

The Government Job: An SSC CGL Story

*One small-town graduate, three attempts, and the complete Tier 1 and Tier
2 plan that made him an Inspector*

SUBASH

The SSC CGL Syllabus at a Glance

Before the story, the map: the whole examination in plain words, section by section, with the topics that actually come and one working idea for each.

How the examination is built

- Two stages, both on a computer. **Tier 1** is a screening test: pass it and you go to Tier 2, but its marks are not added to your final score. **Tier 2** decides your rank. A few posts also need a physical test, and every selected candidate goes through document verification.

- Your rank and the list of posts you prefer decide which job you get. You are considered only for the posts you ask for.

Tier 1 — 100 questions, 200 marks, 60 minutes, minus 0.50 for a wrong answer

- **General Intelligence and Reasoning — 25 questions.** Analogies of words, numbers and figures; odd one out; number and letter series; coding and decoding; arithmetic operations and

symbol substitution; Venn diagrams; paper folding and cutting; mirror and water images; embedded figures; seating, direction and blood relations; statements and conclusions. *Idea*: do twenty questions of one type in one sitting until you can see the trick in five seconds.

• **General Awareness — 25 questions.** Current events; history of India, especially the national movement; geography of India and the world; the Constitution and polity; the economy and the Budget; everyday physics, chemistry and biology; sports, awards, books and important days; art and culture. *Idea*: static general knowledge wins more marks than last week's news. Learn the NCERT science and social science of classes 6 to 10 first.

• **Quantitative Aptitude — 25 questions.** Percentages, ratio and proportion, averages, simple and compound interest, profit, loss and discount, mixtures, time and work, time and distance, number system; algebra and its identities; geometry of triangles, circles and quadrilaterals; mensuration of flat and solid figures; trigonometry and heights and distances; data from tables, bar charts and pie charts. *Idea*: learn squares to 30, cubes to 20 and the percentage value of every fraction from $1/2$ to $1/20$. They save a minute on every paper.

• **English Comprehension — 25 questions.** Spotting errors; fill in the blanks; synonyms and antonyms; spelling; idioms and phrases; one-word substitution; sentence improvement; active and passive voice; direct and indirect speech; rearranging sentences; a cloze passage; a reading passage. *Idea*: every wrong word you meet in a paper goes into a notebook, with its sentence.

- From the 2026 examination, each Tier 1 section has its own fifteen-minute timer. You can no longer borrow time from one section to spend on another.

Tier 2, Paper I — compulsory for every post

- **Section I: Mathematical Abilities (30 questions, 90 marks) and Reasoning (30 questions, 90 marks).** The Tier 1 topics, one level harder: longer arithmetic, more geometry, trigonometry and data interpretation; puzzles and arrangements in reasoning.

- **Section II: English Language and Comprehension (45 questions, 135 marks) and General Awareness (25 questions, 75 marks).** English carries more marks than any other part of the paper. Expect two or more reading passages.

- **Three marks for a right answer, minus one for a wrong one.** Sections I and II together are worth 390 marks, and those 390 marks make the merit list for most posts. From 2026, Section I runs to 30 minutes each for maths and reasoning, and Section II to 40 minutes for English and 20 for general awareness.

- **Section III: Computer Knowledge (20 questions, 60 marks) — qualifying.** How a computer is built; memory and storage; input and output devices; the operating system; a word processor, a spreadsheet and presentation software; the internet, email and networks; computer security — viruses, phishing, passwords, firewalls. *Idea:* learn the common keyboard shortcuts by using them every day.

- **The Data Entry Speed Test — qualifying.** Typing a passage on a computer: 2,000 key depressions in fifteen minutes. The notice

says how it applies to each post. *Idea*: fifteen minutes of typing practice a day for three months.

- Every section must be passed on its own: 30 per cent for unreserved candidates, 25 per cent for OBC and EWS, 20 per cent for others. A brilliant maths score does not rescue a failed English section.

