OBESITY EXPERTISE

A first-principles curriculum in 196 books

BOOK 5 6th of 196 in the series

Policy process, framing and advocacy craft · Rung 1

Who decides, under what authority, and how the question is framed

A PROPOSAL BECOMES POLICY ONLY WHEN AN IDENTIFIABLE BODY ACTS ON IT UNDER AN IDENTIFIABLE POWER

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This book is for learning. It is not medical, legal or financial advice, and it does not replace a qualified professional who knows your situation.

About the author



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Harsh Maheshwari completed his MBBS at King George's Medical University (KGMU), Lucknow, and is a resident in MD Community Medicine at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Raipur. His MD thesis, on chrononutrition and obesity, was selected by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) for funding in 2026.

He learns best from first principles: rebuilding an idea from what came before it until the formula feels like the only reasonable answer. This series grew out of that habit.

His long-term aims are to reduce obesity in India and to help make India healthy.

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Introduction

Why this book exists

Most health proposals fail long before anyone argues about the evidence: they are addressed to no one who can act on them. A tax on sugary drinks, a school-canteen rule and a front-of-pack label each belong to a different body, working under a different law, by a different procedure. This book teaches the reader to find that body and that authority for any proposal, to see the frame a public argument is working inside, and to keep apart two jobs that are easily confused: informing a decision and campaigning for one. It ends with a one-page note on a real Indian proposal that names who decides.

How to read it

Read it in order. The early sections build a map of who makes policy in India and how; the later ones use that map on framing and on the difference between research and advocacy. The exercises are decisions, not sums: name the body, name the power it acts under, name the frame. Do them as you go; the note at the end uses all three.

Every section has the same shape. **Definition** states the idea exactly. **In plain terms** says it again in everyday words. **Illustration** works through one real case, usually with a source you can open yourself. **Where this picture breaks** says where the illustration stops being true. **Must-know points** are what should change what you do. Then come **exercises** and, in most sections, a graded **practice set**.

Do the exercises before you look anything up. The worked answers are in the appendix at the back, under the same numbers. The references for each Part follow that Part. The glossary lists every term of art in the plain words it was first given. The last pages list all 196 books in the series and show where this one sits.

If you are new to this

Book 0, and above all its Part F: reading a table, checking a reference, telling a premise from a conclusion, and the section on how government works (Parliament and the State Legislatures, the executive, the courts; statute, rule, regulation and notification), which this book builds on directly. No mathematics beyond Book 0 is used, and there are no calculations: the practice sets are exercises in tracing a decision to its body and reading a frame, not arithmetic. Book 4, on food systems, is helpful but not required; where this book uses a programme Book 4 describes, it gives the one fact it needs.

On a first reading, read each section's definition, plain-terms explanation, illustration and must-know points, and do the exercises. Worked derivations can be skimmed and revisited once the idea feels familiar. Keep a calculator beside you: every worked answer can be followed with pen, paper and a calculator. Anything beyond the stated prerequisites is explained where it first appears, or marked as beyond this book. The **Symbols used in this book** page lists every sign and Greek letter with how to read it and where it is first used.

How to send feedback

If something is wrong, unclear, or could be better, please write to **contact@drharshmaheshwari.com**. Put the book number, the version and the section in the subject line (for example: *Book 5, v1.0, section C5*). Say what the text says, what you think it should say, and, if you can, the source.

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> **WHERE THIS BOOK SITS**
> Book 5 of the series' 196 books (Book 0 and 195 rung books). Before it: Book 4, Food systems, value chains and Indian food policy · Rung 1. After it: Book 6, R, reproducibility engineering and data management · Rung 1. The full list is at the back.

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Before you start

This book uses the following Book 0 sections. Each is summarised where it is first needed; work through Book 0 itself if a summary is not enough.

- Book 0, A4 · Percentages, and the percentage of a percentage
- Book 0, D6 · Sampling: how a part can tell you about a whole
- Book 0, F1 · Reading a table
- Book 0, F3 · Checking a reference
- Book 0, F4 · Argument: premise, inference, conclusion
- Book 0, F5 · How government works, in the shape you need to read a regulation

Rung 1 — Introductory

1 · A proposal is not a policy

DEFINITION. A proposal is a course of action that someone wants a public body (a ministry, department, authority or office of government) to take. Until a body with the power to decide has decided it, it is only a proposal, however widely it is supported.

Public policy is what public bodies do about matters of concern to some part of society. Policy also includes the outcomes their action creates, and a choice not to act.

Public bodies carry a policy out; the organised work they do for it is what this book calls a programme.

A common textbook model (OpenStax, *American Government*, a US text) divides the policy process into four stages: agenda setting (made up of problem identification and the specifying of alternative solutions), enactment, implementation and evaluation, with evaluation feeding back into the others. [1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17]

IN PLAIN TERMS. You are a postgraduate in community medicine at a medical college in Chhattisgarh. Your department wants to propose action on obesity among school children and young adults in the district.

- A **proposal** is what someone wants a public body to do. “Tax sugary drinks more” is a proposal.
- A **policy** is what a public body has actually decided and done about a problem.
- A **programme** is the work a public body does to carry a policy out: the staff, the money, the forms, the visits.

Textbooks draw the life of a policy as four stages. A problem gets onto the agenda, with options for solving it. A body decides on one. Public bodies carry it out. Someone checks whether it worked.

Use the stages as a list of jobs that must happen somewhere. Do not use them as a timetable. Real decisions skip stages, go back, and happen out of order.

Before you propose anything, write down who would lose.

Illustration 1. Here is a sentence that sounds right and is not. Suppose a made-up draft from your department opens like this:

> *Our department's policy is that school canteens in the district should stop selling sugary drinks.*

Ask three questions of it. Who decided this? Your department did. Does your department have the power to tell school canteens what to sell? It does not. Where is the decision written down in a form that binds anyone? Nowhere. So the sentence names a proposal and calls it a policy.

Fix it by saying what it is: "We propose that canteens in the district's schools stop selling sugary drinks." Now the sentence leaves a gap you can see. It does not say who would have to decide. Finding that body is the work of the next sections. For a canteen rule, do not guess.

Now a real policy. The National Health Policy 2017 is a document of the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. Open the Press Information Bureau's (PIB's) year-end release of 18 December 2017 (https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=1513000). Search for "15th March". The release says the Cabinet approved the policy at its meeting on 15 March 2017. So a body with power decided it, and the decision is recorded. That makes it policy.

Now open the policy itself (the National Health Systems Resource Centre's copy, https://nhsrcindia.org/sites/default/files/2021-07/National%20Health%20Policy%202017%20%28English%29%20.pdf). Go to section 3.1 and search for "could consider". The policy says that the Government "could consider imposing taxes on specific commodities", and names "foods having negative impact on health" among them.

Here is the trap. That sentence is inside a policy, and it decides nothing. "Could consider" keeps an option open. It sets no tax, names no food and fixes no rate. Someone who writes "India's National Health Policy taxes unhealthy food" has turned an option into a decision. A tax needs its own decision, by the body that holds the power to tax, in its own instrument.

Figures quoted in this illustration are from [18].

WHERE THIS PICTURE BREAKS. The three questions sort a sentence into proposal or policy. They do not tell you whether a policy is carried out. A policy can be decided, recorded and still barely happen on the ground. Checking that needs a look at what public bodies actually do, not only at the document.

The made-up memo has an easy answer because a department plainly has no power over canteens. Real cases are harder. A body may hold the power for some schools and not others. That is why the next sections trace power step by step instead of guessing.

