

Right to Information Act, 2005 explained: how RTI works

When to use this

- You want to know the status of an application or complaint with a government office
- An office is not giving reasons or records
- You want to understand your rights before filing an RTI

Steps

1. Know who can ask and what

Citizens can ask public authorities for information, records, copies of documents and inspection of work. Ask specific questions rather than a general "tell me everything".

2. Send the application

Address it to the Public Information Officer of the office. Central offices can be reached online at rtionline.gov.in; many states have their own portal. A small fee applies, and people below the poverty line are exempt.

3. Expect a reply in 30 days

The officer should reply within 30 days. For information about a person's life or liberty, within 48 hours.

4. Appeal if needed

If there is no reply or it is wrong, file a first appeal to the First Appellate Authority, then a second appeal to the Information Commission.

Key facts

- Some information is exempt, for example matters of national security and certain personal information
- The reply period is 30 days
- You do not need to give a reason for wanting the information

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