

## **Indian Forest Service examination – Detailed information for Aspirants**

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Many youngsters consider the Indian Forest Service a grave challenge, anxious about a frightening environment involving physical hazards and risk to life, not to mention the absence of sophisticated urban comforts. This is the negative side of a bright picture.

Old traditions in India considered forests sacred, perhaps for its significance in maintaining the quality of life on the planet. It is tragic that in modern times, the picture has changed to indiscriminate felling of trees, illegal poaching and destruction of forests for temporary gains, ignoring their negative impacts.

Forests make substantial contribution to the Indian economy. They help reduce soil erosion and flooding; supply the growing needs of the domestic wood industry; and meet the needs of the rural population for firewood, fodder, small timber and miscellaneous forest produce.

Indian forests produce more than eight million cubic metres of industrial wood, 15 million cubic metres of firewood, four million tonnes of bamboo and a wide variety of items such as sabai grass, medicinal plants, honey and resins. They support the splendid wildlife with its unique diversity. Maintaining ecological balance also finds a place in the national policy on forests.

We have a dream of covering 33 per cent of the land area of the country with forests; what we have is much less. The services of trained personnel are essential to preserve and regenerate the forests, forest wealth and resources.

The Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) conducts a competitive examination every year for recruitment to the Indian Forest Service. There is a misconception that only those who have qualifications in forestry can enter the service.

A candidate in the age group of 21-30 with any one of the following qualifications is eligible to apply for admission to the examination: a Bachelor's degree with at least one of the subjects namely mathematics, physics, chemistry, statistics, botany, zoology, geology and animal husbandry and veterinary science; or a Bachelor's degree in engineering, agriculture or forestry.

Candidates belonging to eligible categories are set a lower upper age limit. Those who have appeared in the qualifying examination are also eligible for admission.

Candidates must be in good mental and bodily health and free from any physical defect that may interfere with the discharge of their duties as officers of the service. They have to undergo a medical examination under a specified medical board. Then, there is a walking test — men have to walk 25 km and women 14 km in four hours.

The full details of physical standards will be notified by the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests in the Gazette of India.

There are six papers, each of three hours, with questions demanding essays as answers. There will be no objective-type question. The candidate has to choose two optional subjects from a list of 14:

Agricultural engineering, Agriculture, Animal husbandry and veterinary science, Botany, Chemical engineering, Chemistry, Civil engineering, Forestry, Geology, Mathematics, Mechanical engineering, Physics, Statistics, Zoology.

*The following combination of subjects is not allowed:*

Agriculture and agricultural engineering

Agriculture and animal husbandry and veterinary science

Chemistry and chemical engineering

Mathematics and statistics.

Two engineering subjects (agricultural, chemical, civil or mechanical engineering)

For each optional subject, there will be two papers. The six papers are as follows.

General English: 300 marks

General knowledge: 300

Subject 1, paper 1: 200

Subject 1, paper 2: 200

Subject 2, paper 1: 200

Subject 2, paper 2: 200

Total: 1,400

Those who perform well in the written examination will be asked to attend an interview/personality test, which carries 300 marks. The UPSC has given specific instructions with regard to the personality test.

“The object of the interview is to assess the personal suitability of the candidate for the service. The candidate will be expected to have taken an intelligent interest not only in his subjects of academic study but also in events which are happening around him both within and outside his own State or country, as well as in modern currents of thoughts and in new discoveries which should rouse the curiosity of well-educated youth,” it says.

“The technique of the interview is not that of a strict cross examination, but of a natural, though directed and purposive conversation, intended to reveal mental qualities of the candidate. The Board will pay special attention to assessing the intellectual curiosity, critical powers of observation and assimilation, balance of judgment and alertness of mind, initiative, tact, capacity for leadership; the ability for social cohesion, mental and physical energy and powers of practical application; integrity of character; and other

qualities such as topographical sense, love for outdoor life and the desire to explore unknown and out of way places.”

The syllabus of each paper will be published along with the examination notification. As in other written examinations held by the UPSC, marks will not be awarded for mere superficial knowledge. Credit will be given for orderly, effective and exact expressions combined with due economy of words. You will be allowed the use of scientific (non-programmable type) calculators. Reference material such as mathematical or physical tables and the National Building Code will be supplied in the examination hall.

The standard of the general English and general knowledge papers will be what can be expected from a science or an engineering graduate from an Indian university. The standard for science subjects will be that of the Honours degree level — higher than the Bachelor's degree but lower than the Master's degree. In engineering subjects, the level corresponds to that of the Bachelor's degree.

In the general English paper, the candidate will have to write an essay. Other questions will be designed to test your understanding of English and workmanlike use of words. Passages will usually be set for summary or precis.

The general knowledge paper includes knowledge of current events and of such matters of everyday observation and experience in their scientific aspects as may be expected of an educated person who has not made a special study of any scientific subject. There will be questions on Indian polity including the political system and the Constitution, Indian history and geography of a nature which the candidate should be able to answer without special study.

In each optional subject paper, there will be eight questions. All questions carry equal marks. Each paper will be divided into two parts, each containing four questions. Of the eight questions, five are to be attempted. One question in each part will be compulsory. Candidates will be required to answer three more questions, taking at least one from each part.

Courtesy: The Hindu

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