Illustration 2. Now use the four stages on the first of the department's proposals: a higher tax on sugar-sweetened drinks. Build a table with one row per stage. In the second column, write what would have to happen at that stage. In the third, write whether you know yet who does it.

Stage	What has to happen	Do you know yet who does it?
agenda setting: the problem	obesity among the district's children and young adults is named as a problem worth acting on	your department can raise it, but raising it decides nothing

agenda setting: the options	a tax on sugary drinks is put forward, beside other options	anyone can put it forward
enactment	a body with the power to tax decides the rate	not yet: the body and its power are what this book will trace
implementation	the tax is collected	not yet
evaluation	someone checks what happened to sales and to children's weight	not yet

Look at the third column. Your department sits in the first two rows. Everything that turns a proposal into a policy sits in the rows you cannot yet fill. That is the gap between a proposal and a policy, drawn as a table.

Now take the stages away and write down who gains and who loses if the tax is decided. Reason it out from what a tax does: it raises the price a buyer pays. Buyers of sugary drinks pay more. Makers and sellers may sell less. The government collects more money. If the tax works as hoped, children drink fewer sugary drinks. Each of these is a group that will take a side.

Last, a warning about order. The textbook calls its stages "sequential". Analysts who study policy as politics do not assume that. They describe the process as a mess of small decisions. A tax rate can be decided before anyone has agreed on the problem. An old programme can be evaluated and never changed. So read the stages as jobs. Ask which job is missing, not which stage comes next.

WHERE THIS PICTURE BREAKS. The gains and losses here are worked out from what a tax does in general. None is a measured effect. Whether a tax on sugary drinks in India would reduce how much children drink, or how much they weigh, is an empirical question that this reasoning cannot settle. A later section of this book asks what evidence can and cannot settle.

The stage table also hides how many bodies may share one row. A tax in India can need more than one body to agree. Tracing that comes later in the book.

MUST KNOW POINTS FOR YOU.

- Before you write "policy" about anything, say which body decided it and where the decision is written down. If you cannot, write "proposal".
- Ask three questions of any sentence that claims a policy exists. Who decided it? Does that body have the power to decide it? Where is the decision recorded in a form that binds anyone?
- A policy document can contain options that it does not decide. The National Health Policy 2017 says the Government "could consider" taxes on foods harmful to health. That sets no tax.
- Policy is also what public bodies actually do, and that can differ from what the document says. When you describe a policy in a note, say whether you are describing the text or the practice.
- If a body with the power to act has been asked and has not acted, its inaction may itself be policy. Write "no order has been found", not "there is no policy".

- Every proposal has losers, if only those who pay. Name them in your own note before anyone else does.
- The four stages do not tell you the order in which things will happen, or who does each job; they only list the jobs.

EXERCISE 1 (retrieval). From memory, say in one sentence each what a proposal, a policy and a programme are. Then name the four stages of the textbook model of the policy process, and the two parts of the first stage.

Record your confidence as a percentage before turning to the answer.

EXERCISE 2 (critique). Each sentence below is made up. Say whether each describes a proposal, a policy, a programme, or none of these yet. Then say what you would need to check.

1. "The district has a policy of promoting millets, since the district collector (the senior civil servant who heads the district's administration) spoke in favour of them at a school function."
2. "Under the National Health Policy 2017, India taxes foods harmful to health."
3. "The State government has decided nothing about sugary drinks in school canteens, so there is no policy on them."
4. "Health workers in the block (the administrative unit below the district) visit each school once a term to weigh the children."

EXERCISE 3 (teaching). A first-year resident has ten minutes and a whiteboard. They say: "Our unit has agreed that we want a sugary-drinks tax. So it is our policy now." Explain the difference between a proposal and a policy, and what the unit would have to find out next.

EXERCISE 4 (interpretation). Here are three short passages. Say for each which of the four stages it belongs to, and whether it shows a decision.

1. A made-up committee minute: "Members agreed that rising obesity among college students is a matter the district should act on."
2. The Press Information Bureau's year-end release of 18 December 2017, looking back on the year: "The Cabinet in its meeting held on 15th March, 2017 approved the National Health Policy (NHP) 2017."
3. A made-up report: "Two years after the canteen guidance, sales of sugary drinks at school gates rose."

2 · Four jobs around a decision: propose, advise, decide, carry out

Checked against the sources as they stood on 2026-10-02.

DEFINITION. Around any public decision, four jobs can be told apart. Someone proposes a course of action. Someone advises or recommends. A body with the legal power decides. Offices carry the decision out and enforce it.

Take minimum support prices (MSP), the prices at which the government will buy certain crops. The Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP) recommends them. For the 14 crops of the kharif season of 2026-27, paddy among them, the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) approved them. The government's press releases on this approval name no power for it; the next section shows where to look. Public procurement agencies buy wheat and paddy at MSP.

Now take food regulations under the Food Safety and Standards (FSS) Act, 2006. The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (the Food Authority) gets scientific opinions from its Scientific Committee (section 14(2)). One of the Authority's scientific panels is on labelling (section 13(3)(g)). The Central Advisory Committee advises the Food Authority on its work programme and priorities (section 12(2)). The Food Authority makes regulations by notification, with the previous approval of the Central Government and after previous publication (section 92(1)). Previous publication means the draft is published first so that the public can object; a later section covers how. So the decide job needs two bodies. The State Government appoints a Commissioner of Food Safety for efficient implementation (section 30(1)), and there is a Designated Officer for each district (section 36(2)).

The Supreme Court may issue directions, orders or writs to enforce fundamental rights (Article 32 of the Constitution); a High Court may issue them for those rights and for any other purpose (Article 226).

"Who decides" names the body that holds the decide job under a named power. [19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32]

IN PLAIN TERMS. Four jobs happen around almost every public decision.

1. **Propose.** Someone puts an idea forward.
2. **Advise.** Someone studies the idea and recommends what to do. An adviser has no power to decide.
3. **Decide.** One body holds the legal power to make the decision.
4. **Carry out.** Offices put the decision into effect and make sure people follow it.

Here is the trap. People name whoever they heard about.

Illustration 1. Start with a made-up headline that sounds right and is not:

> *Expert commission fixes higher price for paddy.*

Check it against two real releases. First open the Press Information Bureau's backgrounder of 10 October 2025, "Minimum Support Prices: From Safety Net to Self-Sufficiency" (https://www.pib.gov.in/PressNoteDetails.aspx?ModuleId=3&NoteId=155448&reg=48&lang=2). Search for "recommendations". The Government announces the prices "based on the recommendations of the Commission for Agricultural Costs & Prices (CACP)". It also considers "the views of the concerned State Governments and Central Ministries/Departments".

Then open the release of 13 May 2026 (https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2260617). Read its first sentence. The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) "has approved" the minimum support prices for the 14 crops of the kharif season of 2026-27, paddy among them.

So the commission recommends. It does not fix. A minimum support price is a price at which the government will buy, not a price every farmer gets; Book 4 on the food system explains it. Here you need only who does what. Sort each body into its job.

Job	Who holds it for minimum support prices	Where it says so
propose	not named in these releases	none
advise	the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP) recommends; State Governments and Central Ministries give views	PIB backgrounder, 10 October 2025
decide	the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) approves	PIB release, 13 May 2026
carry out	public procurement agencies buy wheat and paddy at specified centres	Department of Food and Public Distribution, Year End Review 2025

For the last row, search the Department of Food and Public Distribution's Year End Review 2025 (https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2210211) for "specified centres". Wheat and paddy that meet the specifications "are bought by the public procurement agencies" at MSP.

Look at the first row. Neither release says who first proposed a price. That blank is honest. You leave it blank rather than fill it with a guess. The headline's error was to put the adviser in the decider's row.

