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

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IB families in India usually hear one of two things: that the IB keeps every door open, or that it closes the Indian ones. Neither is quite true. The IB Diploma is recognised by Indian universities, but a few rules about subjects, exam timing and percentages decide whether a child can actually use that recognition.

This guide covers those rules, checked against the IB's own India guidance in November 2026. Cambridge 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?

IB Diploma: how the subjects work

In the Diploma Programme (Grades 11–12), a student takes six subjects, one from each of six groups, with three or four at Higher Level (HL) and the rest at Standard Level (SL) (IB subject requirements). Alongside them come three compulsory core parts: Theory of Knowledge, the Extended Essay, and Creativity, Activity, Service.

Group	What it holds
1	Studies in language and literature
2	A second language
3	Individuals and societies, such as Economics, History, Psychology
4	Sciences: Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Computer Science
5	Mathematics, in one of two courses
6	The arts, or a second subject from Groups 3 or 4 instead

- **The Diploma is scored out of 45.** Six subjects give up to 42 points and the core up to 3; a student needs at least 24, plus the IB's other passing conditions (explainer).
- **Maths comes in two courses**, each at SL or HL. Analysis and Approaches (AA) is algebra and calculus; Applications and Interpretation (AI) leans towards statistics and modelling (Immerse Education). Families aiming at engineering usually choose AA, often at HL. Check the target universities before choosing AI.
- **Medicine needs three sciences**, and a standard Diploma fits only two, even with Group 6 swapped for a science. The IB allows an extra science taken separately, or a non-regular Diploma that replaces the Group 3 subject, but that must be requested **at least 18 months before the exams** (IB: FAQs about the IB in India).
- **Grades 9–10 (MYP)** are recognised as equal to Grade 10 of an Indian board, so an MYP child can move to any Indian board for Grade 11.

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Recognition in India: marks, timing and paperwork

The Association of Indian Universities (AIU) has recognised the IB Diploma since 1983. Students who don't complete the full Diploma are recognised too, if they have 24 points with three subjects at HL and three at SL (IB: FAQs about the IB in India).

Question	What happens
How marks become a percentage	The IB issues an Indian percentage transcript, requested through the school's IB coordinator before results are released
When results arrive	Early July for the May exams; early January for November
The catch	Indian admissions often finish by the end of June, so many colleges admit on predicted grades
Paperwork	Some colleges ask for an AIU equivalence certificate, which takes time; check early

Entrance exams and CUET for IB students

IB students can sit JEE, NEET and CUET. What matters is which subjects they hold at Grade 12 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), or the board's top 20 percentile
JEE Advanced and IITs	Physics, Chemistry and Mathematics	75% (65% SC/ST/PwD) or top 20 percentile, to take an IIT seat
NEET (MBBS, BDS)	Physics, Chemistry, Biology/Biotechnology and English	50% in PCB (40% OBC/SC/ST)

- **Medicine needs all three sciences.** Plan the extra science at the start of Grade 11, as the Diploma section explains.
- **Expect a timing clash.** Most entrance tests fall in April or May, the same weeks as IB May exams, so preparation has to start in Grade 11.
- **Expect extra preparation.** JEE and NEET follow the NCERT syllabus, which the IB doesn't teach in the same order.
- **CUET needs the Diploma.** The MYP alone isn't enough; it counts only as Grade 10.

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

Five mistakes we see every year

1. **Planning medicine too late.** Three sciences need an extra course or a non-regular Diploma, requested 18 months before the exams. That means deciding at the start of Grade 11.

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2. **Choosing Maths AI out of comfort.** It suits many paths, but check the target engineering and economics courses first.
3. **Waiting for final results.** Indian admissions often close before IB results arrive. Plan for predicted grades, and ask the school to request the Indian transcript before results.
4. **Leaving entrance preparation to Grade 12.** The tests clash with IB May exams.
5. **Assuming every school offers every subject.** Which subjects run at HL, and whether Group 6 can be swapped for a science, depends on the school. Ask before Grade 11.

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. IB rules are from the IB's own India guidance; exam rules are from published summaries of the 2026–27 bulletins, so recheck them each year.

- IB: FAQs about the IB in India
- IB Diploma subject requirements (explainer) and IB scoring (explainer)
- IB Maths courses (Immerse Education)
- Official bulletins to check each year: JEE Main (NTA), JEE Advanced, NEET-UG (NTA), CUET-UG (NTA), JoSAA

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