



RIGHT TO INFORMATION

**A Citizen's Practical Guide to
the RTI Act, 2005**

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Right to Information Act, 2005¹ (“the Act” or “RTI Act”) confers upon every citizen of India a legally enforceable right to request access to records, documents, and decisions held by public authorities. Its core purpose is to ***promote transparency, ensure public accountability, and prevent corruption***. The Act’s preamble states its purpose: “to provide for setting out the practical regime of right to information for citizens to secure access to information under the control of public authorities, in order to promote transparency and accountability”. It further emphasises that “democracy requires an informed citizenry and transparency of information to contain corruption and to hold Governments accountable.”²

The RTI Act was introduced in response to the public’s increasing demand for government transparency.

The Act draws constitutional support from Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution of India, which guarantees freedom of speech and expression. The Supreme Court has recognised that the right to information is an integral facet of that fundamental freedom.³

2. KEY LEGAL FEATURES

2.1 Statutory Framework

The right to information in India is governed by the Right to Information Act, 2005 (Act No. 22 of 2005), which came into force on 12 October 2005. The Act creates a comprehensive statutory framework for access to government-held information.

2.2 Constitutional Backing

The right to know how the government functions is a facet of the freedom of speech and expression guaranteed under Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution of India.

2.3 Scope of Access

Citizens may inspect government works, obtain certified copies of documents, and request samples of material held by public authorities, all in accordance with the procedures prescribed by the Act.

¹ Right to Information Act, 2005 (Act No. 22 of 2005), published in the Gazette of India Extraordinary, Part II, Section 1, dated 21 June 2005.

² Preamble, RTI Act, 2005 (Act No. 22 of 2005), published in the Gazette of India Extraordinary, Part II, Section 1, dated 21 June 2005.

³ Constitution of India, Art. 19(1)(a); see also *Union of India v. Association for Democratic Reforms*, (2002) 5 SCC 294 (SC India), holding that the right to information is a facet of freedom of speech.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE RTI ACT

The primary objectives of the Act are:

- **Promote Transparency:** to ensure that government institutions operate openly and that citizens may request details about policies, decisions, and administrative actions.
- **Enhance Accountability:** to make public officials answerable for their actions and thereby improve institutional efficiency.
- **Empower Citizens:** to grant legal authority to access government records, transforming passive subjects into active, informed participants in democratic governance.
- **Combat Corruption:** provide a tool to scrutinise government spending, contracts, and processes to identify and prevent misconduct.

4. SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE RTI ACT

4.1 What Constitutes “Information”

Section 2(f) of the Act defines “information” to mean any material in any form, including records, documents, memos, e-mails, opinions, advices, press releases, circulars, orders, logbooks, contracts, reports, papers, samples, models, data material held in any electronic form, and information relating to any private body which can be accessed by a public authority under any other law.⁴

4.2 Exemptions Under Section 8

Section 8(1) of the Act exempts certain categories of information from disclosure.⁵ The principal exemptions are:

- **Section 8(1)(a):** information affecting India’s sovereignty, integrity, security, strategic interests, or foreign relations.
- **Section 8(1)(b):** information expressly forbidden from publication by any court or constituting contempt of court.
- **Section 8(1)(c):** information constituting a breach of privilege of Parliament or a State Legislature.
- **Section 8(1)(d):** trade secrets, intellectual property, or commercial confidence the disclosure of which would harm the competitive position of a third party (unless larger public interest warrants disclosure).
- **Section 8(1)(e):** information held in a fiduciary relationship.
- **Section 8(1)(f):** information received in confidence from a foreign government.

⁴ RTI Act, s. 2(f): “‘information’ means any material in any form, including records, documents, memos, e-mails, opinions, advices, press releases, circulars, orders, logbooks, contracts, reports, papers, samples, models, data material held in any electronic form and information relating to any private body which can be accessed by a public authority under any other law for the time being in force”.

⁵ RTI Act, s. 8(1)(a)–(j).

- **Sections 8(1)(g) & (h):** information that endangers physical safety, reveals a confidential source, or impedes a criminal investigation.
- **Section 8(1)(i):** Cabinet papers and records of deliberations of the Council of Ministers until a decision is implemented.
- **Section 8(1)(j):** personal information having no relation to public activity, or whose disclosure would cause unwarranted invasion of privacy.

Notwithstanding the above, Section 8(2) provides that a public authority may disclose exempt information where the public interest in disclosure outweighs the harm in doing so.⁶

4.3 The Twenty-Year Rule

Under **Section 8(3)**, information exempted under most provisions of Section 8(1) must be disclosed once twenty years have elapsed from the date of the document, except for information falling under Sections 8(1)(a) and 8(1)(c).⁷

4.4 Excluded Organisations

Section 24 of the Act excludes specified intelligence and security organisations from its ambit.⁸ However, even these organisations are obliged to disclose information regarding allegations of corruption or human rights violations.

