



NDA — the officer's door you walk through at 16, and the board that decides the rest at 13 years



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Clear the NDA at 16 or 17, train for four years, and be commissioned an officer at 21. Everything up to Lieutenant Colonel then comes on time served. What happens after that is decided by a selection board, and the officers it passes over reach Colonel thirteen years later than the ones it does not.

Last reviewed 13 August 2026

THE 30-YEAR JOURNEY

You join at 16 or 17 and train for four years before you are commissioned. From there the first thirteen years are given to you: Captain at two years, Major at six, Lieutenant Colonel at thirteen, all on time served rather than on merit. Then a selection board takes over and the same ladder splits into two. One path keeps climbing on selection. The other keeps the rank badges coming, much later, without the command that goes with them.

SALARY PROJECTION

If you joined today

Figures as of August 2026

7th CPC defence pay matrix, Military Service Pay ₹15,500 for officers up to Brigadier, DA @ 60%, X-city HRA, after NPS and AGIF deductions. The Army ladder is used after commissioning.. The two columns hold the same rank at Colonel and differ in everything else. A selected officer reaches it around 15 to 18 years with command of a unit and the general ranks ahead; an officer on time scale reaches it at 26 years, on identical pay, with neither. Money is not what the fork costs you. 7th-CPC DA revises about every six months. We update this every year.

YEAR	MILESTONE	NOT SELECTED Colonel at 26 years, no unit command	SELECTED Colonel with command, then general officer ranks
0	Commissioned (Lieutenant)	L10 · ₹1.06L Both paths identical so far · Lieutenant	
6	Major, on time scale	L11 · ₹1.26L Both paths identical so far · Major	
13	Lieutenant Colonel, then the fork	L12A · ₹2L Both paths identical so far · Lieutenant Colonel	

YEAR	MILESTONE	NOT SELECTED Colonel at 26 years, no unit command	SELECTED Colonel with command, then general officer ranks
18	Paths split	L12A · ₹2L Lieutenant Colonel, still An officer not selected stays a Lieutenant Colonel until the time-scale Colonel arrives at 26 years of service.	L13 · ₹2.15L Colonel, commanding a unit Selected Colonels take command of a battalion or regiment, typically for two to three years.
26	Twenty-six years in	L13 · ₹2.15L Colonel, on time scale Same rank and same pay as the selected officer reached eight years earlier, without the unit command and with the ranks above closed.	L14 · ₹2.25L Major General Military Service Pay of ₹15,500 stops above Brigadier while basic rises only ₹4,600, so the in-hand can sit below a Brigadier's. Derived arithmetic, verify.

In-hand figures are derived from basic, MSP and DA @ 60% and are not quoted from a pay order. Military Service Pay stops above Brigadier, which is why the Major General line does not rise the way the rank suggests. Snapshot dated August 2026.

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