WHERE THIS PICTURE BREAKS. The table describes who holds each job on paper, as the releases state it. It does not say how much the CCEA departs from what the commission recommends, or how far State views change the result. The releases held do not say.

Minimum support prices are the cleanest split held here, because the releases name each body. Many decisions are less tidy. One body may advise and decide, or the release may not name the adviser at all.

Illustration 2. Now use the four jobs on the department's third proposal: a warning label on packaged foods high in sugar, salt or fat. Here it is only a worked example of tracing jobs. A later book takes the labelling rules themselves apart.

Open the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 (https://indiacode.gov.in/handle/123456789/586348). Book 0's section on how government works showed you that the Food Authority makes food regulations under section 92. Go back to section 92(1) and read the whole sentence. The Food Authority may make regulations "with the previous approval of the Central Government and after previous publication, by notification".

Count the bodies in that sentence. The Food Authority makes the regulation. The Central Government must approve it first. So the decide job needs two signatures. A note that asks only the Food Authority has missed one. A note that asks only the Central Government has missed the other.

Now find the advisers. Search for "scientific opinions". Section 14(2) makes the Scientific Committee "responsible for providing the scientific opinions to the Food Authority". Section 13(3)(g) lists a scientific panel on "labelling". The Central Advisory Committee advises on the Authority's work programme and priorities (section 12(2)).

Now find who carries a regulation out in your own district. Search for "Commissioner of Food Safety". Section 30(1) says the State Government appoints one "for efficient implementation". Then search for "each district". Section 36(2) says: "There shall be a Designated Officer for each district."

Job	Who holds it for a food regulation	Provision
propose	anyone, including your department	none needed
advise	the Scientific Committee and its panels, one of them on labelling; the Central Advisory Committee on the work programme and priorities	sections 14(2), 13(3)(g) and 12(2)
decide	the Food Authority, with the previous approval of the Central Government	section 92(1)
carry out	the State's Commissioner of Food Safety, and a Designated Officer in each district	sections 30(1) and 36(2)

Look at where the jobs sit. The decide row is in the Union government. The carry-out row is in the State government and your own district. So a label decided in Delhi is checked in Chhattisgarh by the State's officers.

Last, suppose a made-up petition asks a High Court to make the food regulator act. Article 226 gives every High Court power to issue "directions, orders or writs", including to "any Government". A court can direct a body to act. The power to make the regulation remains the Food Authority's under section 92.

WHERE THIS PICTURE BREAKS. The table shows who holds each job under the Act. It does not show whether the Scientific Committee was consulted on any particular regulation, or how often the Central Government refuses approval. Those are facts about practice, and the Act does not record them.

The court line is deliberately thin. What Indian courts have in fact ordered on food, and how far they have gone, is left to a later book.

MUST KNOW POINTS FOR YOU.

- The error is to name the body that recommends as the body that decides. The Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices recommends minimum support prices; the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs approves them.
- For any proposal, write four lines: who proposes, who advises, who decides, who carries it out. Fill each with a named body and the place that says so.
- A food regulation needs the Food Authority and the previous approval of the Central Government (FSS Act, section 92(1)). Address your note to the body that holds the decide job for the instrument your proposal needs. Where several bodies must act, name all of them and say which one moves first.
- The body that decides and the body that carries out can sit in different governments. Food regulations are made at the Union level and implemented by each State's Commissioner of Food Safety and the district's Designated Officer.
- A court can direct a body to act. Making the regulation is still the job of the body the statute names.
- The four jobs tell you who holds formal power. They do not tell you who has influence, or whether the decider will act.

EXERCISE 1 (retrieval). From memory, name the four jobs around a decision. Then, for minimum support prices, name the body that recommends and the body that approved them for the kharif season of 2026-27.

Record your confidence as a percentage before turning to the answer.

EXERCISE 2 (interpretation). Read section 92(1) of the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006:

> *The Food Authority may, with the previous approval of the Central Government and after previous publication, by notification, make regulations consistent with this Act and the rules made thereunder to carry out the provisions of this Act.*

Name every body in the sentence and give each its job. Then name the two steps that must happen before a regulation can be made. Say what the sentence does not tell you.

EXERCISE 3 (critique). Here is a made-up draft note from your department. "The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) enforces the Act. So we will write to FSSAI. We will ask it to check that school canteens in our district follow the food safety rules." Find what is wrong with whom the note writes to, and fix it.

EXERCISE 4 (teaching). A journalist has three minutes and asks: "So who actually sets the price farmers are promised for paddy, the expert commission or the government?" Answer in plain words, with one quotable sentence.

3 · Where a body's power comes from

Checked against the sources as they stood on 2026-10-02.

DEFINITION. In India every lawful exercise of public power rests on an instrument above it. The chain runs downward from the Constitution. An Act made by a legislature may give a named body the power to make rules or regulations, or to issue notifications and orders. Each lower instrument must stay within the one above it.

A lower instrument normally names the provision it is made under, in words such as "in exercise of the powers conferred by".

Executive power is the second source. Article 73 extends the executive power of the Union to the matters on which Parliament has power to make laws. Article 162 extends the executive power of a State to the matters on which its Legislature has power to make laws. The words are "has power to make laws", not "has made laws".

An Act can be passed and not yet in force. Section 1(2) of the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023 leaves the date to the Central Government, by notification, and allows different dates for different provisions. Notification G.S.R. 843(E) of 13 November 2025 brought its provisions into force in three stages: some on the date of publication, some one year from it, and the rest eighteen months from it (the stages and their sections are in the second illustration). G.S.R. stands for General Statutory Rules, and 843 is the notification's number. It was printed in the Gazette of India, Extraordinary. [33, 34, 26, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45]

IN PLAIN TERMS. Picture a ladder. The Constitution is the top rung. Below it are Acts, made by Parliament or a State Legislature. An Act can hand a named body the power to make rules or regulations. Below those are notifications and orders, each issued under some section that allows it. A rung cannot go further than the rung above lets it.

Most notifications tell you their own rung. Near the start they say "in exercise of the powers conferred by" and name a section.

A government can also act by executive decision — a decision of the government itself, with no new Act behind it.

Illustration 1. Start with a sentence that cannot be checked. Suppose a made-up draft letter from your department ends like this:

> *We request the Government to use its powers to stop the sale of sugary drinks near schools.*

Ask the question this section is about: under what authority? The letter does not say. "The Government" could be the Union or the State. "Its powers" names no provision. Nobody can act on it, and nobody has to answer it. Your department has written a request to no one.

Now see what a checkable answer looks like, on a real instrument. Open the Digital Personal Data Protection Rules, 2025, notification G.S.R. 846(E) of 13 November 2025. The letters and number are the label the Gazette gives the notification, and the way you cite it. It was published by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (https://www.meity.gov.in/static/uploads/2025/11/53450e6e5dc0bfa85ebd78686cadad39.pdf). Search for "in exercise of powers". The rules are made "in exercise of powers conferred by sub-sections (1) and (2) of section 40" of the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023.

Climb one rung. Open the Act (https://www.meity.gov.in/static/uploads/2024/06/2bf1f0e9f04e6fb4f8fef35e82c42aa5.pdf) and go to section 40(1). The Central Government may "make rules not inconsistent with the provisions of this Act". So the rules rest on the Act, and the Act sets their limits.

Climb again. The Act is an Act of Parliament. Article 245 of the Constitution says that Parliament "may make laws for the whole or any part of the territory of India". Which subjects it may make laws on is the next section's work.