4.5 Other Limitations

- **Copyright (Section 9):** information cannot be disclosed if its disclosure would infringe copyright vesting in a person other than the State.⁹
- **Citizenship:** only Indian citizens may file an RTI application; the Act does not extend to companies, associations, or NGOs unless a specific citizen is named as applicant.
- **Voluminous requests (Section 7(9)):** a request for massive or unspecified data may be refused where its processing would disproportionately divert the resources of the public authority.¹⁰

4.6 Disclosure of Personal Information

Section 8(1)(j) protects “personal information” that has no bearing on the public interest, unless disclosure is justified by a greater public interest. Thus, RTI cannot be used to force disclosure of information that falls within these exemptions. Examples of prohibited queries: personal financial details of individuals (unless the applicant can show overriding public interest), exam evaluation schemes based on fiduciary relationships, national security secrets, or internal advice/advice if not already part of records. Section 22 makes RTI prevail over inconsistent laws – but does not override the Constitution or non-public bodies.

⁶ RTI Act, s. 8(2).

⁷ RTI Act, s. 8(3): exempt information must be disclosed after twenty years from the date of the document, unless it falls within ss. 8(1)(a) or (c).

⁸ RTI Act, s. 24.

⁹ RTI Act, s. 9.

¹⁰ RTI Act, s. 7(9).

Private companies and individuals are generally outside the scope of RTI unless it comes under “public authority” (Section 2(h)). The Information Commissions and courts frequently reject queries that ask for creation of new records, speculate on unknown facts, or seek third-party proprietary data.

4.7 Forbidden RTI Requests

Certain examples of commonly forbidden RTI requests are:

1. Why did you do X? (It seeks an explanation or an opinion and not a record or information)
2. Hypothetical or future-related questions
3. Details of a person’s private life, wealth, taxes, and related matters.
4. Advice, recommendation, draft notes
5. Copies of written text prior to the examination

The RTI machinery has consistently stressed: information means existing records, not fresh investigations or personal explanations. As one Central Information Committee (CIC) order explained, the Act does not require the PIO to create information, to draw inferences, or furnish answers to what are essentially interrogative questions. A key principle in RTI drafting is that a person may request only recorded information, not solicit opinions or explanations from officials. Section 2(f) includes “opinion” and “advice” only if they are already present in a record. We may ask for a copy of a written opinion or recommendation (if it exists in a file), but cannot ask the officer to give their personal or professional opinion on a matter. The CIC has emphasized this point – Public authority is not required to provide advice or opinion to an applicant; nor required to obtain and furnish any ‘opinion’ or ‘advice’ to an applicant.” The terms opinion and advice in Section 2(f) only refer to such material available in the records of the public authority. Therefore, questions framed as “why did this happen” or “what do you think” are improper and are not accepted under RTI.

For example, in *R. Vidyadhar v. DoPT* (CIC, 2023), the appellant’s questions 2–6 “why despite submitting X, my name was not included” were denied on the grounds that they were “interrogatory” and were asking for interpretation/clarification, not recorded facts.

5. IDENTIFYING THE CORRECT PUBLIC AUTHORITY

The “correct public authority” is the specific government body that holds the information sought. Section 2(h) of the Act defines “public authority” to include any institution established or constituted by or under the Constitution, by Parliament, or by a State Legislature, and any body owned, controlled, or substantially financed by the government.¹¹

¹¹ RTI Act, s. 2(h).

5.1 How to Identify the Right Authority

- **By Jurisdiction:** Central Government matters (passports, railways, income tax) — apply to the relevant Central Public Information Officer. State Government matters (land records, state police, municipal issues) — apply to the relevant State Public Information Officer.
- **By Subject Matter:** match your query to the department's core function (e.g., provident fund queries — EPFO; provident fund of school teachers — state education department).
- **By Funding:** any NGO, school, or hospital that receives substantial financial aid from the government is a public authority to the extent of that funding.

5.2 Transfer to the Correct Authority

If a public authority receives an application for information held by another department, it is legally required under Section 6(3) to transfer the application to the correct authority within five days and inform the applicant of the transfer.¹²

6. FRAMING A PRECISE RTI REQUEST

Because Section 2(f) read with Section 6(1) confines the Act to existing recorded information, the following principles must guide the drafting of any RTI application:

- **Ask for Records, Not Reasons:** do not ask “Why has my road not been fixed?” Instead, ask for the work order, progress reports, and file notings relating to the repair of that road for a specified period. Example: Provide minutes of the Cabinet meeting of 15 March 2024 concerning Airport Project X. Ambiguous queries like “Details of Contract” are often rejected on the grounds as too broad.
- **Specify a Timeframe:** provide an exact date range (e.g., 1 January 2025 to 31 December 2025) to prevent a rejection on grounds of excessive breadth.
- **Use Numbered Points:** separate each query into a distinct, numbered item; avoid narrative paragraphs.
- **Specify the Format:** state whether you require certified photocopies, printouts, or electronic copies on a CD/USB drive.
- **Scope of “information” (Section 2(f)):** your request should be directed at material in any form — records, documents, memos, e-mails, press releases, circulars, orders, logbooks, contracts, or reports — that already exists in the records of the authority.
- **One Subject Rule:** An often-overlooked aspect is that RTI queries are meant to be subject-specific; this means the RTI filed should focus on a single topic or subject. The Central Information Commission (CIC) has held that if an application contains questions on more than one unrelated subject, each subject matter is treated as a separate request that requires a separate filing fee. If the RTI covers matters across multiple departments, the application will be transferred, which will add delays. If the request concerns another public authority, then the Central Public Information Officer (CPIO) must transfer it

¹²RTI Act, s. 6(3).

within 5 days and inform the applicant. This means that multi-department questions cause fragmentation.

