

Why RTI Applications Get Rejected in India — and How to Avoid It

Did you know? The word “**confidential**” is **not** a valid ground for refusal. The Public Information Officer must cite a specific clause of Section 8 or Section 9 of the Act, with reasons. Anything less is appealable.

Why RTI Applications Get Rejected

Top 5 reasons and the exact fix for each · Right to Information Act, 2005

BAD — invites rejection

CORRECT — gets answered

Asking questions or opinions

1

Why was my passport application rejected?



Certified copy of the file noting and rejection order on passport application X12345.

Vague or broad queries

2

All information about corruption in your department.



Number of complaints under CCS (Conduct) Rules, 1964 in 2024, with action-taken reports.

Wrong public authority

3

Land-record query sent to Ministry of Home Affairs.



File with the Tehsildar under the State Revenue Department.

Section 8 exemption invoked

4

Annual Property Returns of my neighbour Mr Sharma.



Sanction order on my own complaint Y2345. Cite Section 8(2) in appeal.

Bulk or excessive request

5

All files in your office for the last 20 years.



Split into narrowly-scoped applications. One specific record per RTI.

Source: RTI Wiki — righttoinformation.wiki · Right to Information Act, 2005, Sections 6, 7, 8, 19

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 senior-practitioner guide to the Right to Information Act, 2005. Why applications fail, how to fix each one, and two real-life style case studies of rejected RTIs that were rescued through better drafting and a Section 19(1) appeal. Written for first-time applicants, students, journalists, activists, and professionals.

In one line. Most RTIs are rejected for drafting, not for law. A vague question, an opinion, the wrong department, or a bulky request — each is avoidable.

What that means in practice.

- Ask for a **document**, not an explanation.
- Name the **file number, date, or period**.
- File with the **right authority**. Check Section 4 first.
- If rejected, use the **first appeal** under Section 19(1). No fee. Thirty days.

You paid the Rs 10. You waited thirty days. The reply says: *“Information cannot be provided under Section 8(1)(j) of the RTI Act.”* Or worse — no reply at all.

In most cases, the fault lies not in the law but in the application. The Right to Information Act, 2005 is a strong statute. Used carelessly, it still returns a blank. Used with care, it delivers.

After the **14 November 2025 amendment** to Section 8(1)(j), the margin for careless drafting is narrower still. This page sets out the top reasons Right to Information applications get rejected in India, gives the exact fix for each, and closes with two real-life style scenarios showing how rejected RTIs were corrected on appeal.

What counts as "rejection"

A rejection takes one of three forms.

- **No reply in thirty days.** Silence is treated as a refusal under Section 7(2). Forty-eight hours for life-or-liberty matters. Forty days where a third party is involved under Section 11.
- **Partial reply.** Some items answered, others withheld. Section 10 requires the Public Information Officer to release the non-exempt part after severing the rest.
- **Express denial.** The Officer cites Section 8(1), Section 9, Section 11, or Section 24 and refuses.

Each is a valid ground for a **first appeal under Section 19(1)**. The appeal is free at the Central Government level. The time limit is thirty days.

The five reasons RTI applications fail

1. Asking "why" instead of "what"

The Act gives you the right to **existing records**. It does not require any officer to write a fresh explanation for your benefit.

Weak: *Why was my passport application rejected?*

Strong: *Please provide a certified copy of the file noting and the rejection order on my passport application number X12345 dated 15 January 2026.*

The strong version asks for a document the Passport Office already holds. The Officer cannot refuse on the ground that the Act does not require the drafting of new reasoning.

2. Vague or sweeping queries

A request that cannot be tied to a specific record invites a Section 7(9) refusal — compliance would “disproportionately divert the resources” of the public authority.

Weak: *Provide all information about corruption in your department.*

Strong: *Please provide the number of complaints registered under the Central Civil Services (Conduct) Rules, 1964 in your office between 1 January 2024 and 31 December 2024, and a certified copy of the action-taken report on each.*

A fixed period. A named rule. A specific document. Each element narrows the request and removes the grounds for a procedural refusal.

3. Wrong public authority

A misdirected application must be **transferred under Section 6(3) within five days**. Transfer adds a delay of weeks.

Weak: Sending a land-record query to the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Strong: File with the **Tehsildar's office** of the concerned State Revenue Department. The Tehsildar holds land records.