Rung	Instrument	What it says about the rung above
1	Constitution of India, article 245	Parliament may make laws
2	Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023, section 40(1)	rules must be "not inconsistent" with the Act
3	Digital Personal Data Protection Rules, 2025, G.S.R. 846(E)	made "in exercise of powers conferred by" section 40

Now try the same climb on a decision you met in the last section. Open the release of 13 May 2026 on minimum support prices (https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2260617). Search it for "Act", then "section", then "article". None appears. The release says the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs "has approved" the prices. It names no statute.

That does not make the decision baseless. It tells you which ladder to climb. When a decision names no Act, look at executive power. Article 73 extends the Union's executive power "to the matters with respect to which Parliament has power to make laws". Read those words slowly: "has power to make laws", not "has made laws". The government can act in that field by its own decision, within the limits the Constitution sets (one of them is in the must-know points below). Which field minimum support prices fall in is a question about subjects, and it waits for the next section.

WHERE THIS PICTURE BREAKS. The ladder shows where a power claims to come from. It does not show that the lower rung really stays inside the upper one. Whether a rule goes beyond its Act is a legal question, and the words "not inconsistent" do not answer it for you.

The minimum support price step is a method, not a finding. A release that names no Act tells you to look at executive power. It does not prove that no Act applies. A decision can rest on a statute that its press release does not mention.

Illustration 2. Here is a trap that catches careful people. An Act exists, you can download it, it has a year in its title. You quote it. It is not in force.

Take the same Act. The Gazette copy says it "received the assent of the President on the 11th August, 2023". Now read its section 1(2). It "shall come into force on such date as the Central Government may, by notification in the Official Gazette, appoint", and "different dates may be appointed for different provisions".

So the Act was passed in 2023, and the date it starts was left for later. Now open the notification that did the switching: G.S.R. 843(E), dated 13 November 2025 (https://www.meity.gov.in/static/uploads/2025/11/c56ceae6c383460ca69577428d36828b.pdf). It opens "In exercise of the powers conferred by sub-section (2) of section 1". It then sets three stages.

Stage	When, in the notification's words	Some of the sections it covers
Stage (a)	the date of publication of this notification	section 2, sections 18 to 26
Stage (b)	one year from the date of publication	section 6(9)
Stage (c)	eighteen months from the date of publication	sections 3 to 5, 7 to 17

The notification gives no calendar dates for stages (b) and (c). Work them out yourself from the date printed on it, 13 November 2025.

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13 November 2025, plus one year: 13 November 2026
13 November 2025, plus eighteen months: 13 May 2027
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Now place today on that line. This book is written on 2 October 2026. Stage (a) is in force. On the notification's own words, stages (b) and (c) are not yet. So a note that says "the Act requires" something in sections 3 to 17 is wrong today, though the Act was passed more than three years earlier.

Here is the habit to keep. Before you write "the Act requires", open section 1 and find the commencement. Then find the notification that brought the section you need into force.

Figures quoted in this illustration are from [46, 47].

WHERE THIS PICTURE BREAKS. The two calendar dates are your own arithmetic from the date printed on the notification. The Gazette's electronic copy carries a code with 14 November in it, and the notification does not say which day counts as "the date of publication". So each date could be a day later.

The status holds only for the notifications read here. A later notification could change any date. Before you rely on a stage, search for a newer notification under section 1(2).

MUST KNOW POINTS FOR YOU.

- The error is to answer "under what authority?" with "the government's powers". The answer is a named provision: an article, a section or a rule, with the body it gives the power to.
- Read a notification backwards. Find the words "in exercise of the powers conferred by", open the section they name, and then open the Act that section sits in.

- An Act that has been passed is not always in force. Before you write "the Act requires", read its commencement section and find the notification that brought your section into force.
- When a decision names no Act, look at executive power. Then ask for the order that records the decision and the body that took it.
- Some matters are open to both Parliament and the State Legislatures. On those, do not assume the Union can act inside a State by executive decision. The proviso to article 73 says it cannot, unless the Constitution or an Act of Parliament expressly provides for it.
- Write "X has power under Y". Do not write "X can lawfully do Z" unless a source says so.

EXERCISE 1 (retrieval). From memory, list the rungs of the chain of authority from the top. Then name the two articles of the Constitution that set how far executive power reaches, and say which government each is for.

Record your confidence as a percentage before turning to the answer.

EXERCISE 2 (interpretation). Here are the opening words of notification G.S.R. 843(E) of 13 November 2025:

> *In exercise of the powers conferred by sub-section (2) of section 1 of the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023 (22 of 2023), the Central Government hereby appoints —*

"22 of 2023" is the Act's number: Act No. 22 of that year.

Name the body acting, the provision it acts under, and the Act. Then say what you must open next to check that the provision gives this body this power, and what the opening words alone cannot tell you.

EXERCISE 3 (critique). Here is a made-up line from a classmate's draft note. "The Digital Personal Data Protection Act was passed in 2023. Since then, every school health app in Chhattisgarh has been bound by sections 3 to 17." Find the error and fix the sentence.

EXERCISE 4 (design). Another of your department's proposals is a warning label on packaged foods high in sugar, salt or fat. The previous section traced the jobs for a food regulation. Write the one sentence your note should use to answer "who would decide, and under what authority?" Use only what the earlier sections and this one have shown.

4 · Union, State or local: whose subject is it

Checked against the sources as they stood on 2026-10-02.

DEFINITION. Article 246 of the Constitution divides the power to make law by subject.

State List entry 6 is public health and sanitation, hospitals and dispensaries. Concurrent List entry 18 is adulteration of foodstuffs and other goods. Concurrent List entry 25 is education, subject to entries 63 to 66 of the Union List. Concurrent List entry 33(b) is trade and commerce in, and the production, supply and distribution of, foodstuffs.

Union List entry 52 covers industries whose control by the Union Parliament has declared by law to be expedient in the public interest. Section 2 of the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 makes a declaration in those words for the food industry. Because of that declaration, trade in the food industry's products also falls under Concurrent List entry 33(a), the products of a declared industry. So the State is not shut out of that trade.

Below the State sit the panchayats and the municipalities. Articles 243G and 243W let the Legislature of a State, by law, endow them with powers and responsibilities, including for the matters listed in the Eleventh Schedule (panchayats) and the Twelfth Schedule (municipalities).

These entries are read from the text of the Constitution as on 1 May 2026 (checked on 2 October 2026). [48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65]

IN PLAIN TERMS. Each list is a numbered set of entries, and each entry is a subject in a few words. A subject on the Union List belongs to Parliament. A subject on the State List belongs to each State's Legislature. A subject on the Concurrent List belongs to both.

Below the State there is a third tier: the panchayats in villages and the municipalities in towns.

So one proposal can land on three governments at once. Your job is to find every entry it touches, not the first one that fits.

Illustration 1. Here is the trap with "whose subject is it". You find one entry that fits, and you stop.

Suppose your department's first draft, a made-up one, says this about the canteen proposal:

> *Public health is a State subject, so the Government of Chhattisgarh can make the rule.*

Check it. Search for the Constitution of India on the India Code website (https://indiacode.gov.in/handle/123456789/618394) and open it. Go to the Seventh Schedule. Find List II, the State List. Entry 6 reads "Public health and sanitation; hospitals and dispensaries." The draft is right so far.

Now do not stop. A canteen rule is about food sold to children inside a school. So search the same Schedule for "food" and for "education", and read every entry that comes up.

In List III, the Concurrent List, entry 18 reads "Adulteration of foodstuffs and other goods." Entry 33(b) covers trade in, and the production, supply and distribution of, "foodstuffs". Entry 25 is "Education", with some higher education kept for the Union.