- **Neutral Tone:** RTI is not the forum for grievances or emotional appeals. Phrases like “wilful neglect” or “illegal act” should be omitted from use. Try to keep the tone neutral and objective, as if requesting from a clerk. This is often noted by authorities as problematic language.
- **Practical advice:** When drafting, prefer putting related questions in only one RTI. If needed information is on, say, Scheme A and on Scheme B, file separate RTI forms for each. This avoids fee complications and ensures the CPIO can process your request efficiently.

An example of a well-framed request question: “Kindly provide a copy of the Cabinet Secretariat’s minutes dated 10 July 2023 regarding Agenda Item ‘Purchase of Medical Equipment’.”

7. STANDARD FORMAT OF AN RTI APPLICATION

An application under Section 6(1) of the Act may be made on plain paper. It must contain the applicant’s name, contact details, a citizenship declaration, the particulars of the required information, and proof of fee payment (or a BPL exemption certificate, where applicable).

8. FEE, SUBMISSION, AND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

8.1 Application Fee

- **Standard Fee:** ₹10 for the initial application.
- **BPL Exemption:** citizens living below the poverty line are exempt; a certified BPL card or certificate must be attached.
- **Additional Fees (if request approved):** A4/A3 paper — ₹2 per page; larger paper — actual cost of printing; floppy/CD/DVD — ₹50 per disk; inspection of records — free for the first hour, ₹5 per subsequent hour.

8.2 Submission Methods

Option A: Online Submission

- Visit the official RTI Online Portal (rtionline.gov.in).
- Select the relevant Ministry, Department, or Apex body.
- Fill in your personal details and type your request (up to 3,000 characters).
- Pay the ₹10 fee online via Internet Banking, Credit/Debit card, or UPI.

Option B: Offline Submission

- Write or print the application on plain paper.
- Attach the ₹10 fee by Indian Postal Order (IPO) or Demand Draft (DD), payable to the Accounts Officer of the department; a Court Fee Stamp (in states where accepted); or cash paid at the department's cash counter (obtain a receipt).
- Deliver the application by Speed Post, Registered Post, or in person to the Public Information Officer (PIO).

8.3 Acknowledgement of Receipt

- **Online:** an instant digital acknowledgement and a Unique Registration Number are issued via SMS and e-mail upon successful payment.
- **Offline (in person):** request the receiving clerk to stamp, date, and sign a photocopy of your application as proof of receipt.
- **Offline (by post):** your postal tracking receipt (Speed Post or Registered Post) confirming delivery constitutes proof of submission. The 30-day response period begins from the date of physical receipt by the department.

9. GROUNDS FOR REJECTION OF AN RTI APPLICATION

A Public Information Officer (PIO) may legally reject an application only under specific provisions of the Act. The principal grounds are:

9.1 Legal Exemptions (Section 8(1))

- National security — Section 8(1)(a).
- Court prohibitions — Section 8(1)(b).
- Parliamentary privilege — Section 8(1)(c).
- Commercial confidence — Section 8(1)(d).
- Fiduciary relationship — Section 8(1)(e).
- Foreign government confidence — Section 8(1)(f).
- Safety and investigation — Sections 8(1)(g) and (h).
- Cabinet papers — Section 8(1)(i).
- Personal privacy — Section 8(1)(j).

9.2 Procedural and Format Errors

- **Wrong jurisdiction:** although under Section 6(3) the PIO should transfer the application within five days, a request entirely outside the public authority's bounds may be rejected.
- **Request for opinions or explanations:** seeking a reason or justification rather than an existing record falls outside the scope of Section 2(f) and Section 6(1).
- **Incorrect fee or payment mode:** failure to pay the ₹10 fee, use of an unapproved mode (e.g., ordinary postage stamps), or failure to attach a valid BPL certificate.

- **Non-citizen applicant:** the Act is restricted to Indian citizens; an application filed in the name of a company, association, or NGO without a named individual citizen may be rejected.
- **Vague or voluminous requests:** requests for massive unspecified data may be refused under Section 7(9) where processing would disproportionately divert public resources.

9.3 Contents of a Rejection Letter

If an application is rejected, the PIO must state in writing: (i) the exact reason for rejection, citing the specific section of the Act; (ii) the period within which the applicant may file an appeal (usually 30 days); and (iii) the name, designation, and address of the First Appellate Authority.

10. THE FIRST APPEAL PROCESS

Under Section 19(1) of the Act, an applicant who is aggrieved by a decision or non-decision of the PIO may file a First Appeal before the First Appellate Authority (FAA), who is a senior officer within the same department.