Check the Section 4(1)(b) disclosure on the public authority's website. It lists the subject-wise records held. If still unsure, file with the most proximate authority and let the transfer rule do its work.

4. Section 8 exemption

Section 8(1) lists ten grounds on which information may be refused. The ones most cited are:

- **Section 8(1)(j)** — personal information of a third party. After 14 November 2025, the public-interest proviso within this clause has been removed. The override now operates only through Section 8(2). See [DPDP Rules, 2025 — the amendment to Section 8\(1\)\(j\)](#).
- **Section 8(1)(e)** — information held in a fiduciary capacity. Narrowed by *Reserve Bank of India v. Jayantilal Mistry*, (2016) 3 SCC 525.
- **Section 8(1)(h)** — information that would impede investigation, apprehension, or prosecution.
- **Section 8(1)(d)** — commercial confidence and trade secrets.

Weak: *Please provide the Annual Property Returns of Mr Sharma, my neighbour.*

Strong: *Please provide the sanction order and the file noting on my own complaint number Y2345 dated 10 March 2025. The information relates to my own matter and the Section 8(1)(j) objection does not arise.*

If the Officer still invokes a Section 8 clause, cite **Section 8(2)** — the public interest override — in the first appeal and give a specific public interest ground.

5. Poor format or bulky request

An unstructured application invites a procedural rejection. A bulky one invites Section 7(9).

Correct format.

1. Address to the **Central Public Information Officer** by designation, not by name.
2. Subject line: *“Request for information under Section 6(1) of the Right to Information Act, 2005.”*
3. A **numbered list of requests**. One item per number.
4. A fee statement: *“I have enclosed Rs 10 by Indian Postal Order”* (offline), or *“paid online through the portal gateway”* (online).
5. Signature, full name, postal address, PIN code, date.

Weak: *Provide all files in your office for the last 20 years.*

Strong: Split the ask into multiple applications, each narrowly scoped. Start with the single record that matters most. Use the first reply to frame the next request.

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






Five rules for an RTI that gets answered

1. **Ask for documents, not explanations.** *“Certified copy of...”* is the strongest opening.
2. **Identify the record.** Name the file number, application reference, date, or register entry.
3. **One request per sub-paragraph.** Number them 1, 2, 3.
4. **Confine to a definite period.** *“Between 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2025”* beats *“last few years”*.
5. **State the fee up front.** Removes one procedural ground of rejection.

For the full filing walk-through, see [How to File RTI Online in India — 2026 Step-by-Step Guide](#).

Five Rules for an RTI That Gets Answered

A senior-practitioner checklist under the Right to Information Act, 2005

- 
Ask for documents, not explanations
 "Certified copy of..." is the strongest opening.
- 
Identify the record
 Name the file number, reference, date, or register entry.
- 
One request per sub-paragraph
 Number them 1, 2, 3. Keep each ask isolated.
- 
Confine to a definite period
 "1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025" — not "recently".
- 
State the fee up front
 "Rs 10 enclosed by IPO" or "paid online."

Source: RTI Wiki — righttoinformation.wiki · Why RTI applications get rejected

Good versus bad — sample questions

Weak	Strong
Why is my ration card delayed?	Certified copy of the file noting on ration-card application number R/2025/1234 dated 10 March 2025, and the current status.
Provide details of all tenders awarded by your office.	Certified copy of the letter of acceptance on tender number T/2024/56 dated 5 June 2024, with the bid-evaluation minutes.
Why did the Officer reject my earlier RTI?	Certified copy of the file noting on my earlier RTI application number Y/2025/890 dated 12 February 2025 and the order passed thereon.
Provide the names of all officers who accept bribes.	Certified copy of the complaints received by the Vigilance Officer of your public authority between 1 January 2024 and 31 December 2024, and the action-taken report on each.
Everything you have on my file.	Certified copy of every document placed on file number F/HR/2024/45 maintained in respect of my employment between 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2025.

Two real-life style scenarios

Two case studies, drawn from the pattern of Central Information Commission orders. Names changed. Facts compressed for teaching.

Scenario 1: Priya's EPF withdrawal

First attempt. Priya, a former employee of a private company, filed this application with the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation:

"Why has my PF withdrawal not been processed? Please take immediate action."

