

How to prepare for UCEED

Undergraduate Common Entrance Examination for Design. Run by IIT Bombay, for the UCEED-CEED Implementation Committee.

When

One exam day in mid-January. UCEED 2026 was on Sunday 18 January 2026, 9 am to 12 noon (2026 brochure).

The exam

One 3-hour paper, 300 marks, in English only, at a test centre.

Your plan, step by step

- 1 Start a daily sketchbook Class 11, now to March 2027**
Buy a cheap A4 sketchbook and a few pencils (HB, 2B, 4B) and a black pen. Draw for 30 to 45 minutes every day from real life, not from phone photos: your school bag, a pressure cooker, a scooter, your family at dinner, a street corner. Date every page. Twice a week, draw the same object from three angles. This is the single habit that decides Part B.
- 2 Learn the basics of drawing Class 11, April to September 2027**
Work through one-point and two-point perspective, drawing boxes and cylinders in space, light and shadow, and human proportion (the body is about seven to eight heads tall). Draw people at a bus stop or a market in 2-minute quick sketches. Once a month, compare your first pages with your latest ones so you can see progress.
- 3 Train observation and design thinking Class 11 to 12, alongside the sketchbook**
Keep a notebook of everyday problems: a bucket handle that cuts your hand, a bus ticket that is hard to read. For each, write who suffers, why, and three ways to fix it, with small drawings. Read the newspaper for 15 minutes a day for the environment and society questions. Practise mental rotation, paper folding and pattern puzzles for Part A.
- 4 Past papers and registration Class 12, July to October 2027**
Download the UCEED question papers and answer keys from 2015 onwards from the official site. Solve Part A papers under a 2-hour timer and check them against the official key. For Part B, give yourself exactly one hour and redo the two drawing questions from each paper. Register in October 2027 when the window opens, and keep your Class 12 board studies on track.
- 5 Full mocks every week Class 12, November 2027 to January 2028**
Take one full 3-hour paper each week, Part A on screen if you can, Part B on paper. Learn the marking rules: skip a multiple-select question rather than guess, because one wrong option costs a mark. Show your Part B drawings to an art teacher or a design student for honest feedback.
- 6 Exam day, then seat allotment Exam week and after**
Sleep well, carry your own drawing pencils and erasers as allowed by the admit card, and keep one hour clear for Part B. After results in March, apply for B.Des seats on the UCEED portal within the dates, and remember that your Class 12 subjects decide which IITs you can choose.

What the exam tests

- Part A, Section 1: 14 numerical answer questions (you type a number, no options). 4 marks each, no negative marking. 56 marks.
- Part A, Section 2: 15 multiple-select questions, where one or more of four options can be correct. Up to 4 marks each, with partial marks for picking only some correct options. Minus 1 if you pick any wrong option. 60 marks.
- Part A, Section 3: 28 multiple-choice questions with one correct answer. 3 marks for right, minus 0.71 for wrong. 84 marks.
- Part B: two questions answered in a paper answer book. Sketching, 50 marks, and design aptitude, 50 marks. Each answer is marked by at least two examiners.

Free and official material

UCEED past question papers and answer keys (2015 onwards) (uceed.iitb.ac.in/2026/downloads.html). The best practice material there is. Every year from 2015 to 2026 is free, with official answer keys for Part A.

UCEED 2026 Information Brochure

(uceed.iitb.ac.in/2026/assets/downloads/docs/UCEED2026_information_to_students.pdf). The official pattern, syllabus, marking and eligibility rules. Read it once in full, and read the 2028 brochure when it is out.

UCEED official FAQ (uceed.iitb.ac.in/2026/faq.html).

Answers common questions, including IIT Bombay's own advice that there are no recommended books and that past papers are the guide.

NPTEL: Design Thinking, A Primer (IIT Madras)

(nptel.ac.in/courses/110106124). A free four-week course on how designers study people and solve problems. Useful for the design aptitude question.

Books students use

Commonly used, not endorsed.

Design Drawing, Francis D.K. Ching

Perspective Drawing Handbook, Joseph D'Amelio

The Design of Everyday Things, Don Norman

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

Quantitative Aptitude, R.S. Aggarwal

UCEED Previous Year's Papers, Ashok Goel and Arjun Kamal

Coaching: do you need it?

Self-study with free material: Students who can draw daily without being pushed and will use the official past papers. Many students succeed this way, especially in Part A, which is puzzle and reasoning work.

Online live classes: Students in small towns who need information on sketching and give feedback on their sketches. Check that a teacher actually reviews your drawings, not just plays videos.

Classroom design coaching: Students in cities with a centre nearby who want studio practice and regular critique of their drawings. It helps most for Part B, where feedback on your own work matters. It helps least for Part A, which past papers cover well.

Red flags

- Promises of a guaranteed IIT seat or rank. The 2024 Ministry of Education guidelines bar this.
- Pressure to pay a full year or two years upfront, or no refund policy in writing.
- Very large batches where nobody looks at your sketchbook.
- Tutors who give you ready-made drawings or 'templates' to memorise. Part B rewards your own observation, and examiners see memorised answers every year.
- Selling costly books or kits as compulsory when the official past papers are free.

The last months

- Do a full 3-hour paper each week under a timer, then spend the next day on only the mistakes.
- Keep sketching daily even in the last month. Short 10-minute drawings of people and objects keep your hand fast.
- Practise Part B inside exactly one hour. Many students run out of time on the second question.
- Learn when to leave a multiple-select question blank: a wrong option costs a mark, while a blank costs nothing.