10.1 Grounds for Filing a First Appeal

- No response from the PIO within 30 days.
- Wrongful rejection of the application under Section 8 without valid cause.
- Incomplete, incorrect, or misleading information provided.
- Excessive or incorrect additional fee demanded by the PIO.

10.2 Time Limit

- **Standard window:** 30 days from the date of the PIO's reply (or from the expiry of the 30-day response period if no reply was received).
- **Condonation of delay:** the FAA may condone a delay beyond 30 days on sufficient cause being shown.

10.3 Disposal Timeline

Under Section 19(3) of the Act, the FAA must dispose of the appeal within 30 days of receipt, extendable by a further 15 days for reasons recorded in writing.¹³

10.4 Format of a First Appeal

The appeal may be written on plain paper and addressed to the First Appellate Authority. It should include:

- Name and contact details of the appellant.
- Details of the PIO who handled the original application.
- Date of filing the original RTI application.

¹³ RTI Act, s. 19(3): The First Appellate Authority shall dispose of the appeal within thirty days, extendable by a further fifteen days for reasons recorded in writing.

- Date of the PIO's reply (or state "No Reply Received").
- Grounds of appeal (e.g., wrongful denial under Section 8(1)(j), or failure to respond within the statutory period).
- Brief facts and relief sought.
- Enclosures: a copy of the original RTI application, proof of payment of the fee, and a copy of the PIO's reply (if any).

11. CONSOLIDATED RTI APPLICATION TEMPLATE

Instructions: This is a general-purpose template. Complete each item carefully. Replace all bracketed placeholders with your actual details. The template is compliant with Section 6(1) of the Right to Information Act, 2005.

To,

The Central Public Information Officer (CPIO) / Public Information Officer (PIO)

[Name of the Department or Public Authority, e.g., Regional Passport Office]

[Full Office Address]

[City, State — Pin Code]

Subject: Request for Information under Section 6(1) of the Right to Information Act, 2005.

Sir/Madam,

I, the undersigned, am a citizen of India and hereby seek the following information under the Right to Information Act, 2005.

1. Name of the Applicant: [Your Full Name]

2. Contact Details:

- **Postal Address:** [Your Complete Postal Address, Street, City, State — Pin Code]
- **Mobile Number:** [Your 10-Digit Mobile Number]
- **Email ID:** [Your Email Address]

3. Particulars of Information Required

Note: Under Section 2(f) read with Section 6(1) of the Act, requests must be directed at **existing recorded material** held by the public authority. Do not ask for opinions, explanations, advice, or grievance redressal. Be specific, use numbered points, and specify a date range.

[State your reference details, e.g.: “With reference to my application for [Document/Service] filed on [Date] bearing Reference No. [Number], I seek the following information:”]

1. [Item A: Specify the exact document, record, or data required — e.g., certified copy of attendance register for [Officer Name] for May 2026.]
2. [Item B: Specify a date range — e.g., total budget allocated and expenditure incurred for [Project Name] during financial year 2025–26.]
3. [Item C: Specify the department or file concerned — e.g., certified copy of file notings related to approval of Contract No. [XYZ].]
4. [Add additional items as required. Each item should seek one specific piece of recorded information.]

4. Format of Information Sought

[Specify, e.g.: certified photocopies/printouts / electronic copy on CD or USB drive/inspection of records at the office]

5. Applicant’s Citizenship: I state that I am a citizen of India and am entitled to seek information under the Right to Information Act, 2005.

6. Application Fee Details:

- **Mode of Payment:** [Indian Postal Order (IPO) / Demand Draft (DD) / Cash Receipt / Online payment]
- **Instrument/Transaction Number:** [IPO or DD number; or online transaction ID]
- **Date of Issue:** [DD-MM-YYYY]
- **Amount:** ₹10/- (Rupees Ten Only)

Note: If you belong to the BPL category, replace this section with: “I belong to the BPL category and am exempt from paying the fee. A certified copy of my BPL Card No. _____ is attached herewith.”

7. Declaration and Request for Transfer:

I request you to provide the information sought in certified paper format to the postal address mentioned above. Should any part of the requested information fall under the jurisdiction of another public authority, I request that this application be transferred to the relevant authority within five days in accordance with Section 6(3) of the Right to Information Act, 2005.

Place: [Your City/Town]

Date: [DD-MM-YYYY]

Signature of Applicant:

[Your Signature]

Name of Applicant: [Your Full Name]

Enclosures: (1) Proof of fee payment; (2) Copy of relevant prior application/reference (if applicable); (3) BPL certificate (if applicable).

