

Previous Year Questions: How to Use PYQs the Smart Way

Page 1 of 2 · The core idea, the framework and what to remember

What previous year questions actually are

PYQs are the **real papers CBSE has already set** in past board exams. Unlike any practice material, they show what has *genuinely* been asked — which concepts the board returns to, how questions get framed, and the depth expected.

Board exams rarely repeat the exact question — they repeatedly test the same *concepts* in new forms.

So the job is not to memorise past questions. It is to **master the concepts underneath them** so well that you can answer them in whatever new wording appears.

PYQs vs sample papers — different jobs

	Previous year questions	Sample papers
What they are	Real papers set in past board exams	Practice papers (official or publisher)
What they show	What has <i>actually</i> been asked	What the exam <i>could</i> look like
Main value	Pattern recognition	Full-length exam simulation

The examfront Pattern Recognition Framework

Works *across several papers* — that is what makes patterns visible. One paper shows you nothing about what recurs.

Collect
across papers

Compare
across years

Identify
the concept

Strengthen
the concept

Reattempt
in new forms

When to start — and when not to

Do not begin your preparation with PYQs. Understand the chapter → solve the chapter's own questions → *then* use PYQs to see how CBSE frames those concepts. Closer to the exam, work across full past papers to build the bigger pattern picture. Use **official CBSE papers** only — third-party PDF repositories are often altered or mislabelled.

Key takeaways

1. **Concepts repeat, questions do not.** Hunt the concept, not the wording.
2. **One paper proves nothing.** Patterns only emerge across several years.
3. **Regroup by chapter, not by year** — the pattern jumps out once questions sit in topic piles.
4. **Recurrence + weightage = priority.** High on both is where preparation earns most.
5. **Patterns guide focus, never predict the paper.** Prepare the whole syllabus; go deepest where the evidence points.

Three questions, three years, one concept

This is what “concepts repeat, not questions” looks like when you actually do it.

Step 1 — Collect and compare

Paper A. A tower stands vertically on the ground. From a point 20 m from its foot, the angle of elevation of the top is 60° . Find the height of the tower.

Paper B. The angle of elevation of the top of a tree from a point 15 m away on level ground is 30° . Find the height of the tree.

Paper C. A kite is flying with a taut string 60 m long that makes an angle of 60° with the ground. Find the height of the kite.

Step 2 — Strip the wording, name the concept

Tower, tree, kite. Three stories — **one concept: a right triangle with one angle and one side known, asking for the opposite side.** Applications of trigonometry, heights and distances.

$$\tan \theta = \text{opposite} / \text{adjacent} \quad \sin \theta = \text{opposite} / \text{hypotenuse}$$

A. $h = 20 \tan 60^\circ = 20\sqrt{3} \approx \mathbf{34.64 \text{ m}}$ · **B.** $h = 15 \tan 30^\circ = 15/\sqrt{3} = 5\sqrt{3} \approx \mathbf{8.66 \text{ m}}$ · **C.** $h = 60 \sin 60^\circ = 30\sqrt{3} \approx \mathbf{51.96 \text{ m}}$

Notice the nuance: C gives the **string** (the hypotenuse), not the ground distance — so the ratio switches from tan to sin. Same concept, different data. That switch is exactly what the board varies year to year, and exactly what you must be able to spot.

Step 3 — Now try this one

From the top of a 40 m tower, the angle of **depression** of a car on the ground is 30° . How far is the car from the foot of the tower?

Same concept in a new disguise: the angle of depression from the top equals the angle of elevation from the car, so $\tan 30^\circ = 40/d \Rightarrow d = 40\sqrt{3} \approx \mathbf{69.28 \text{ m}}$. If you recognised the concept before reaching for a formula, the framework is working.

Practise the concepts that repeat — with examfront

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