Reply on Day 28. *"Query does not seek information under Section 2(f). No records are called for. No response required."*

What went wrong. The application asked a question, not for a document. It did not name the claim number, the establishment code, or the date of submission. The Officer had no record to point to.

Corrected RTI. Priya redrafted:

To: The Central Public Information Officer
Employees' Provident Fund Organisation, [Regional Office]

Subject: Request for information under Section 6(1) of the RTI Act, 2005.

I request the following information in respect of my PF withdrawal claim:

1. Certified copy of the file noting on my Form 19 claim reference number EPFO/BLR/2025/00123 dated 12 January 2026 filed against UAN 100XXXXXXXX, establishment code KN/BN/12345.
2. The current status of the claim, and, if rejected or returned, a certified copy of the rejection memo or deficiency letter.
3. The name and designation of the dealing Assistant and the Accounts Officer to whom the file currently stands marked.

Fee of Rs 10 paid online through the portal gateway on 18 April 2026.

Priya [Surname]
[Address, PIN, date, signature]

Reply on Day 11. Certified copy of the file noting supplied. Claim was pending for want of the employer's signature on Form 10C. Priya obtained the signature and the amount was credited in eighteen days.

Why it worked. The second application named the **claim reference number**, the **UAN**, the **establishment code**, and the **date**. It asked for **documents** (file noting, memo) rather than for action. It left the Officer no room to say *"no record is called for"*.

Scenario 2: Rahul's disciplinary file

First attempt. Rahul, a Central Government employee facing a departmental enquiry, filed:

"Please provide complete file of my vigilance case and the reasons for the adverse entry."

Reply on Day 30. *"Information sought relates to an ongoing disciplinary proceeding. Disclosure would impede the investigation. Refused under Section 8(1)(h)."*

What went wrong. The request was framed as an omnibus *"complete file"* demand. The Officer invoked the strongest exemption available — Section 8(1)(h), impediment to

investigation — and refused the whole request.

Corrected RTI. Rahul split the application. He restricted the request to documents that were already on the record and that related to him:

Subject: Request for information under Section 6(1) of the RTI Act, 2005.

1. Certified copy of the charge memorandum issued to me vide office memorandum number [Ref] dated [Date], and its enclosures.
2. Certified copy of my written statement of defence dated [Date], as received and placed on file.
3. Certified copy of the Inquiry Officer's appointment order.
4. List of documents relied upon by the Disciplinary Authority in framing the charge memorandum (Annexure III).

I clarify that I am not seeking the investigating officer's notes or the preliminary enquiry report. The above items have either been issued to me or are documents in respect of my own defence. The Section 8(1)(h) objection does not arise. Should the Public Information Officer maintain that any item is exempt, I invoke Section 8(2) – disclosure of my own disciplinary record is in the public interest in the governance of a public servant.

[Name, designation, department, date, signature]

Section 19(1) appeal. Where the Officer still refused items 1 and 4, Rahul filed a first appeal within thirty days. He cited *CBSE v. Aditya Bandopadhyay*, (2011) 8 SCC 497 on the primacy of disclosure, and *Girish Ramchandra Deshpande*, (2013) 1 SCC 212 on the Section 8(1)(j) boundary for *an employee's own* disciplinary record.

First Appellate Authority's order. Items 1, 2, 3 and 4 released. The investigating officer's notes remained withheld.

Why it worked. The second application **narrowed the ask, named each document, anticipated the Section 8(1)(h) objection** and addressed it up front, and **invoked Section 8(2)** on the public-interest override. The first appeal completed what the Officer had refused.

What to do if your RTI is rejected

First appeal — Section 19(1)

File within **thirty days** of the Officer's reply, or of the deemed refusal. The First Appellate Authority is the officer senior to the Public Information Officer within the same public authority.

- **No fee** at the Central Government level.
- The Authority must pass a **speaking order** within thirty days, extendable to forty-five.
- State the specific item that was wrongly refused. Quote the Officer's exact reason. Cite **Section 8(2)** where a public interest ground exists.

Use Template: first appeal.

Second appeal — Section 19(3)

If the First Appellate Authority's order is unsatisfactory, or no order is passed in time, file a **second appeal within ninety days** to the **Central Information Commission** (for Central matters, at **cic.gov.in**) or to the relevant State Information Commission.

- The Commission's order is binding under Section 19(7).
- The Commission can impose a penalty on the Officer under **Section 20** — Rs 250 per day of delay, up to Rs 25,000.