12. RTI APPLICATION FORMATS OF STATE GOVERNMENTS

State	Prescribed Form?	Application Fee	Special Requirements	Online Portal?
Central Government	Form-A	Rs. 10/-	English	RTI Online Portal: https://rtionline.gov.in
Maharashtra	Form-A (prescribed)	Rs. 10/-	Form in Marathi / English accepted	https://aaplesarkar.mahaonline.gov.in
Delhi	No mandatory form	Rs. 10/-	Can be on plain paper	https://rtionline.gov.in (central depts)
Karnataka	Form-I (prescribed)	Rs. 10/-	Kannada or English	https://sakala.karnataka.gov.in
Tamil Nadu	Form-I	Rs. 10/-	Tamil or English	https://www.tn.gov.in/rti
Uttar Pradesh	No mandatory form	Rs. 10/-	Hindi preferred	https://up.gov.in/rti
West Bengal	No mandatory form	Rs. 10/-	Bengali or English	https://wbti.in
Rajasthan	Form-A	Rs. 10/-	Hindi or English	https://rti.rajasthan.gov.in
Gujarat	Form-A	Rs. 20/-	Gujarati or English	https://gujaratindia.gov.in/rti
Kerala	No mandatory form	Rs. 10/-	Malayalam or English	https://kerala.gov.in/rti
Andhra Pradesh	Form-I	Rs. 10/-	Telugu or English	https://ap.gov.in/rti

Telangana	Form-I	Rs. 10/-	Telugu or English	https://ts.gov.in/rti
Punjab	No mandatory form	Rs. 10/-	Punjabi or English	https://punjab.gov.in/rti
Haryana	No mandatory form	Rs. 10/-	Hindi or English	https://haryana.gov.in/rti
Madhya Pradesh	Form-A	Rs. 10/-	Hindi preferred	https://mpedistrict.gov.in
Goa	No mandatory form	Rs. 10/-	English, Konkani or Marathi	https://goa.gov.in/rti
Himachal Pradesh	No mandatory form	Rs. 10/-	Hindi or English	https://himachalpr.gov.in/rti
Jharkhand	No mandatory form	Rs. 10/-	Hindi or English	https://jharkhand.gov.in/rti
Odisha	Form-A	Rs. 10/-	Odia or English	https://odisha.gov.in/rti
Assam	No mandatory form	Rs. 10/-	Assamese or English	https://assam.gov.in/rti
Bihar	No mandatory form	Rs. 10/-	Hindi or English	https://state.bihar.gov.in/main/rti

13. RTI DO'S AND DON'TS – GOOD AND BAD EXAMPLES

Examples Set A- Construction of Road

Good Example:

1. Please provide a certified copy of the approved DPR (Detailed Project Report) and cost estimate sanctioned for the construction of the road connecting Sector-4 to Sector-9 in Ghaziabad under the Smart City Mission project no. [XXX], for the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023.

2. Please provide a copy of the agreement/contract entered into with the contractor for the said road project, including the name of the contractor, contract value, and deadline for completion.
3. Please provide copies of inspection reports, site visit records, and progress reports submitted by the project engineer for the said road project up to 31 December 2023.

Bad Example:

1. Why has the road from Sector-4 to Sector-9 not been built yet? What are the reasons for the delay?
2. What is the government doing about Ghaziabad's bad roads? Give me all the information about road contracts from 2000 to the present.
3. Why are the officials so corrupt? Provide all documents showing corruption in road construction.

Example Set B- Pension / Service Matter

Good Example:

1. Please provide a certified copy of the order/notification sanctioning the monthly pension of [Name], Retd. [Designation], [Department], [Employee Code], effective from [Date of Retirement].
2. Please provide copies of all correspondence (letters, e-mails) between the CPIO's office and the pension sanctioning authority regarding the above applicant's pension claim filed on [Date].

Bad Example:

1. Why is my father's pension being withheld? Give me all the reasons and explain what the department is doing.
2. How long will it take the government to fix the pension problem? What is the policy for retired employees?

Example Set C- Public Appointments / Recruitment

Good Example:

1. Please provide a certified copy of the merit list/selection list for the post of [Position] in [Department], published in connection with Advertisement No. [XXX] dated [Date].
2. Please provide copies of marks/scores obtained by all candidates in the written examination and interview conducted for the above recruitment, along with evaluation criteria/marketing scheme.

Bad Example:

1. Why was I not selected for the post? Was the selection process fair?

2. Tell me who got selected and whether they were selected on merit. Explain the entire selection process.

14. DRAFTING TIPS – RTI GUIDELINES & EXPERT ADVICE

According to RTI Guidelines and expert advice, a person should keep in mind the following while drafting an RTI application:

1. **Keep it Factual and Unemotional:** An RTI should be crisp and specific, and read like a grocery list. Mostly avoid arguments, opinions, allegations, or emotional language, and use neutral phrasing of facts.
2. **Application Details:** Include Full Name, E-mail, phone number for contacting and postal address, and duly sign the application.
3. **Learn from Examples:** Read already filed and approved RTI's or appellate orders. It is advised to read the approved as well as rejected RTI's for getting a broader idea on what to do and what not to do while filing an RTI.
4. **Referrals and Escalation:** If a Public Information Officer (PIO) remains unresponsive for some time and there is no reply to the RTI filed, a person can use Section 6(3) to have the matter transferred. If 30 days pass with no response, prepare a first appeal immediately.
5. **Record Everything:** It is better to keep copies of the RTI filed and the postal receipts. Also, note the submission date and the deadline for the first appeal. It can serve as evidence at a later stage, if anything goes wrong.
6. **One Subject per Application:** Per CIC practice, each application should address a single topic. If there is a requirement of multiple subjects, then it is better to file separate RTI's for the same.
7. **Proofread and Format:** Ensure that there are no typing errors in the RTI and that there are bullet points for multiple questions or queries. The RTI must be grammatically perfect and free of errors.