Last, open the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 on India Code (https://indiacode.gov.in/handle/123456789/586348). Read section 2. Parliament declares it "expedient in the public interest that the Union should take under its control the food industry." Go back to List I, the Union List. Entry 52 covers "Industries, the control of which by the Union is declared by Parliament by law to be expedient in the public interest." The Act does not name entry 52, but its words match the entry's. That match is your reading, so say so in a note.

Lay out what you found.

entry	list	what it names	who may make law on it
6	State	public health and sanitation	the State Legislature
18	Concurrent	adulteration of foodstuffs	Parliament and the State Legislature
25	Concurrent	education	Parliament and the State Legislature
33(b)	Concurrent	trade in, supply and distribution of foodstuffs	Parliament and the State Legislature
52	Union	industries the Union has declared it will control; the food industry, by the Act's section 2	Parliament

The draft named one row. The proposal touches five. Three are Concurrent. On a Concurrent subject, Article 254(1) says that where a State law is repugnant to — that is, clashes with — a law Parliament made, Parliament's law prevails. Parliament has made a food law. So before the State writes a canteen rule about what food may be sold, someone has to check it against the Union's Act and whatever has been made under it.

The fix to the draft names every entry. It does not yet say which instrument would carry the rule, or which body would write it. The lists cannot tell you that. A later section gives the method that does.

WHERE THIS PICTURE BREAKS. The table says which legislature may make law on each subject. It does not say that any law on school canteens exists, or which body acts under it. Whether a given canteen rule falls under entry 6, 18, 25 or 33(b), or several at once, is a question of reading. Where it is disputed, courts settle it, and this book does not. Name every entry that could apply, and say you have not settled which governs.

Illustration 2. Now the third tier. Here the trap is a made-up sentence of a kind you may hear in a meeting:

> *Health is a panchayat subject. It is in the Eleventh Schedule.*

Open the Constitution again and find the Eleventh Schedule. Entry 23 is "Health and sanitation, including hospitals, primary health centres and dispensaries." Entry 17 is "Education, including primary and secondary schools." So the words are there.

Now read Article 243G, the article the Eleventh Schedule hangs from. It begins: "the Legislature of a State may, by law, endow the Panchayats with such powers and authority as may be necessary". Read the verb again. May. By law. The Schedule is a list of subjects a State is allowed to hand to its panchayats. It hands nothing over by itself.

Article 243W does the same for municipalities, with the Twelfth Schedule. Its entry 6 is "Public health, sanitation conservancy and solid waste management."

So the sentence is half a fact. The subject is one a State may give. Whether Chhattisgarh has given it, and on what terms, is written in the State's own panchayat and municipal Acts. Those Acts are not read in this book. Before you say a panchayat or a municipal body in the district can act on canteens, open the State Act and find the section that gives it the power.

Put the three proposals side by side and see where each lands.

proposal	where the Constitution puts it
a higher tax on sugar-sweetened drinks	goods and services tax, Article 246A: Parliament and every State Legislature; Parliament alone where the supply crosses a State border
a warning label on packaged foods	Concurrent List entry 18, with the Union's declared control of the food industry (Union List entry 52, the Food Safety and Standards Act, section 2)
a rule on what school canteens may sell	State List entry 6 and Concurrent List entries 18, 25 and 33(b); a State may also hand school and health functions to panchayats and municipalities

The canteen rule could involve the Union, the State and a local body at once. That is the point of this section. One proposal can land on three governments.

WHERE THIS PICTURE BREAKS. The Eleventh and Twelfth Schedules show what a State may hand down, not what Chhattisgarh has handed down. The State Acts that do the handing are not held for this book. So nothing here tells you which panchayat or municipal body in the district holds any power over schools or food.

MUST KNOW POINTS FOR YOU.

- Do not answer "Health is a State subject, so the State decides." Food is Concurrent (entries 18 and 33(b)), and the Food Safety and Standards Act puts the food industry under Union control.
- On a Concurrent subject, Parliament's Act wins a clash. The State law is void where the two clash (Article 254(1)). The one way round this is a State law reserved for the President and given his assent (Article 254(2)). So before you propose a State rule on food, open the Union's food Act and read what it already covers.
- The Eleventh and Twelfth Schedules list what a State may give its local bodies. To say one can act, cite the section of a State Act (for Chhattisgarh, its panchayat or municipal law, not read in this book) that gives it the power.

- Goods and services tax sits outside the three Lists. Article 246A gives Parliament and every State Legislature power over it. Parliament alone has it where the supply crosses a State border (Article 246A(2)).
- Write "whose subject" as an entry: "Concurrent List, entry 18", not "a Central subject". An entry number can be checked by anyone in a minute. "A Central subject" cannot be checked at all.
- The lists say which legislature may make law on a subject. When two entries could both cover your proposal, say so in your note.

EXERCISE 1 (retrieval). Without looking back, write down:

1. The Article that divides law-making by subject, and the three Lists it names.
2. The list and entry for public health, and for adulteration of foodstuffs.
3. What happens when a State law on a Concurrent subject clashes with an Act of Parliament.
4. What Article 243G lets a State do, and which Schedule goes with it.

Record your confidence as a percentage before turning to the answer.

EXERCISE 2 (interpretation). A colleague proposes that the district stop the sale of sugar-sweetened drinks within school premises. Using only the Seventh, Eleventh and Twelfth Schedules and section 2 of the Food Safety and Standards Act, list every entry the proposal touches. Then say what the entries cannot tell you, and what you would open next.

EXERCISE 3 (critique). A made-up draft note says: "Food safety is on the Union List, so a State cannot make any law about food sold in schools." Find the errors and rewrite the sentence.

EXERCISE 4 (teaching). A first-year resident in your department has ten minutes and a whiteboard. She asks: "Is the State health department the only place to send our canteen proposal?" Explain.

5 · Inside the Union government: Cabinet, ministries, departments

Checked against the sources as they stood on 2026-10-02.

DEFINITION. Article 77(3) has the President make rules for the transaction of the Government's business and for its allocation among Ministers. The President made two sets of these rules on 14 January 1961, each issued as an order. They sit directly under the Constitution, with no Act between.

The Government of India (Allocation of Business) Rules, 1961 say who owns what. Rule 2 lists the Ministries, Departments, Secretariats and Offices in the First Schedule, and calls them all "departments". Rule 3 distributes the subjects among them in the Second Schedule. The rules stand as amended up to Amendment Series no. 386 of 22 July 2026.

The Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 is with the Department of Health and Family Welfare (item 3(a)). The Goods and Services Tax Council and the Central Goods and Services Tax Act are with the Department of Revenue (items 18A and 21(a)).

Aerated water and soft drinks, and industries such as biscuits, confectionery and ready-to-eat foods, are with the Ministry of Food Processing Industries (items 6 and 2). Regulation of packaged commodities is with the Department of Consumer Affairs (item 6). The rules list subjects, not where one subject ends and another begins. Whether a food label touches "packaged commodities" is not settled by the list.

The Government of India (Transaction of Business) Rules, 1961 say how business is decided.

Under rule 7, the cases in the Second Schedule go before the Cabinet. They include cases involving legislation, differences of opinion between Ministers, and proposals to vary or reverse a Cabinet decision. Standing Committees of the Cabinet may decide matters referred to them (rule 6(3)), and the Cabinet may review their decisions (rule 6(6)). [66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98]

IN PLAIN TERMS. At the top sits the Council of Ministers, led by the Prime Minister. The senior ministers in it form the Cabinet. Below them, the work is split among ministries, and most ministries are split again into departments.

The Allocation of Business Rules say which department owns which subject. The Transaction of Business Rules say who decides a case, and which cases must go to the Cabinet.