Use Template: second appeal.

Pro tips from experienced RTI users

1. **Keep it specific.** A named file is harder to refuse than “*all documents*”.
2. **Documents, not opinions.** “*Please provide...*” beats “*Please explain...*”.
3. **Break large queries into multiple RTIs.** Several narrow applications out-perform one omnibus ask.
4. **Check Section 4 first.** Many public authorities already publish the record you need under the seventeen heads of suo motu disclosure.
5. **Frame around your own record where possible.** Section 8(1)(j) does not apply to the applicant's own information. *Girish Deshpande* itself accepts this carve-out.
6. **Use Section 8(2) in the first appeal.** Even where an exemption is properly invoked, the public-interest override can still compel disclosure.
7. **Polite tone.** A confrontational letter invites defensive drafting in reply.

Conclusion

The top **RTI application rejection reasons** are drafting mistakes, not statutory bars. A vague question, an opinion in place of a document, a wrong department, a bulk ask — each is avoidable with one careful sitting. The Right to Information Act, 2005 is a strong statute. Its strength is in the hands of the applicant who drafts with care. Ask for documents. Name the file. Confine the period. File with the right authority. Use the appeal path when it is due. Used this way, the Act delivers.

Frequently asked questions

1. What is the single most common reason RTI applications get rejected?

Asking a question or an opinion instead of asking for a document. The Right to Information Act, 2005 gives access to existing records. A “*why*” question can almost always be rephrased as a request for the file noting, the order, or the decision letter.

2. Is there a time limit to file a first appeal after rejection?

Yes. **Thirty days** from the date of the Officer's reply, or from the date on which the reply was due in the case of a deemed refusal. The First Appellate Authority may condone delay for sufficient cause under Section 19(1).

3. Can the Public Information Officer reject for asking "too much" information?

Yes, on the 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.

4. If Section 8(1)(j) is invoked against my RTI, can I still get the information?

Possibly, through **Section 8(2) of the Act** — the public-interest override. After the 14 November 2025 amendment, Section 8(2) is the sole route for an override on personal-information matters. Cite a specific public-interest ground in your first appeal.

5. How do I know which public authority has my information?

Check the public authority's **Section 4(1)(b)** suo motu disclosure on its website for the subject-wise list of records. If still unsure, file with the most proximate authority; the Officer must transfer under Section 6(3) within five days.

6. Does the Officer have to give reasons for rejection?

Yes. Section 7(8) requires the Officer to communicate the reasons for rejection, the period within which an appeal may be preferred, and the name of the First Appellate Authority. A bare "refused" order is itself appealable.

7. Will I get a refund of the Rs 10 fee if the application is rejected?

No. The fee is for the processing of the application, not for the information itself. It is not refundable on rejection. The additional cost of copies (Rs 2 per page) only becomes payable if the information is released.

Related pages on this site

- [How to File RTI Online in India — 2026 Step-by-Step Guide.](#)
- [The Right to Information Act, 2005 — current text.](#)
- [RTI Act, 2005 — summary, sections, and notes.](#)
- [Guide for applicants.](#)
- [Grounds for rejection — concept note.](#)
- [Template: first RTI application.](#)
- [Template: first appeal.](#)
- [Template: second appeal.](#)
- [PIO reply after DPDP Rules, 2025.](#)
- [Subjects filed, satisfied, appealed.](#)

Sources

1. The Right to Information Act, 2005 (No. 22 of 2005), Sections 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 19, 20.
2. The Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023 (No. 22 of 2023), Section 44(3).
3. The Digital Personal Data Protection Rules, 2025, notified on 14 November 2025.
4. *Central Board of Secondary Education v. Aditya Bandopadhyay*, (2011) 8 SCC 497.
5. *Reserve Bank of India v. Jayantilal Mistry*, (2016) 3 SCC 525.

6. *Girish Ramchandra Deshpande v. Central Information Commissioner*, (2013) 1 SCC 212.
7. *Chief Information Commissioner v. State of Manipur*, (2011) 15 SCC 1.

Last reviewed on

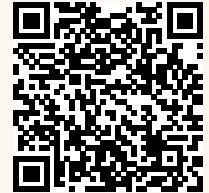
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Right to Information Wiki

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



Read online

<https://www.righttoinformation.wiki/why-rti-gets-rejected>

Main website

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

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