15. COMMON GROUNDS FOR REJECTION

Understanding why RTI applications are rejected allows practitioners to draft better applications and mount stronger first appeals. The following are the most frequent grounds for rejection, along with counter-strategies.

Public authorities and the Central Public Information Officer (CPIO) often reject or refuse RTI requests for several typical reasons:

1. **Incomplete application:** Common reasons include a missing application fee (₹10 IPO or demand draft) or the omission of the applicant's contact details (though Section 6(2) states that personal details other than contact details are not mandatory).
2. **No such record:** If the requested information does not exist in any maintained record, the PIO must state so. Vague queries often hit this: "details of Scheme X" may yield "no document called Scheme X exists."
3. **Exempt information:** The most frequent valid reason is that the requested data falls under the exemptions of Section 8 (personal data, trade secrets, internal advice, etc.). For instance, income-tax returns or confidential employee records are "personal" and exempt. Strategic recommendations or cabinet deliberations (if covered by exemption (a) or (b)) would also be refused.
4. **Pending appeal/prior compliance:** If a request essentially re-litigates an earlier request or has already been addressed, it may be deemed redundant.

Each refusal must cite the legal grounds.

16. FORMAT FOR PARTICULARS

- **Applicant details**

- Full legal name (as in official ID documents)
- Complete residential / correspondence address (with district, state, PIN code)
- Mobile number (strongly recommended — for tracking and communication)
- Email address (optional but useful for faster communication)
- Father's / Husband's name (required in some state formats)
- BPL card number + photocopy (if claiming BPL exemption from fee)

- **Public information officers' details**

PIO Details — Central Government

- Designation: Central Public Information Officer (CPIO)
- Ministry/Dept: [Full official name as notified]
- Address: [Full postal address of PIO's office]
- Find PIO details: <https://rtionline.gov.in> (click 'View Ministry-wise PIO')
- Check organisational chart to identify the correct department

PIO Details — State Government

- Designation: State Public Information Officer (SPIO) / Assistant Public Information Officer (APIO)
 - Department: [Name of State Dept / Board / Corporation]
 - Address: [Full postal address of SPIO's office]
 - APIOs at sub-divisions/taluka level act as receiving authorities — they forward to SPIO.
 - Find SPIO details on the Official website of the concerned State Govt department.
-
- **Subject line**
 - Central: “Application under Section 6(1) of the Right to Information Act, 2005”
 - State: “Application under Section 6(1) of the RTI Act, 2005 read with [State RTI Rules, Year]”
 - With department context: “Application under RTI Act, 2005 — Regarding [Topic] — [Dept Name]”
 - Seeking specific file: “RTI Application — File No. [XXX/YY/ZZZ] — [Brief Topic]”
-
- **Information sought – What you CAN seek under Section 2(j):**

Information Sought means the specific details/questions you write in your RTI application asking the public authority to provide.

 - Records & documents, Copy of file, order, contract, agreement
 - Certified copies, authenticated copies of any document
 - Memos, circulars, press releases, Internal communications on record
 - Opinions & advice, only those already on record — not fresh opinions
 - Inspection of works/records, Visit office and inspect files physically
 - Electronic information, Data, emails, soft copies stored in computers
 - Samples of material: physical samples of construction material, food, etc.
 - Logbooks, reports, papers, any document in any form held by public authority

- **Time period**

- 30-day standard response time from the date the PIO receives your application (Section 7(1)).
- PIO responds to application within 30 days Section 7(1)
- Life or liberty matters: 48 hours Section 7(1) proviso
- APIO forwards to SPIO 5 days (adds 5 extra days to PIO's limit) Section 5(4)
- Third-party notice by PIO 5 days from receipt Section 11(1)
- Third party to respond 10 days from notice, Section 11(2)
- Third-party involvement totals 40 days, Section 11(3)
- First Appeal must be filed within 30 days of refusal / non-response, Section 19(1)
- FAA decides the first appeal within 30 days (extendable to 45 days with written reasons)
- Section 19(6) n Second Appeal to CIC/SIC must be filed within 90 days of FAA order or expiry of Section 19(3)
- No response = deemed refusal. After 30 days of silence, Section 7(2)
- Penalty on PIO begins from day 31 of non-response, Section 20(1)
- Maximum penalty on PIO: Rs. 250/day × max 100 days Rs. 25,000.
- Section 20(1) - If your application was received by an APIO (Assistant PIO at sub-office level), the clock still runs from that date. Still, the APIO gets 5 days to forward it, so the PIO effectively has 35 days total from the day you filed.