So "the government should act" names nobody. Your note has to name the department, and the entry in the rules that gives it the subject.

Illustration 1. Start with the guess almost everyone makes. A proposal about food should go to the food ministry.

Open the Allocation of Business Rules on the Cabinet Secretariat's website (https://cabsec.gov.in/allocationofbusinessrules/completeaobrules/). Check the title page first: "As amended upto Amendment Series no. 386 dated 22nd July, 2026". These rules change often, so the date matters.

Go to the First Schedule. It lists every ministry and department. You will find the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, with its Department of Food and Public Distribution.

Now go to the Second Schedule. This is where each department's subjects are listed. Read the Department of Food and Public Distribution's entry. Its items include "Public Distribution System", trade and supply of "sugar and foodstuffs other than foodgrains", and "Price control of sugar, foodgrains and foodstuffs". Search the entry for "safety". It is not there. Search for "tax". Not there either. The food department runs the grain and sugar side of food. It does not own food safety.

So search the Second Schedule for "Food Safety and Standards Act". It turns up under the Department of Health and Family Welfare, item 3(a). So that is where the Central Government's part in a food regulation is handled.

Now take your department's first proposal, a higher tax on sugar-sweetened drinks, and look up each thing it touches.

the proposal touches	search the Second Schedule for	department	item
the tax	"Goods and Services Tax Council"	Department of Revenue (Ministry of Finance)	18A; the Central Goods and Services Tax Act is item 21(a)
the industry that makes the drinks	"Aerated water"	Ministry of Food Processing Industries	6, "Aerated water and soft drinks"
the safety and standards of the drink	"Food Safety and Standards Act"	Department of Health and Family Welfare	3(a)
the packet it is sold in	"Packaged Commodities"	Department of Consumer Affairs	6, "Regulation of Packaged Commodities"

Four departments in four ministries. The one that develops the drinks industry is not the one that owns the tax, and neither owns the safety standard. "The government" is four offices with four different jobs.

WHERE THIS PICTURE BREAKS. The table shows who owns each subject on paper, as of Amendment Series no. 386. It does not show that the tax is decided by the Department of Revenue. A later section shows that the rate is recommended by a council where the Union and the States both sit. And a subject listed under a department does not mean that department has any power to act on it. The power comes from an Act or the Constitution, as the last two sections showed.

Illustration 2. Now the second rulebook. It tells you what happens when a proposal crosses departments.

Open the Transaction of Business Rules on the same website (https://cabsec.gov.in/transactionofbusiness/transactionofbusinessrules/). Check its title page: "As amended upto Amendment Series no. 75, dated 13th January, 2025". Read rule 3. Business allotted to a department is

"disposed of by, or under the general or special directions of, the Minister-in-charge". So a case that sits wholly in one department is that minister's to decide.

Read rule 4(1). When a case concerns more than one department, "no decision be taken or order issued until all such departments have concurred". If they do not agree, the Cabinet decides. The Explanation under it is wide. A case counts if a decision in one department "is likely to affect" the business of another.

Try it on the canteen proposal. Suppose, as a made-up case, the Union wanted a new Act on food sold in schools. Look up the subjects.

the proposal touches	department	Second Schedule item
food sold in the canteen	Department of Health and Family Welfare	3(a), the Food Safety and Standards Act
the school	Department of School Education and Literacy	1, "Elementary Education"; 12, "Secondary Education and Vocational Guidance"
children's nutrition	Ministry of Women and Child Development	5, "National Nutrition Policy, National Plan of Action for Nutrition and National Nutrition Mission"

Three departments, so rule 4(1) applies. And it is a new Act. Turn to the Second Schedule of the Transaction rules, "Cases which shall be brought before the Cabinet". Entry (a) is "Cases involving legislation including the issue of Ordinances." Its Note adds that a Committee of the Cabinet may not dispose of a case of legislation. The Ministry of Law must also be consulted on every proposal for legislation (rule 4(3)(a)). So this proposal needs three departments to agree, the Law Ministry to be consulted, and the whole Cabinet to decide, before Parliament ever sees it.

Last, remember your setting. Your department is in Chhattisgarh. Much of a canteen rule could be the State's, and the State has its own rulebook. The executive power of a State is vested in its Governor (Article 154(1)). Article 166(3) has the Governor make rules for the business of the State Government. Chhattisgarh's rules are not read in this book. Before you name a State department, open them.

WHERE THIS PICTURE BREAKS. The rules say whose agreement a decision needs. They say nothing about how long that takes, or whether any department will start the case at all. And the Union table does not tell you which State department in Chhattisgarh holds schools, health or nutrition. Only the State's own business rules can.

MUST KNOW POINTS FOR YOU.

- The food ministry does not own food safety. Its Department of Food and Public Distribution has the public distribution system, grain, sugar and food prices. The Food Safety and Standards Act sits with the Department of Health and Family Welfare (Allocation of Business Rules, Second Schedule, item 3(a)). Send a food-standards proposal there, not to the food department.

- "The government" is never an answer. Name the department and the item in the Second Schedule of the Allocation of Business Rules that gives it the subject. Add the amendment series you read.
- The department that develops an industry is not the one that taxes it or sets its safety standards. Aerated water and soft drinks sit with the Ministry of Food Processing Industries. The tax sits with the Department of Revenue in the Ministry of Finance, and food standards with Health.
- A decision in one department may affect another's business. Then nothing is decided until all of them agree, or the Cabinet decides (Transaction of Business Rules, rule 4(1)).
- The Ministry of Law must be consulted on every proposal for legislation (rule 4(3)(a)). The case must also go to the whole Cabinet (Second Schedule, entry (a)).
- These rules show who owns a subject and whose agreement a decision needs. They give no department the power to make a rule or a regulation; that comes from an Act. For Chhattisgarh, open the State's own business rules (Article 166(3)) before naming a State department.

EXERCISE 1 (retrieval). Without looking back, write down:

1. The Article under which the President makes the rules for the Government's business.
2. The two sets of rules made under it, and what each tells you.
3. Which Schedule of the Allocation of Business Rules lists departments, and which lists their subjects.
4. What rule 4(1) of the Transaction of Business Rules says about a case that concerns more than one department.

Record your confidence as a percentage before turning to the answer.

EXERCISE 2 (interpretation). Your department's third proposal is a warning label on packaged foods high in sugar, salt or fat. Use the Second Schedule of the Allocation of Business Rules. Name the Union department that leads on it, and any others that rule 4(1) might bring in. Say what the lookup does not tell you.

EXERCISE 3 (critique). A made-up draft letter from your department is addressed to the Ministry of Food Processing Industries. It asks the Ministry "to notify a higher tax on aerated drinks and stricter safety limits for them". Find what is wrong with the addressee.

EXERCISE 4 (teaching). A journalist has three minutes. The question: "Which ministry is responsible for sugary drinks in India?" Answer without jargon. Give one quotable sentence, and say how sure you are.

6 · How an Act is made

Checked against the sources as they stood on 2026-10-02.

DEFINITION. A Bill introduced by a Minister is a Government Bill. A Bill introduced by a member who is not a Minister is a Private Member's Bill.

Before a Government Bill reaches Parliament, three steps apply inside the Union government. The first is the Pre-legislative Consultation Policy, a decision of 10 January 2014 by the Committee of Secretaries (senior civil servants, chaired by the Cabinet Secretary). The Policy is not a statute. The Transaction of Business Rules require the Ministry of Law to be consulted on proposals for legislation (rule 4(3)(a)), and send cases involving legislation to the Cabinet (Second Schedule, entry (a)). The drafting of Bills is a subject of the Legislative Department of the Ministry of Law and Justice (Allocation of Business Rules, Second Schedule).

