

UPSC PREPARATION WITH A JOB

Prepare for UPSC. Keep your career moving.

How to prepare alongside work, protect your career and use your study time well.

Do you have a good job, or have you received a good job offer after graduation? My advice is to take or keep that job and begin preparing for UPSC alongside it. This includes a good private-sector job. You can prepare seriously while you earn, gain experience and build a career.

I have shared my UPSC preparation experience in this guide, including what helped me clear Prelims and Mains multiple times. I now serve in a Group A government service. That experience is also why I want you to think carefully about your career while preparing.

Hard work matters, but it does not guarantee selection. If you can build another career while you prepare, you will have more choices whatever the result. I suggest around three focused study hours a day, on five or six days a week, as a routine to work towards.

This guide explains how to use that time and decide whether full-time preparation is right for you. For the subjects, books and order of study, read the [main preparation guide](#) alongside this one.

Take a good job and build your career alongside preparation

A first job gives you more than a salary. You learn how to do the work, develop skills and gain experience that helps you move to the next role. If you continue working while preparing, your career can move forward even when an exam attempt does not go as planned.

After graduation, you may have a good opportunity to enter your field. **Do not give it up simply because you think serious UPSC preparation requires full-time study.** If you spend three or four years preparing and then look for your first job, finding a suitable job can become much more difficult. You can still find work, but getting started in your field and building a steady career can be a real struggle. That is why I recommend protecting a good opportunity when you have one.

Having a job also means that every attempt does not have to decide your entire future. You still want to clear UPSC, but you have income and another career to continue if you do not. Keeping that option is a practical decision; it does not mean you are less committed to the exam.

Many candidates have cleared UPSC while holding a job, and working candidates continue to succeed year after year. [Animesh Pradhan, who secured rank 2 in CSE 2023](#), described preparing alongside his full-time job at Indian Oil. Keeping your job does not rule out success.

Begin preparing alongside work and keep checking your understanding through questions and mock tests. You can consider leaving the job later if you are already doing very well and need some extra time to improve further. You should also be financially stable without the job.

Understand what a civil-service career can and cannot offer

Civil service gives you an opportunity to do useful public work, but it also comes with responsibilities, restrictions and difficult situations. Becoming an IAS, IPS, IRS or another service officer will not solve every problem in your life. You should understand the work before deciding how much to risk for it.

Do not compare every difficulty in your present job with only the attractive parts of civil service. Think about the everyday work, salary and responsibilities too. The appeal of a title may change over the years, and so may what you want from your career. **Do not choose civil service with the expectation that it will make you rich or give you unchecked power.**

I expect computerisation, greater citizen awareness and stronger accountability to reduce the scope for corruption and arbitrary decisions. That change will happen at different speeds in different places, but this is the direction I believe public administration will take. Prepare to do responsible work and answer for your decisions.

You can pursue the exam with that understanding while keeping a good career alongside it. The point is to prepare well without depending on selection to solve everything else.

Give your three study hours a clear purpose

Aim for around three focused hours a day on five or six days a week. You can divide them between morning and evening; they do not have to be three continuous hours. Choose study times you can usually keep around your job and other responsibilities. Use the time when you feel freshest for concepts that need more attention.

Three hours on five or six days gives you fifteen to eighteen hours a week. What you do in those hours matters. You need time to understand the subject, revise it and try questions. Keep checking yourself through practice quizzes. As you cover more of the syllabus, take mock tests too. Read the explanations and work on what you got wrong.

Start with the foundation

If you are a beginner, start with the NCERT school textbooks. Work on one or two General Studies subjects at a time. Think about how the concepts work and connect them with what you already know. Think through these connections in your mind. You do not need to write an explanation after every small part or make detailed notes during this first reading. The [NCERT guidance in the main guide](#) explains where to start and how to read.



AT CLARITY

Follow your NCERT lessons more easily.

After a tiring day at work, it can be difficult to settle down with a textbook. The Clarity UPSC app will offer interactive NCERT lessons with a voice-reading assistant. You will be able to read along as it reads the lesson aloud.

The aim is to help you stay focused, connect the concepts and understand them more easily. This should help you make better use of your study time and complete your NCERT reading faster.

Keep your sources limited as you move to more detailed books. Read a suitable book again to understand and remember it better. Avoid repeatedly looking for a new source. Collecting more books and watching more preparation advice takes time. With a job, those hours are better spent studying.

Keep reading, revision and practice together

After studying a topic, think through what you have read and try a few questions. Read the explanations to see whether you understood the concepts and where you went wrong. Return to difficult parts before moving on, and revise earlier topics as you continue. Arrange this work around your job and the subjects you need to study.

