

How to File an RTI (Right to Information) Application in India

The Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2005 empowers citizens to seek information from public authorities to promote transparency and accountability in governance. As students and researchers, understanding how to use RTI can be especially valuable.

STEPS to FILE AN RTI

1. What Information Can Be Requested?

You can request:

- Official records, documents, and files
- Government orders, circulars, and reports
- Data related to policies, decisions, or expenditures
- Status updates on applications or complaints

You cannot ask for:

- Personal opinions or interpretations
- Hypothetical questions
- Information affecting national security or privacy (with some exceptions)

2. Identify the Correct Public Authority

Before filing, determine:

- Which department holds the information
- The relevant Public Information Officer (PIO)
- Example:
 - For university-related issues: Registrar/University office
 - For municipal matters: Local municipal authority

3. Format of an RTI Application

An RTI should include:

- Your name and contact details
- Address of the concerned Public Authority
- Clear description of the information requested
- Time period (if applicable)
- Mode of receiving information (post/email/inspection)

4. Sample RTI Application

To,

The Public Information Officer

[Name of Department/Institution]

[Address]

Subject: Request for information under RTI Act, 2005

Sir/Madam,

I am writing to request the following information under the RTI Act, 2005:

1. [Clearly state your question]
2. [Add more queries if needed]

I request that the information be provided in [electronic/printed] format.

I have enclosed the application fee of Rs. 10.

Yours sincerely,

[Your Name]

[Address]

[Contact Details]

- Submitting an Application Fee

There is a nominal charge associated with the filing of an RTI, a standard fee of ₹10.

Available via Payment modes of:

- Postal Order
- Demand Draft
- Online payment (for central/state portals)

- Submission Methods

An RTI can be filed in the following ways:

- Offline: Submit by post or in person to the concerned authority.
- Online: Through RTI portals (Central/State government websites)

- Time Limit for Response

- 30 days from date of application
- 48 hours if the matter concerns life or liberty

8. Appeals Process

In the event of no response being received by the applicant or dissatisfaction with the provided response, the following can be undertaken by the individuals or bodies seeking information,

- File a **First Appeal** (within 30 days)
- Followed by **Second Appeal** to the Information Commission

9. Tips for Writing an Effective RTI

- Be precise and specific
- Avoid vague or broad questions
- Ask for records, not explanations
- Keep language formal and neutral

Importance of RTIs for Students

- Helps in academic research
- Enables accountability in institutions
- Encourages critical engagement with governance
- Builds practical civic awareness

RTI: What You *Can* vs *Cannot* Ask

10 Questions You *Can* Ask (Information-based, record-oriented)

- Provide a copy of the sanctioned budget for [department] for the year 2023–24.
- Provide certified copies of minutes of meetings held regarding [specific issue].
- What is the status of my application (Application No. ___) submitted on [date]?
- Provide a list of selected candidates for [post/exam] along with marks obtained.
- Provide copies of guidelines/rules governing [specific process].
- How many vacancies exist in [department] as of [date]?
- Provide details of funds allocated and utilized for [scheme/project].

- Provide a copy of inspection reports conducted for [institution/project].
- Provide file notings and correspondence related to [decision/policy].
- Provide the criteria used for selection/shortlisting in [process].

10 Questions You *Cannot* Ask (Opinion-based, vague, or speculative)

- Why did the government fail to implement [policy]?
 - What do you think about the effectiveness of [scheme]?
 - Explain why my application was unfairly rejected.
 - Who is responsible for corruption in [department]?
 - What action will you take against officials involved in [issue]?
 - Give reasons for delay in general (without referring to a specific file/record).
 - Is this decision justified, or correct?
 - Provide your opinion on improving [system/policy].
 - What steps should be taken to solve [problem]?
 - Why is there negligence in your department?
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