) to settle flying squad catching politician's & donor's sons cheating

9 • 20 Marks • 250 Words • Case Studies → Workplace Ethics, Medical & Administrative Integrity [Case Study | Static / Evergreen]
Elevated corridor project manager noticing pier crack requiring 4–6 month rebuild, overruled by Chief Engineer ahead of pre-election CM inauguration

10 • 20 Marks • 250 Words • Case Studies → Disaster, Law & Order & National Security [Case Study | Current-Affairs Linked]
Public hospital administrator during COVID-19 surge deciding criteria to deploy clinical/non-clinical staff with scarce resources (vs private hospital)

11 • 20 Marks • 250 Words • Case Studies → Development vs. Environment & Displacement [Case Study | Static / Evergreen]
Indian food company selling substandard and rejected export products domestically — regulatory action, corporate crisis recovery & ethical dilemma

12 • 20 Marks • 250 Words • Case Studies → Corruption, Probity & Conflict of Interest [Case Study | Static / Evergreen]
State government officer Pawan facing toxic harassment and public humiliation from insensitive senior officer spilling over into his family life

Essay Paper (Philosophical & Policy Prompts) (8 Qs | Code: HXS-G-ESSY)

A1 • 125 Marks • 1200 Words • Philosophical / Epigrammatic → Self, Mind & Philosophy [Essay | Static / Evergreen]
The process of self-discovery has now been technologically outsourced.

A2 • 125 Marks • 1200 Words • Philosophical / Epigrammatic → Governance, Ethics & Leadership [Essay | Static / Evergreen]
Your perception of me is a reflection of you; my reaction to you is an awareness of me.

A3 • 125 Marks • 1200 Words • Philosophical / Epigrammatic → Self, Mind & Philosophy [Essay | Static / Evergreen]
Philosophy of wantlessness is Utopian, while materialism is a chimera.

A4 • 125 Marks • 1200 Words • Philosophical / Epigrammatic → Self, Mind & Philosophy [Essay | Static / Evergreen]
The real is rational and the rational is real.

B1 • 125 Marks • 1200 Words • Philosophical / Epigrammatic → Society, Gender & Inclusion [Essay | Static / Evergreen]
Hand that rocks the cradle rules the world.

B2 • 125 Marks • 1200 Words • Philosophical / Epigrammatic → Education, Science & Knowledge [Essay | Static / Evergreen]
What is research, but a blind date with knowledge!

B3 • 125 Marks • 1200 Words • Philosophical / Epigrammatic → Self, Mind & Philosophy [Essay | Static / Evergreen]
History repeats itself, first as a tragedy, second as a farce.

B4 • 125 Marks • 1200 Words • Philosophical / Epigrammatic → Governance, Ethics & Leadership [Essay | Static / Evergreen]
There are better practices to "best practices".

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