

How to prepare for NATA

National Aptitude Test in Architecture. Run by Council of Architecture (CoA), the national regulator for architecture education, set up under the Architects Act, 1972.

When

Taken after Class 12 exams begin. In 2026, Phase 1 ran from 4 April to 13 June 2026 and Phase 2 on 7 and 8 August 2026, with registration from 11 March 2026 (nata.in and the NATA 2026 brochure).

The exam

NATA 2026 had 200 marks in two parts. Part A is a drawing test on paper (90 minutes, 80 marks, 3 questions).

Your plan, step by step

- 1 Draw every day Now to March 2027 (Class 11)**
Sketch for 30 to 45 minutes a day: objects at home, streets, people, buildings. Practise perspective, light and shade, and proportion. Keep up Class 11 Mathematics and Physics with school.
- 2 Learn the test parts April to September 2027**
Practise the three Part A tasks: a colour composition, a black and white sketch of a scene, and a 3D model from simple materials. Start reasoning puzzles and read about famous Indian and world buildings and architects.
- 3 Timed drawing and reasoning October to December 2027 (Class 12)**
Do one timed 90-minute Part A set every week and have a teacher or architect friend comment on it. Practise Part B style questions on a computer or phone against the clock.
- 4 Balance boards and JEE Paper 2A January to February 2028**
Board exams come first. If you also sit JEE Main Paper 2A for NIT B.Arch, its drawing and aptitude practice overlaps with NATA.
- 5 Register and pick dates March 2028**
Register on nata.in when it opens (March in 2026). If Phase 1 again allows two attempts, book the first after your boards and leave a few weeks before the second.
- 6 Sit NATA April to June 2028**
Take your first attempt, review what went wrong, practise those tasks, then take the second. The better score counts (2026 rule).

What the exam tests

- Part A, Drawing and Composition, offline, 90 minutes, 80 marks: A1 Composition and Colour (1 question, 25 marks), A2 Sketching and Composition in black and white (1 question, 25 marks), A3 3D Composition using a kit provided at the centre (1 question, 30 marks).
- Part B, computer-based adaptive test, 90 minutes, 120 marks: 42 multiple-choice questions (B1) and 8 'no choice' questions where you work out the answer without options (B2). About 108 seconds per question.
- Part B topics: visual reasoning, logical derivation, general knowledge of architecture and design, language interpretation (English grammar and meaning), design sensitivity and thinking, and numerical ability (basic mathematics).
- The test is in English and Hindi. Each session in 2026 ran for 3 hours (10 am to 1 pm or 1:30 pm to 4:30 pm).

Free and official material

NATA official site: brochure, dates, fees (nata.in). The only place for the current pattern, attempts, fees and score validity. Read that year's brochure fully.

Council of Architecture (coa.gov.in). The regulator. Lists approved architecture colleges, so you can check a college is recognised before paying.

JEE Main official site (Paper 2A drawing and aptitude papers) (jeemain.nta.nic.in). NTA posts Paper 2A (B.Arch) question papers and answer keys. Good free drawing and aptitude practice.

NCERT textbooks (free PDF) (ncert.nic.in/textbook.php). Class 11 and 12 Mathematics, for the numerical ability questions and for the Class 12 marks B.Arch admission needs.

Books students use

Commonly used, not endorsed.

A Complete Self Study Guide for B.Arch Entrance Examination, P.K. Mishra (Arihant)

A Visual Dictionary of Architecture, Francis D.K. Ching

NATA and B.Arch Question Bank, Ar. Shadan Usmani

B.Arch Entrance Examination Guide, Surendra Kavimandan

Engineering Drawing, N.D. Bhatt

A Modern Approach to Verbal and Non-Verbal Reasoning, R.S. Aggarwal

Coaching: do you need it?

Self-study with daily sketching and free material:

Students who already enjoy drawing and can get honest feedback from an art teacher or an architect. Many students prepare this way.

Online NATA course or test series: Students far from a coaching city who want structured drawing assignments with feedback, and computer practice for Part B.

Classroom NATA or B.Arch coaching: Students who need someone to correct their drawings in person. It helps most with drawing feedback; it cannot replace daily practice at home.

Red flags

- Promises of a guaranteed score or college seat.
- Selling 'leaked' or 'expected' NATA questions.
- Pressure to pay the full fee upfront with no refund policy in writing.
- Very large drawing classes where nobody looks at your sheet.
- Advice to skip school. B.Arch needs 45 per cent in Class 12 with Physics and Mathematics, and CBSE requires 75 per cent attendance to sit the boards.

The last months

- Do a full timed Part A (colour composition, black and white sketch, 3D model) twice a week.
- Practise Part B on a screen. With about 108 seconds per question, do not get stuck on one.
- Read about 20 famous Indian and world buildings and their architects, and keep short notes.
- Pack and practise with your own drawing kit so nothing is new on test day.

