

Frequently Asked Questions — Right to Information Act, 2005

Did you know? Between 2005 and 2024, citizens filed over **3.5 crore** RTI applications — but the **Central Information Commission** only hears about **0.1%** that reach second appeal. The first line of defence is a well-drafted application.

Notice on DPDP Rules, 2025. The Digital Personal Data Protection Rules, 2025 were notified on 14 November 2025. With this notification, Section 44(3) of the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023 became operational and amended Section 8(1)(j) of the Right to Information Act, 2005. The earlier public interest override within clause (j) stands removed. Public interest reasoning now operates through Section 8(2) of the RTI Act, which has not been amended. This page has been reviewed in the light of this change. For the full practitioner note, see [DPDP Rules, 2025: The amendment to Section 8\(1\)\(j\) of the RTI Act](#).

A quick-reference FAQ on India's Right to Information Act, 2005 — written for applicants, Public Information Officers, First Appellate Authorities, and anyone researching the Act. Current with the 14 November 2025 amendment to Section 8(1)(j) via the DPDP Rules, 2025. For the underlying articles, follow the links.

In one line. This FAQ answers the twenty-five most common RTI questions in a single page. Each answer is two to four sentences. Deeper reading is one click away.

Filing an RTI

1. What is the Right to Information Act, 2005?

The Right to Information Act, 2005 (Act No. 22 of 2005) gives every **citizen of India** the right to request information held by a **public authority**. It repeals the 1923 Official Secrets Act culture of default secrecy and replaces it with a rule of default disclosure. See [the full text of the Act](#) and the [section-by-section summary](#).

2. Who can file an RTI?

Only a **citizen of India** may file an RTI application under Section 3. Companies, NGOs, and foreign nationals cannot file under the Act, though their citizen-directors or representatives can. See [Citizenship under the RTI Act](#).

3. How do I file an RTI?

Three routes. **Online** through rtionline.gov.in (Central Government) — fastest, Rs 10 by card or UPI. **By post** with a hand-written or printed application and a Rs 10 Indian Postal Order. **In person** at the public authority's counter with the fee in cash. See [How to File RTI Online in India](#)

— 2026 step-by-step.

4. What is the fee?

Rs 10 for the Central Government under the Right to Information (Regulation of Fee and Cost) Rules, 2005. **First appeal is free.** Copies cost **Rs 2 per page** if the information runs to many pages. **BPL applicants** pay no fee with a valid certificate. States may prescribe their own fees under Section 27 — see RTI Rules.

5. How long does the Public Information Officer have to reply?

Thirty days from the date the application is received under Section 7(1). **Forty-eight hours** where life or liberty is at stake. **Forty days** where a third party has been notified under Section 11. Silence beyond the deadline is a **deemed refusal** under Section 7(2).

6. Can I file in Hindi or a State language?

Yes. Under Article 350 of the Constitution and Section 6(1) of the Act, you may file in any Scheduled language. Central authorities accept **English and Hindi**. State authorities accept the State's official language as well. The Public Information Officer must provide reasonable assistance if the applicant cannot write.

7. Do I need to give a reason for asking?

No. Section 6(2) expressly says the applicant need not give any reason. The only details needed are the applicant's name, address, and the specific information sought. Your purpose is irrelevant to the Officer's duty to respond.

Drafting the application

8. How do I draft a good RTI?

Ask for **documents**, not explanations. Name the **file number**, the **date**, the **period**, and the **specific office**. Number each question. Confine each query to a single sub-paragraph. For a full walk-through see [Why RTI Applications Get Rejected — and How to Avoid It](#).

9. What should I not ask?

- **Why** questions (“Why was my claim rejected?”) — reframe as “please provide the file noting on claim X”.
- **Opinions** (“Is this fair?”) — the Act does not require officers to express views.
- **Bulk sweeps** (“All files for twenty years”) — invites a Section 7(9) refusal for disproportionate diversion of resources.
- **Third-party personal data** about someone else — Section 8(1)(j) applies.

See [Template: first RTI application](#) for a clean format.

10. What if I don't know the file number?

Name the **document category and the period** (e.g., “certified copy of all order sheets in my service record between 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2025”). The PIO is required under Section 7(9) to render reasonable assistance in identifying records. If truly unsure, file with the most

proximate authority; the Officer transfers under Section 6(3) within five days.

Exemptions and refusals

11. What information is exempt?

Section 8(1) lists **ten grounds** of exemption: sovereignty and integrity, contempt of court, breach of parliamentary privilege, commercial confidence, fiduciary relationship, foreign government, life or safety, investigation or prosecution, cabinet papers, and personal information. See [Grounds for rejection — concept note](#) and [Justification for denial](#).

12. What changed about Section 8(1)(j) on 14 November 2025?

The **Digital Personal Data Protection Rules, 2025** (notified 14 November 2025) substituted Section 8(1)(j) via Section 44(3) of the DPDP Act, 2023. The earlier proviso (information that could not be denied to Parliament cannot be denied to a citizen) **has been removed**. The public-interest override now runs **only through Section 8(2)**. See [DPDP Rules, 2025 — the amendment to Section 8\(1\)\(j\)](#) and [PIO reply after DPDP Rules, 2025](#).

13. Can the Public Information Officer refuse because it's "too much work"?

Yes, but only on the narrow ground in Section 7(9) that compliance would **disproportionately divert** the resources of the public authority. The remedy is to **split** the request into multiple narrower applications, each tied to a specific record. The Officer may also offer inspection rather than copies.