After your first one or two weeks, begin a little CSAT practice too. CSAT is the second Prelims paper, which tests comprehension, reasoning and basic mathematics. Start with four or five questions without a time limit. Then work on the parts you find difficult. Give it a regular place in your week by replacing part of a subject session.

Do not begin with Mains answer writing. Build your General Studies foundation and focus first on clearing Prelims. Without the facts and concepts, you will struggle to write an answer. Once you have a grip on the basics, you can add optional-subject preparation and, later, answer writing. When you add a task, give it time within your existing routine. Do not keep adding more to an already full day.

Keep current affairs within your available time

1. **Read a newspaper for the first one to two months.** Choose news articles and editorials to become familiar with newspaper language and improve your understanding. Do not read every page or spend hours copying notes.
2. **After that, stop daily newspaper study and use one source of prepared current-affairs material.** A monthly magazine or a suitable website brings the important news and background together. Reading several newspapers and collecting the same news from different sources wastes study time.
3. **Take a daily current-affairs quiz and read the explanations.** Try the questions first, then find out why each answer is right or wrong. Read the related article when you need more background. Each week, return to questions you got wrong or guessed.

Keep time for your main subjects and revision as you study current affairs. If the newspaper takes all three hours, the rest of your preparation will not move forward.

Choose help that fits around your job

With a job, you need help that fits the time you have. You can choose lessons for a particular subject without committing to a full coaching timetable. For choosing teachers and using AI to clear doubts, read the [coaching and self-study section in the main guide](#).



AT CLARITY

Stay on track with Clarity.

Use Clarity's [subject reading](#), [current-affairs pages](#) and [daily quiz](#) for the topic you are working on. Try the questions, read the explanations and return to anything you did not understand. You can also use the [learner app](#) to continue your preparation. Working aspirants are an important part of the audience we want to help. The purpose is to make the study time you have useful through clear explanations and practice.

When you can consider leaving a job

Keep your study plan flexible. Some days you may have less time, and a topic may take longer than you expected. Not finishing everything exactly as planned is not, by itself, a reason to leave a job.

Consider leaving only if you are already performing very well in practice and mock tests, and you believe some extra study time could help you improve further. You should also be financially stable without the job. You need to be able to support yourself and meet your responsibilities while preparing.

If you do not have a suitable job opportunity

Full-time preparation can be an option if you do not have a suitable job opportunity and can support yourself while studying. Someone with enough financial support may also choose to accept the career risk. Having that support gives you more freedom to choose, but it does not make selection certain.

If you have already spent years preparing

If you have already spent several years on UPSC, start with the choices available to you now. You do not need to defend every earlier decision before taking the next step. Finding a suitable job and building a steady career after a long gap can be very difficult. It is still possible, so begin looking at the work available to you and the skills you need.

Decide how to move forward

1. Begin looking at work and skills

Look at jobs you could apply for and the skills you need to refresh. Prepare an honest explanation of the time you spent studying and what you can contribute now. You can explore employment while continuing a smaller UPSC routine. You do not have to wait for another result before looking at your options.

2. Use the foundation you have already built

If you return to preparation after a break, check what you still understand before starting every book again. Try questions on familiar topics, revise the gaps and update your current affairs. Your earlier reading can still help you. The [personal account in the main guide](#) explains how a strong foundation helped me in later attempts.

3. Judge the next attempt from your present position

Look at your recent progress, finances and the work you could obtain. You may continue preparing alongside a job or decide to move to another career. The years you have already spent do not require you to keep preparing indefinitely.

For the full order of preparation, return to the [main guide](#). Its [study-routine section](#) explains regular study, rest and why the final month before Prelims matters. Arrange your preparation around your job and keep checking your understanding. You can work towards UPSC while continuing to build a career.

Questions and answers

WORKING ALONGSIDE A JOB

Should I leave my job to prepare for UPSC?

If you have a good job, I recommend keeping it and preparing alongside work. Consider leaving only if you are already performing very well in practice and mock tests and believe some extra study time could help you improve further. You should also be financially stable without the job. Not finishing every topic exactly as planned is not, by itself, a reason to resign.

Should I accept a private-sector job after graduation if I want to prepare for UPSC?

Yes, I recommend taking a good private-sector opportunity and preparing alongside it. Your first job helps you build skills and experience, which can make it easier to move forward in your career. Do not reject it simply because you think every serious UPSC aspirant must study full-time. Look at the work hours and plan your study around them.

Can I prepare for UPSC while working full-time?

Yes. Many candidates have cleared UPSC while holding a job. Begin with the General Studies foundation, keep your sources limited and make time for revision and questions. I suggest working towards around three focused hours on five or six days a week. Arrange this around your job, keep your plan flexible and use practice to check your understanding.

Are three hours a day enough for UPSC preparation?