Tier 2, Papers II and III — only for some posts

- **Paper II: Statistics** — for Junior Statistical Officer. **Paper III: General Studies (Finance and Economics)** — for Assistant Audit Officer and Assistant Accounts Officer. Each is 100 questions, 200 marks and two hours, with minus 0.50 for a wrong answer, and each is added to Paper I for those posts.

How serious candidates use this syllabus

- Copy it by hand onto one chart, and write one source beside every line.

- Solve at least five years of previous papers before deciding what to study. They show which topics come every year and which almost never do.

- Study Tier 1 and Tier 2 together — Tier 2 is the same syllabus, one level deeper.

- Take a full timed mock every week from the third month, and study your mistakes longer than you took to make them. And check this page against the current notice on the Commission's official website.

CHAPTER 1

Inspector, How Many Copies?

The first person to call him Inspector was Shankar brother, and he did not mean it kindly.

It was a Sunday morning in March 2023. Rajesh had come to the photocopy shop opposite the bus stand with a pen drive, the way he came every Sunday, to print a mock test he had downloaded in the week. Shankar brother, whom the whole road called brother whatever their age, was feeding a jammed sheet out of the big machine and complaining to a college boy about the price of toner.

"Ah," he said, loud enough for the boy and the two women waiting for their Aadhaar copies. "Inspector has come. Inspector, how many copies today? Twenty? Or will the government print them for you free, after you join?"

The women laughed. The college boy asked what kind of inspector. Shankar brother explained with great confidence: it was the big central government exam, the one where you became an Income Tax Inspector or an Excise Inspector, with a jeep and a flag and people saluting, and this boy — he pointed with the pen drive — had been preparing for it for four months while working at a medicine shop.

It was not a medicine shop. It was a wholesale distributor, and he was not preparing in the way Shankar meant. But Rajesh said nothing. He paid twenty rupees for twenty pages, folded them into his bag, and went.

By the end of that month half the market road called him Inspector. The boys selling vegetables near the bus stand said it. His father's colleague on the morning bus said it to his father, who came home and repeated it at dinner without a smile. The name was a joke about a billing clerk who thought he could become an officer, and every time someone used it, the joke got a little easier to tell.

It took him three years to make the name true.

This is the story of those three years. But it begins a few months before Shankar brother's joke, on the evening Rajesh first met someone who had actually done the job.

* * *

It was November 2022. Rajesh Mohan was twenty-two years old, and for five months he had been a billing assistant at a wholesale medicine distributor, eleven thousand rupees a month, ten in the morning to seven at night.

He was good at the job. He typed fast — he could enter a forty-line invoice in four minutes — and he could work out a discount and the tax on it in his head before the screen did. The owner, Mr. Dsouza, said he was the only billing boy who had never once sent a chemist the wrong bill. Rajesh had taken the job the week his B.Com results came out, with sixty-four per cent, from the aided college in the town, because his father's knee was getting worse and somebody had to start earning.

His family lived in a small town — one bus stand, one public library, a weekly market and a photocopy shop — in a rented house

of two rooms and a kitchen. India has thousands of towns like it, and it does not matter which one it was. His father, Mohan, had been a conductor on the state-transport buses for twenty-nine years. Every night he sat on the floor after dinner and counted the day's coins into rolls, fifty to a roll, with a rubber band around each, though the coins were the depot's and not his. His mother, Geeta, cooked in the mid-day meal kitchen at the government primary school and was up at five every morning. His younger brother, Arun, was in the twelfth standard and wanted to study mathematics.

On a Saturday in November, Mr. Dsouza asked Rajesh to take a file of old excise papers to a retired officer on the next street who had offered to help him sort out a dispute from before the GST years. The officer turned out to be a woman of sixty-three with reading glasses on a chain, a house full of files tied with white tape, and a way of looking at people as if she were checking their accounts.

Her name was Meena. The whole street called her Meena madam. She had retired two years earlier as a Superintendent of Central Excise.

The story continues.

Twenty-three chapters and an epilogue. 113 pages.

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