In Parliament, a Bill may start in either House. The exceptions are a Money Bill, and any other Bill that deals with tax or the other matters in Article 110(1)(a) to (f) (Articles 107(1), 109(1) and 117(1)). A Bill is introduced on a motion for leave, the first reading, and published in the Gazette. It may be referred to a Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committee. At the second reading, the House may instead send it to a Select or Joint Committee.

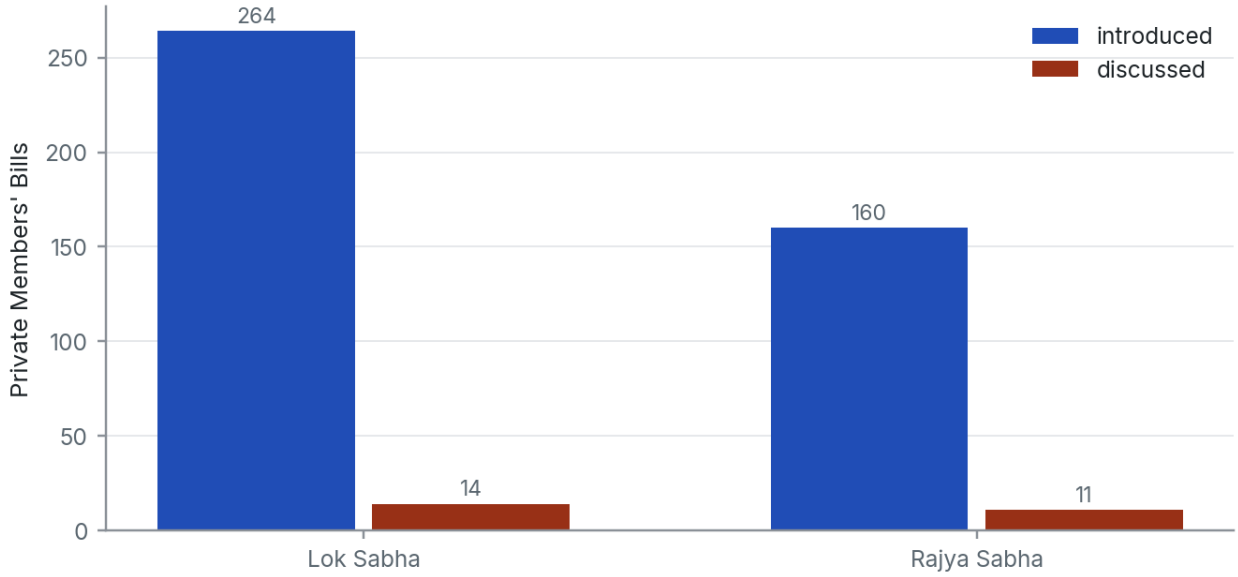
A Money Bill is a Bill that contains only provisions on the matters in Article 110(1), the first of which is the imposition, abolition, remission, alteration or regulation of any tax. It cannot be introduced in the Rajya Sabha (the Council of States). The Rajya Sabha may only recommend amendments, within fourteen days, which the Lok Sabha (the House of the People) may accept or reject (Article 109). The Speaker of the Lok Sabha decides whether a Bill is a Money Bill (Article 110(3)). [99, 100, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 88, 90, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126]

IN PLAIN TERMS. A Bill is a statute in draft. Government Bills come from a minister's department. The Union's own policy asks the department to put the draft in public for at least thirty days first, so that anyone can comment. But that policy is not a law, and a department can skip it if it writes down why.

Then the Cabinet approves the Bill and it goes to Parliament. Each House reads it three times.

In the first reading it is introduced. In the second, members debate it and go through it clause by clause, and it may be sent to a committee. In the third, the House votes to pass it. Then the other House does the same.

For you, two doors matter most: the public consultation before the Bill, and the committee that examines it.



Private Members' Bills in the term of Parliament running in May 2012, as PRS Legislative Research, an independent, not-for-profit group, counted them. Lok Sabha: 264 introduced, 14 discussed. Rajya Sabha: 160 introduced, 11 discussed. Of 424 introduced, 25 had been discussed at all.

Illustration 1. Here is the trap. You hear that a ministry is preparing a Bill on your subject, and you assume you will get a month to comment. You may not.

Open the Pre-legislative Consultation Policy on the Legislative Department's website (https://legislative.gov.in/pre-legislative-consultation-policy/). Its heading says it is a set of "Decisions taken in the meeting of the Committee of Secretaries" on 10 January 2014. That is a meeting of senior civil servants. It is not Parliament, and the Policy is not an Act.

Read paragraph 2. The department "should publish" the draft, or at least its main points. "Such details may be kept in the public domain for a minimum period of thirty days". Note the verbs: should, may. Paragraph 1 does say departments "shall proactively publish" proposed laws. Paragraph 8 says the Law Ministry "shall" check that the department "has complied with the process of pre-legislative consultation". But the thirty days is in paragraph 2, under "should" and "may".

Now read paragraph 11. If the department thinks consultation is "not feasible or desirable", it "may record the reasons in the note for the Cabinet". Nothing in the Policy asks for those reasons to be published. So a draft can go to the Cabinet with no public consultation at all, and you may never learn why.

Last, search the Press Information Bureau website for release 1797203, of 10 February 2022 (https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1797203). The Law Minister told the Rajya Sabha: "The Ministry of Law and Justice does not maintain any record relating to compliance by the Ministries/Departments with the Pre-Legislative Consultation Policy." Nobody is counting.

So the thirty days is a door that may open. Watch the department's website for it. Do not plan as if it must.

Now the clean case: when the consultation does happen, follow your comment through. Paragraph 6 asks for a summary of the comments to be put on the department's website. Paragraph 9 asks for a summary, with the department's response, to go into the note for the Cabinet with the

draft. Paragraph 10 asks for the summary to go before the Parliamentary Standing Committee when the Bill is referred to it. A comment that arrives in time can travel with the Bill all the way to Parliament.

Figures quoted in this illustration are from [127].

WHERE THIS PICTURE BREAKS. This is the Union's policy for Bills and rules made by Union departments. It does not bind a State. Chhattisgarh's practice for its own Bills is not read in this book. And the Policy says what a department should do, not what any one department did with any one Bill.

Illustration 2. Now walk a Bill through Parliament. Suppose, as a made-up case, the Cabinet has approved a Bill on food in schools. Open the Rajya Sabha Secretariat's booklet *Legislative Procedure in the Rajya Sabha*, of February 2005 (https://cms.rajyasabha.nic.in/UploadedFiles/Procedure/PracticeAndProcedure/English/6/legislative_procedure.pdf). Open the Constitution beside it, at Articles 107 to 111. Fill in this table as you read.

stage	what happens	where it is written
introduction, the first reading	a motion for leave to introduce; then the Bill is published in the Gazette	booklet, I(i)(a)
standing committee	the Speaker or the Chairman may refer the Bill to a Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committee for examination and report	booklet, I(i)(a)
second reading	debate on the principle; the House may send it to a Select or Joint Committee, or circulate it for opinion; then clause by clause	booklet, I(i)(b)
third reading	the House votes to pass it; a simple majority of those present and voting is enough	booklet, I(i)(c)
the other House	the same stages again	booklet, II
both Houses agree	the same text, or a joint sitting if they disagree	Articles 107(2) and 108
assent	the President assents or withholds; the Bill becomes an Act only on assent	Article 111; booklet, VI

Two rows are doors for your department. A Select or Joint Committee "can also take evidence of associations, public bodies or experts who are interested in the measure". The booklet says a Standing Committee examines a Bill and reports on it, but not how it gathers evidence. So when a Bill goes to either kind of committee, a short memorandum of evidence from your department is the document to send. And when a Bill is circulated for opinion, the opinions are gathered through the State Governments. Write to the Government of Chhattisgarh, not to Parliament.

