

How to prepare for NID DAT

National Institute of Design, Design Aptitude Test (undergraduate). Run by National Institute of Design, Ahmedabad, for all NIDs.

When

Two stages. Prelims is a written test in December; Mains (studio test and in-person test) follows in spring.

The exam

Stage 1, DAT Prelims: a pen-and-paper test on the same day at all centres, in English only, with questions in text and pictures.

Your plan, step by step

- 1 Build the daily drawing habit Class 11, now to March 2027**
Draw for 30 to 45 minutes every day in a cheap A4 sketchbook: people at home, objects on your table, a street, a market. Draw from life, not photos. Try one 'strange viewpoint' drawing a week, such as your room seen by an ant or a ceiling fan, because NID asks exactly this kind of question. Date every page.
- 2 Learn to think like a designer Class 11, April to September 2027**
Keep a problem notebook. Each week pick one everyday problem (a crowded bus stop, a school water tap, a grandparent's pill box), list the people who face it, and sketch three or four different solutions with short notes. Visit a local craftsman, such as a potter or weaver, and draw how they work. Read a newspaper daily for general awareness.
- 3 Work with your hands Class 11 and 12, weekends**
Make small models from paper, card, clay, wire, thread and waste material. Try to make something that stands, folds or moves. Mains is a hands-on studio test, and students who have never cut and glued card struggle under time pressure. Photograph each model with a note on what you tried.
- 4 Apply and practise the Prelims paper Class 12, September to November 2027**
Apply on admissions.nid.edu before the end-November deadline, and check the fee and category details carefully. Solve the official sample paper under a 3-hour timer. Practise writing short, clear explanations next to your drawings, and practise colouring quickly with pencil colours or pastels.
- 5 Prelims, then switch to studio work Class 12, December 2027**
Write Prelims. From January, do not wait for the result: spend three or four days a week on model making, quick sketching and material work, while keeping up with board exam preparation.
- 6 Mains preparation Class 12, after the Prelims result**
If shortlisted, practise timed studio tasks with given materials and rehearse talking about your own work: why you made it, what went wrong and what you would change. Keep your sketchbooks and models together in case you are asked to show them. Be honest in the in-person test; panels ask about your background and interests, not memorised answers.

What the exam tests

- Prelims duration is not in the handbook; it is printed on the admit card. News and coaching sites report 3 hours and 100 marks for the 2026 Prelims (secondary).
- The official B.Des Prelims sample paper on the NID site (labelled 2025) is 100 marks: 15 one-mark and 5 two-mark objective questions (odd one out, cube and paper-folding puzzles, logos, general awareness, colour relations), then drawing and design tasks worth 75 marks, such as four illustrated ideas to settle a quarrel between neighbours over a neem tree, drawing a juice shop from a crow's point of view, a poster, listing user groups who struggle with a train washbasin, and designing a board game from a reading passage.
- Several secondary sources say the 2026 Prelims dropped the objective section and had only drawing and design-thinking questions. The official sample paper still has an objective part, so check the 2028 handbook and the latest sample paper.
- For each category, NID calls 2.5 times the number of seats to Mains (2027-28 handbook).

Free and official material

NID admissions portal (handbook, dates, notices) (admissions.nid.edu). The only official source for dates, rules and changes. NID warns that sites ending in .org or .org.in are fake.

Official B.Des DAT Prelims sample paper (admissions.nid.edu/NIDA2027/download/SamplePaper_DAT_Prelims_B.Des.pdf). Shows the real style of questions and marks. Solve it under time, twice.

NID Admissions Handbook 2027-28 (admissions.nid.edu/NIDA2027/download/BDES_IntegratedPrelimsAdmissionsHandbook2027-28.pdf). The full rules: eligibility, age, fee, seats, the two stages and how the merit list is made.

NPTEL: Design Thinking, A Primer (IIT Madras) (nptel.ac.in/courses/110106124). A free course on studying users and generating ideas, useful for NID's design problems.

Books students use

Commonly used, not endorsed.

Design Drawing, Francis D.K. Ching

Basic Rendering, Robert W. Gill

Verbal and Non-Verbal Reasoning, R.S. Aggarwal

NID (B.Des) Entrance Book and Test Series, AFAINDIA

NIFT, NID, IIFT Entrance Examination, Dharmendra Mittal

Coaching: do you need it?

Self-study with free material: Students who can keep a daily sketchbook, make models at home and find an art teacher or design student to look at their work now and then.

Online live classes: Students far from a design coaching centre can get questions and feedback. Ask how your drawings are reviewed online.

Classroom design coaching: Students who want studio practice and model making with materials under supervision. **Admissions handbook 2027-28 (p.6)**. It helps most for Mains practice. It helps least if it replaces your own daily drawing.

Red flags

- Guaranteed NID selection or rank promises. The 2024 Ministry of Education guidelines bar these.
- Pressure to pay the full course fee upfront, or a written 'no refund' rule.
- Coaches who teach memorised 'NID answers' or fixed drawing templates. NID's questions change every year and reward your own ideas.
- Mock interviews that script what you should say about yourself. The in-person test looks for honest, curious answers.
- Result claims that cannot be checked, or that count short test-series students as their toppers.

The last months

- Before Prelims: solve the official sample paper and two or three similar papers under a strict 3-hour timer, including colouring.
- Keep drawing people and places every day. Speed and confidence in quick sketches matter in both stages.
- Right after Prelims, move to studio work: three or four timed model-making sessions a week with paper, card, clay and waste materials.
- Practise explaining your work out loud to a family member in two minutes: what the idea is, who it is for, what you would improve.