14. Can I get file notings and inter-office notes?

Yes. Section 2(i) of the Act defines “record” to include file notings. The position was consolidated by the Supreme Court and by [CBSE v. Aditya Bandopadhyay \(2011\)](#). Notings written in the file are as disclosable as any other record. See [File notings under RTI](#).

15. What about third-party information?

Where the information relates to a **third party supplied in confidence**, the PIO must follow **Section 11**: give the third party notice, hear the objection within ten days, and then decide in writing on the public interest. The procedure is mandatory — skipping it is itself grounds for appeal. See [Third party under RTI](#) and [Template: third party notice](#).

Appeals

16. My RTI was rejected. What do I do?

File a **first appeal under Section 19(1)** within **thirty days** of the Officer's reply or the deemed refusal. There is **no fee** at the Central Government level. Address the appeal to the officer **senior** to the Public Information Officer in the same public authority. Use [Template: first appeal](#).

17. What if the first appeal is also rejected?

File a **second appeal under Section 19(3)** to the **Central Information Commission** at

cic.gov.in (for Central matters) or the relevant **State Information Commission, within ninety days** of the First Appellate Authority's order — or of the date on which the order was due. See [Template: second appeal](#).

18. What powers does the Information Commission have?

Under Sections 18, 19, and 20, the Commission can **summon witnesses, examine records, impose costs on the public authority, and impose a penalty on the Public Information Officer** under Section 20 — **Rs 250 per day of delay, up to Rs 25,000**, plus departmental action on record. The order is **binding** under Section 19(7).

19. Can I file a complaint directly to the Commission?

Yes, under Section 18, for specific failures such as a refusal to receive the application, non-appointment of a PIO, or malafide action. A Section 18 complaint is different from a Section 19 appeal — the Commission may pass binding orders under either. See [Complaint under Section 18](#).

Role-specific

20. I am a Public Information Officer. What must I do?

Respond in **thirty days** (forty-eight hours for life/liberty, forty days for third-party matters). Every denial needs a **specific Section 8 clause** and a **reason on record** under Section 7(8). Silence equals refusal plus personal liability under Section 20. See [Guide for PIOs](#) and [Template: standard PIO reply](#).

21. I am a First Appellate Authority. What is my duty?

To **test the PIO's order against the Act**, not to protect the PIO. Decide within **thirty days** (extendable to forty-five with written reasons). Pass a **speaking order** addressing each item refused. See [Guide for FAAs](#) and [Template: FAA speaking order](#).

22. I am a researcher. What is the primary text?

Start with the Act, current text as amended and the section-by-section summary. For jurisprudence, see the landmark decisions library organised by section. For recent shifts, read A decade of change 2015 to 2025.

General

23. Does the RTI Act apply to private bodies?

The Act applies to **“public authorities”** as defined in Section 2(h) — bodies owned, controlled, or **substantially financed** by the State, or constituted by law. Purely private bodies are outside the Act. The Supreme Court's [Thalappalam \(2013\)](#) narrowed “substantially financed”. See [Public authority and Substantially financed](#).

24. Are political parties covered?

In 2013 the **Central Information Commission** held that **six national political parties** are

public authorities. The parties have not complied. The question of enforcement remains open. See [A decade of change](#) for the current position.

25. What is the relationship between the RTI Act and the DPDP Act, 2023?

The DPDP Act, 2023 (in force for Section 44(3) from 14 November 2025) **substituted Section 8(1)(j)** of the RTI Act to align “personal information” with the DPDP definition. The RTI Act remains the source of the right; the DPDP framework tightens the test for personal-data disclosure. Section 8(2) of the RTI Act (public-interest override) still operates. See [DPDP Rules, 2025: the amendment](#).

Still have a question?

If this FAQ didn't answer your question:

- Read the full Act or the sectionwise summary.
- See [Guide for applicants](#) or [Guide for PIOs](#) or [Guide for FAAs](#).
- Browse the [concept explainers](#) or the [case-law library](#).
- For the newest post, see the [editorial blog](#).

Related pages on this site

- [The Right to Information Act, 2005 — current text](#).
- [RTI Act, 2005 — summary, sections, and notes](#).
- [How to File RTI Online in India — 2026 step-by-step](#).
- [Why RTI Applications Get Rejected — and How to Avoid It](#).
- [Guide for applicants](#).
- [Templates — first RTI, first appeal, second appeal, PIO replies](#).
- [Case law library](#).
- [DPDP Rules, 2025 — the amendment](#).

Sources

1. The Right to Information Act, 2005 (No. 22 of 2005), Sections 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 18, 19, 20.
2. The Right to Information (Regulation of Fee and Cost) Rules, 2005.
3. The Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023 (No. 22 of 2023), Section 44(3).
4. The Digital Personal Data Protection Rules, 2025, notified 14 November 2025.
5. *Central Board of Secondary Education v. Aditya Bandopadhyay*, (2011) 8 SCC 497.
6. *Thalappalam Service Cooperative Bank Ltd. v. State of Kerala*, (2013) 16 SCC 82.
7. *Girish Ramchandra Deshpande v. Central Information Commissioner*, (2013) 1 SCC 212.

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Right to Information Wiki

The working reference for India's Right to Information Act, 2005.



Read online

<https://www.righttoinformation.wiki/faq>

Main website

<https://www.righttoinformation.wiki/>

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