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Choosing Subjects in Cambridge: A Guide for Parents in India (Grades 9–11)

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Cambridge families in India usually hear one of two things: that Cambridge keeps every door open, or that it closes the Indian ones. Neither is quite true. IGCSE and A Levels are recognised by Indian universities, but a few rules about English, exam series and percentages decide whether a child can actually use that recognition.

This guide covers those rules, checked against Cambridge's own India guidance in November 2026. IB families have a separate guide.

The rules only tell you what is allowed. Which combination is right depends on a different question: who is your child, and what keeps them curious?

IGCSE (Grades 9–10): the five-pass rule

India's Association of Indian Universities (AIU) treats passes in **five IGCSE or O Level subjects including English Language** as equal to Grade 10 (Cambridge India FAQ).

- **English can be any of three.** First Language English, English as a Second Language and O Level English Language all count.
- **Five passes is the floor, not the target.** Whatever else your child takes, make sure five passes include English.
- **Marks come as PUMs.** Each subject has a Percentage Uniform Mark out of 100. For a junior college form, add the PUMs and divide by the number of subjects; don't convert grades to marks when PUMs are available.
- **The school matters for recognition.** AIU does not give equivalence to private candidates (Cambridge recognition factsheet), so the exams must be taken through an enrolled school.

AS and A Level (Grades 11–12): fewer subjects, chosen carefully

There is no fixed bundle: a child picks a small number of subjects and goes deep. That makes the choice matter more than in any Indian board, because a subject not taken can't be added for an entrance exam later.

- **For engineering:** A Level Physics, Chemistry and Mathematics, plus a language. Any A Level language or any AS Level English subject meets JEE's language rule; IELTS and TOEFL don't.
- **For medicine:** A Level Physics, Chemistry and Biology, plus **any AS Level English**, which Cambridge advises taking in Year 12. IELTS and TOEFL don't count here either.
- **The AICE Diploma is not separately recognised in India.** Indian colleges look at the individual A Level results.

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- **Indian universities set their own number of A Levels.** Check two or three target courses before Grade 11 subjects are fixed.

Recognition in India: marks and timing

Question	What happens
Is it recognised?	Yes. AIU treats A Levels as equal to Grade 12
How marks become a percentage	Add the subjects' PUMs and divide by the number of subjects
When results arrive	May for the March series in India; August for the June series
The catch	June-series results can arrive too late for that year's Indian admissions
Exam series	Some colleges want all required subjects from a single exam series

Next step: where the school offers it, choose the March series for the subjects Indian colleges will look at, so results arrive in time (Cambridge India FAQ).

Entrance exams and CUET for Cambridge students

Cambridge students can sit JEE, NEET and CUET. What matters is which subjects they hold at A Level.

Route	Grade 12 subjects needed	Marks condition
JEE Main (B.E./B.Tech)	Physics and Mathematics, plus one of Chemistry, Biology, Biotechnology or a technical vocational subject, and a language	None to sit the exam
NITs, IIITs and other central institutes	As for JEE Main	75% in Grade 12 (65% SC/ST)
JEE Advanced and IITs	Physics, Chemistry and Mathematics	75% (65% SC/ST/PwD), to take an IIT seat
NEET (MBBS, BDS)	Physics, Chemistry, Biology/Biotechnology and English	50% in PCB (40% OBC/SC/ST)

- **The 75% rule is the only route.** Other boards can also use the "top 20 percentile", but Cambridge doesn't publish that figure.
- **For NEET, Cambridge's aggregate is specific:** add the PUMs of A Level Physics, Chemistry and Biology and AS Level English. For a staged route, use the A Level results, not the AS ones.
- **Expect extra preparation.** JEE and NEET follow the NCERT syllabus, which Cambridge doesn't teach in the same order.
- **CUET needs A Levels.** IGCSE alone counts only as Grade 10.

These rules come from the 2026 and 2027 exam cycles (JEE Main, JEE Advanced, NEET) and Cambridge's India FAQ. Check the current bulletin before Grade 11 choices are final.

Five mistakes we see every year

1. **Missing English in the five IGCSE passes.** Without it, there's no Grade 10 equivalence.

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2. **Leaving out AS Level English.** Students heading for JEE or NEET need it. IELTS doesn't count.
3. **Spreading A Levels across exam series** without checking whether target colleges accept that.
4. **Taking the June series by default.** August results can miss Indian admissions for that year.
5. **Treating the AICE Diploma as the qualification.** In India, it's the individual A Levels that count.

Talking it through at home

Parents worry about security. Teenagers worry about being judged, or letting you down. When a child senses a verdict coming, they go quiet or agree to whatever ends the conversation.

A few questions that open the conversation up:

- "Which subjects make you curious enough to keep going when a chapter gets hard? Which ones drain you?"
- "If your friends' choices and the relatives' opinions were off the table, which two or three subjects would you pick?"
- "Which two courses or careers shall we read up on together this month, so we can check which subjects keep them open, in India and abroad?"
- "What's the heaviest pressure on you right now?" Then listen, without comparing them with anyone.

Where Rosemounts helps

The rules tell you which doors a subject combination keeps open. They can't tell you which one fits your child.

That is what the VIP+™ Career and Life Design Program is for. It looks at your child's Values, Interests, Personality and Skills together, and a counsellor talks the results through with your child and with you. The choice then starts from who your child is, rather than last term's marks or what friends are picking.

What we won't promise: no assessment predicts a rank, a job or a salary, and no subject choice guarantees an admission. If you ask about fees, you'll get the full fee and what it includes, straight away. This guide is yours to use on its own, with no obligation to book anything.

To talk it through, WhatsApp us on +91 73022 22330 with one line: which class is your child in?

Sources

Checked 15 November 2026. Cambridge rules are from Cambridge's own India guidance; exam rules are from published summaries of the 2026–27 bulletins and should be rechecked against the official bulletins each year.

- Cambridge International: India frequently asked questions
- Cambridge International: global recognition factsheet
- Official bulletins to check each year: JEE Main (NTA), JEE Advanced, NEET-UG (NTA), CUET-UG (NTA), JoSAA

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