Around three focused hours on five or six days a week can make a meaningful difference. Use the time to understand subjects, revise and answer questions. Keep checking yourself through quizzes and, as you progress, mock tests. Review your answers and return to what you did not understand. Three hours is a suggested routine, not a guarantee of selection.

How should working professionals organise their UPSC study?

Choose study times you can usually keep around your job. Use your freshest time for concepts that need more attention, and keep returning to revision and questions as you progress. You can divide the study between separate sessions. Give CSAT and current affairs regular attention too, without trying to do every part of preparation every day. The aim is consistent work, not following one standard timetable.

Can I prepare for UPSC with an unpredictable work schedule?

Arrange your study around the time available to you and keep the plan flexible. Some days you may study less. That does not mean your preparation has gone wrong. Aim for regular effort and keep checking your understanding through questions and mock tests as you progress.

When is full-time UPSC preparation a reasonable choice?

If you already have a job, consider leaving only when you are performing very well and believe extra study time could help you improve further. You should also be financially stable without it. Full-time preparation can also be an option if a suitable job is not available and you can support yourself, or if you can afford to accept the career risk.

Should I have a backup career while preparing for UPSC?

Yes. If you can keep a good job or build another career while preparing, do so. Selection is uncertain even when you work hard. Earning, developing skills and gaining experience gives you choices if an attempt does not go well. This does not require you to prepare for several unrelated exams at once.

Will a gap for UPSC preparation make it impossible to get a job later?

No, but finding a suitable job and building a steady career after a long gap can become very difficult. The challenge is not just getting any job; it is finding work that helps you move forward in your field. Keep your professional skills current where you can. If you already have a gap, look at jobs you could apply for and what you need to learn or refresh, instead of assuming that work is no longer possible.

I have already spent several years preparing. Should I now look for work?

Yes, begin looking at the work available to you, especially if finances are becoming difficult or preparation has stopped progressing. Refresh the skills those jobs need and apply while continuing a smaller study routine if you want to. Decide about another attempt from your present situation, rather than only from the years you have already spent preparing.

What should I do when work makes me miss a study day?

One day with less study does not mean your preparation has gone wrong. Keep your plan flexible and aim to study regularly around your work. If a study session takes longer than planned, adjust the timetable and continue. Use practice questions and mock tests to check your understanding as you progress.

Does having financial support mean I should prepare full-time?

Financial support gives you more freedom to consider full-time preparation and accept the career risk. If you already have a good job, my advice is to keep it unless you are performing very well and believe extra study time could help you improve further. You should remain financially stable after leaving. Having enough money does not make selection certain.

CAREER AND SERVICE EXPECTATIONS**Will becoming an IAS, IPS or another civil service officer solve all my problems?**

No. Civil service has its own responsibilities, restrictions and difficulties. It will not automatically bring lasting happiness, wealth or a solution to every personal problem. Learn about the actual work and prepare with realistic expectations. If you have a good career opportunity alongside preparation, protect it.

Should I prepare for UPSC mainly to become rich?

No. Choose it for the work and responsibility, with a realistic understanding of the salary and the life it involves. Do not expect corruption, special treatment or unchecked power to make the career worthwhile. If becoming wealthy is your main aim, compare other career options honestly before committing years to this exam.

Will the prestige of civil services remain the same throughout my career?

Do not assume it will. The appeal of a title may change over time, and so may your own interests and priorities. Think about whether you want to do the work, including its everyday responsibilities. A title's attraction today is not enough reason to risk every other career option.

How could digitisation and citizen awareness change civil-service work?

I expect computerisation, greater citizen awareness and stronger accountability to reduce the scope for corruption and arbitrary decisions. This is my outlook; the pace of change will differ across institutions. Prepare for work in which you have to explain your decisions and answer to the public, rather than expecting unlimited authority.

Does maintaining a parallel career mean I am not serious about UPSC?

No. You can be serious about UPSC while earning and building a career. What matters is whether you study regularly, understand the subjects, revise and practise. Resigning is not proof of commitment. A job gives you another path while you work towards an uncertain exam result.

How should I decide between a good career opportunity and full-time UPSC preparation after graduation?

My recommendation is to take a good job and begin preparing alongside it. Use the opportunity to gain experience while building a regular study routine. Consider full-time study when you do not have a suitable alternative, or when you can knowingly afford the career and financial risk. Do not give up a good opportunity because you expect civil service to solve every problem.

Sources & further reading

This guide draws on my preparation experience and my advice to protect a good career while studying. The suggestion of around three hours on five or six days is about regular effort, not a standard timetable or a guarantee of selection. Decide about work and full-time preparation with your responsibilities, finances, skills and opportunities in mind.

For exam references, see [sources in the main guide](#).