- **Certified copies request**

- Under Section 2(j) "right to information" means the right to information accessible under this Act which is held by or under the control of any public authority and includes the right to
 - i) inspection of work, documents, records;
 - (ii) taking notes, extracts or certified copies of documents or records;
 - (iii) taking certified samples of material;
 - (iv) obtaining information in the form of diskettes, floppies, tapes, video cassettes or in any other electronic mode or through printouts where such information is stored in a computer or in any other device;

- Specifically request certified copies when you need authenticated documents for legal or official use.
 - Specify: ‘I require certified copies of the above-mentioned documents.’
 - Certified copies carry the seal and signature of the PIO/authorised officer.
 - Certified copies are admissible as evidence under Section 65 of the Indian Evidence Act / Section 57 BSA 2023
 - Cost: Rs. 2/- per page (Central Govt); varies slightly by state

- **Inspection request option**

- First hour of inspection: Free of charge
- Additional time: Rs. 5/- per 15 minutes (Central Govt)
- State rules may vary; check specific state RTI rules
- Inspection must be provided within 5 days of intimation (Section 7(5))
- You may take notes or photographs of records during inspection (no extra fee specified in Act)
- The PIO must inform you of the date, time, and venue for inspection
- Include in the application: ‘I also request inspection of all files/records relating to [topic].’

- **Fee details**

Central government fee structure

Item	Fee (Central — RTI Rules, 2012)	Notes
Application fee	Rs. 10/-	Mandatory; exempt for BPL
Per page (A4/A3)	Rs. 2/-	For copies provided
Larger paper	Actual cost	As determined by PIO

Inspection of records	Rs. 5/- per 15 min (after first hour free)	First hour is always free
Diskette/Floppy	Rs. 50/- per diskette/floppy	For electronic info
Printed info (priced)	Price fixed by authority	For publications
Post/courier charges	Actual charges	For sending copies

- **BPL Card Holders -Complete Exemption**

Persons Below Poverty Line (BPL) are FULLY EXEMPT from paying the application fee of Rs. 10/-. Also exempt from all additional charges (per-page fee, inspection fee, etc.) — Section 7(5) RTI Act.

Proof required: Attach a self-attested photocopy of the BPL ration card / BPL certificate. In the application, state: 'I am a BPL card holder. A copy of my BPL ration card is enclosed.' State rules mirror this exemption; confirm with specific state RTI rules. If PIO demands a fee despite BPL proof — first appeal grounds arise immediately.

- **Payment modes**

Payment Mode	Applicable For	How to Pay
Indian Postal Order (IPO)	Central + most states	Purchase from Post Office; payable to 'Accounts Officer, [Ministry/Dept]' or as prescribed

Demand Draft (DD)	Central + most states	From any bank; in favour of 'Accounts Officer, [Dept]'; specify name of payee as per state rules
Court Fee Stamp	Many state governments	Affix on application; available at Collector's office/stamp vendors
Cash	In-person submission only	Deposit at cash counter and attach receipt copy
Treasury Challan	Some state govts (e.g., MH)	Pay at State Treasury or designated banks; attach challan copy
Online (NEFT/UPI/Card)	RTI Online Portal (Central)	Directly on https://rtionline.gov.in at the time of filing
Postal Order (State)	State-specific	As prescribed by state RTI rules

Online filing

1. Visit <https://rtionline.gov.in> — official portal for all Central Govt. RTI applications
2. Click 'Submit Request' — Enter Ministry/Department (select from drop-down)
3. Fill applicant details: Name, address, mobile, email, ID proof type
4. Type information sought in the text box (max 3000 characters)
5. If text exceeds 3000 characters: Mention 'Details in attached document' and upload PDF
6. Select whether BPL: if Yes, upload scanned BPL card and no fee required
7. Pay Rs. 10/- via debit card, credit card, net banking, or UPI
8. Submit — note the Registration Number (format: XXXXX/YYYY/000000)

9. Acknowledgement sent to registered email automatically

Track status at: <https://rtionline.gov.in> using Registration Number

Offline filing

1. Draft application on plain A4 paper (or prescribed form if state requires)
2. Attach application fee (IPO / DD/court fee stamp/cash receipt)
3. Make two copies: original to PIO, one copy for your records (get it date-stamped)
4. Submit at PIO's office or APIO (Assistant PIO at sub-division/taluka level)
5. Request a dated acknowledgement receipt or stamping on your copy — this is your legal proof of filing
6. Note: APIO must forward to SPIO within 5 days (Section 5(4))
7. Retain the receipt safely — you need it for first appeal if no response within 30 days

Postal submission

Postal Submission — Important Guidelines

- Send by Registered Post with Acknowledgement Due (RPAD) — NOT ordinary post
- RPAD gives you legal proof of delivery (AD card) — crucial for appeal if PIO claims non-receipt
- Keep the postal receipt and the returned AD card safely
- Address the envelope clearly: 'Application under RTI Act, 2005 — URGENT'
- Enclose IPO/DD payable to the correct accounts officer
- Do NOT send hard cash by post
- Retain a complete photocopy of the application and all enclosures
- The 30-day response clock starts from the date of receipt by the PIO (not your posting date)
- **Acknowledgement and tracking**

After filing your RTI application, the PIO must:

- Acknowledge receipt of your application
- Provide a registration/diary number -save this always
- Respond within 30 days (21 days if it concerns life/liberty)
- How to track: Online (Central) rtionline.gov.in → Track Application Status. By post/in person: Use your diary number to follow up with PIO. State portals: Each

state has its own tracking portal. No response in 30 days | Deemed refusal file
First Appeal immediately

- **First appeal note**

- When to file the first appeal
 - PIO fails to respond within 30 days (or 48 hours for life/liberty cases)
 - PIO refuses information without valid grounds under Section 8: Exemption from disclosure of information. Section 9 Grounds for rejection to access in certain cases.
 - Information provided is incomplete, incorrect, or misleading
 - PIO charges excessive or incorrect fee
 - PIO refuses to accept your application
 - First Appellate Authority Section 19(1) — The First Appeal lies to an officer senior in rank to the PIO in the same public authority. The designation varies by authority.

- **Common mistakes**

- At the drafting stage:

- Asking vague or broad questions -"give all information about XYZ scheme" gets rejected
- Asking for opinions, reasons, or explanations - RTI only covers existing records/documents
- Addressing the wrong PIO- always identify the correct public authority first
- Asking multiple unrelated questions in one application -better to file separate applications

At the procedural stage:

- Paying the wrong fee (₹10 for Central; states vary)
- Sending fee in wrong mode (cash not accepted by post)
- Not mentioning your complete postal address -response can't reach you
- Filing with the Appellate Authority instead of the PIO first

At the appeal stage:

- Missing the 30-day window for First Appeal after no response
- Missing the 90-day window for Second Appeal to CIC/SIC
- Not mentioning the registration number in your appeal
- Filing Second Appeal without exhausting First Appeal

16. FILLED FORMATS

FORM A

[See Rule 3(1)]

Application for Obtaining Information under Section 6(1) of the
Right to Information Act, 2005

To,

The State Public Information Officer / Assistant Public Information Officer

The Central Public Information Officer (CPIO),

Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE)Shiksha Kendra,

2 Community Centre Preet Vihar,

Delhi – 110092

1. Full Name of Applicant : Aditya Bandopadhyay

2. Address for correspondence:

3. Is the applicant a BPL : Yes [] No ☒ cardholder?

(If Yes, attach copy of BPL card)

4. Particulars of fee paid : Rs. ___10___/- by [IPO/Challan/Cash]

Receipt / IPO No. : _____xxxxxxxx_____

5. Information Sought :

a)Kindly provide information relating to the Secondary School Examination conducted by the Central Board of Secondary Education in the year 2008 in which I appeared as a candidate.

b)Specifically, the following information is requested: Provide certified copies of all evaluated answer books pertaining to my examination in the following subjects:

i.English

ii.Mathematics

iii.Science

iv. Social Science

v. Hindi

c)Provide certified copies of the marks awarded by each examiner on every page of the answer books.

d) Provide details of any moderation, scaling, re-totalling, or correction carried out in respect of my answer books.

e) Provide copies of the tabulation records showing marks awarded and marks finally entered in the result records.

f) Provide the total marks awarded question-wise and page-wise by the examiner for each answer book.

g) Provide copies of all instructions, guidelines, circulars, manuals, and evaluation schemes supplied to examiners for the assessment of answer books relating to the examination.

h) Provide details of the procedure followed by CBSE for evaluation, moderation, scrutiny, and preservation of answer books.

i) Permit inspection of my original evaluated answer books under Section 2(j) of the RTI Act, 2005.

j) Provide reasons for any difference found between marks recorded on the answer book and marks reflected in the final result, if any.

k) Provide certified copies of all records maintained by CBSE concerning the evaluation of my answer books.

Mode of Access: The information may kindly be supplied in the form of certified photocopies. Inspection of records may also be permitted at a mutually convenient date and time.

Period to which Information Relates: January 2008 to August 2008 (Secondary School Examination, 2008)

1. Whether certified copies of documents are required?

Yes ☒ No []

2. Whether inspection of records/documents required?

Yes ☒ No ☐

Declaration:

I am a citizen of India and seek the above information under Section 6(1) of the Right to Information Act, 2005.

Place: Kolkata, West Bengal

Date : ____ / ____ / 2008

Appeal under Section 19 of the Right to Information Act, 2005

To

First Appellate Authority

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.....

A. Contact details:

1. Name of the Applicant

2. Address

B. Details about RTI request:

1. Particulars of the SPIO against
whose order appeal is preferred

(a) Name

(b) Address

2. Date of submission of application
(Please attach a copy)

3. Brief facts leading to appeal	(a) No response received within 30 days of submission of Form I
	(b) Aggrieved by the response received within the prescribed period (a copy of the order received be attached)
	Grounds for appeal
4. Prayer or relief sought	
5. Last date for filing the appeal	
6. If the appeal is being filed after 30 days, the reasons which prevented the filing of the appeal in time	
7. Copies of documents relied upon by the applicant	
	Signature of the Applicant.....

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