Now change the made-up Bill. Suppose it only raised a tax. Article 110(1) makes a Bill a Money Bill if it "contains only provisions" on matters such as "the imposition, abolition, remission, alteration or regulation of any tax". A Money Bill cannot start in the Rajya Sabha. The Rajya Sabha may only recommend changes, within fourteen days, and the Lok Sabha may reject every one (Article 109). So for a tax law, the Lok Sabha is where the votes that matter are cast.

Last, the Bill an ordinary member brings. PRS Legislative Research is, in its own words, "an independent, not-for-profit group". Open its *Indian Parliament at 60 years* (https://prsindia.org/articles-by-prs-team/indian-parliament-at-60-years-facts-statistics), written in 2012. "Till date, Parliament has passed 14 Private Members' Bills." And: "No Private Members' Bill has been passed by Parliament since 1970". In the term of Parliament running in 2012, 264 such Bills had been introduced in the Lok Sabha and 160 in the Rajya Sabha. Only 14 and 11 had been discussed.

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264 plus 160 = 424 introduced
14 plus 11 = 25 discussed
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Of 424 Private Members' Bills introduced in that term to 2012, 25 had been discussed at all. A Private Member's Bill can put a subject in front of Parliament. On these figures it is not a route you can count on to make law.

Figures quoted in this illustration are from [128, 129].

WHERE THIS PICTURE BREAKS. The booklet is of 2005 and the PRS figures stop in 2012; neither shows what happened after. The booklet describes the Rajya Sabha's practice; the Lok Sabha has its own rules, not read here. The counts of Bills say how many were discussed, not why the rest were not.

MUST KNOW POINTS FOR YOU.

- Do not count on thirty days to comment on a draft Bill. The Pre-legislative Consultation Policy is a decision of senior civil servants, not a law.
- Your evidence can enter at two sourced points. One is the pre-legislative consultation, if it is held. The other is a Select or Joint Committee examining the Bill, which the Rajya Sabha booklet says can take evidence from experts. A Bill may instead go to a Department-related Standing Committee, which reports on it; the booklet does not say how it takes evidence.
- "Parliament has passed the Bill" is not yet "the law says". A Bill becomes an Act only when both Houses have agreed to the same text and the President has assented. An Act may then wait for a notification before it is in force.
- Of 424 Private Members' Bills introduced in the term running in 2012, 25 had been discussed. No Private Member's Bill had passed since 1970 (PRS, as of 2012). Do not describe one as a likely route to a new law.
- A Bill that only deals with tax is a Money Bill. The Rajya Sabha can only recommend changes, within fourteen days, and the Lok Sabha may reject them all.
- This route is the Union's. A State law passes the State Legislature and goes to the Governor, who may reserve it for the President (Article 200). Read a State's own procedure before you describe how a State Bill is made.

EXERCISE 1 (retrieval). Without looking back:

1. Put these in order: assent; Cabinet decision; third reading; introduction; pre-legislative consultation; the other House; second reading.

2. Name the two points where a researcher's evidence can enter, and the document that provides for each.
3. Say what makes a Bill a Money Bill, and what the Rajya Sabha can do with one.

Record your confidence as a percentage before turning to the answer.

EXERCISE 2 (interpretation). A made-up news line reads: "Parliament today passed the School Food Bill. From tomorrow, every school canteen must follow it." Say what has and has not been established, and what you would check.

EXERCISE 3 (critique). Here is a line from a draft letter by your department. "The Ministry acted illegally by sending the Bill to the Cabinet without publishing it for thirty days, as the law requires." Find the errors and rewrite the sentence.

EXERCISE 4 (teaching). The State health secretary wants one page, answer first. She asks: "Suppose a national Act on food in schools were proposed. Whom would it have to pass through? Where could our department's evidence get in?"

7 · How a rule or regulation is made, and where the public gets in

Checked against the sources as they stood on 2026-10-02.

DEFINITION. A rule or a regulation is made by the body an Act names, under the power that Act gives, and by the procedure that Act sets. For rules, the General Clauses Act adds a procedure of its own. The section that gives the power can carry three conditions. "By notification": the instrument is made by publishing it in the Gazette. "With the previous approval of" another authority: a second body must agree first. "After previous publication": a draft must be published first.

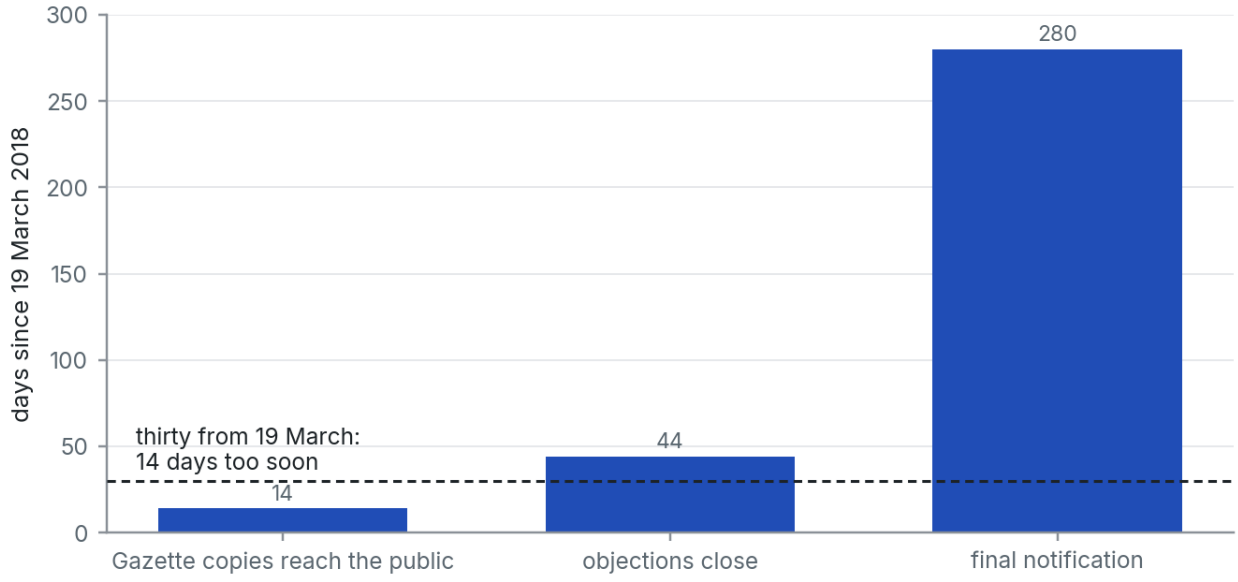
Section 23 of the General Clauses Act, 1897 applies where a Central Act gives a power to make "rules or bye-laws" subject to previous publication. The authority must publish a draft for the information of persons likely to be affected. It must publish with the draft a notice of the date on or after which the draft will be taken into consideration. It, and any authority whose sanction, approval or concurrence is needed, must consider any objection or suggestion received from any person before that date.

The order of the words in a power is not the order of the steps. The draft comes first. Because the approving authority must consider objections received before the notice's date, it acts after that date. For an FSSAI regulation, the Food Safety and Standards Act does not set this order in words. [130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 26, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 104, 142, 143, 107, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 153, 154]

IN PLAIN TERMS. Parliament passes an Act. The Act often leaves the detail to someone else.

Some Acts, the Food Safety and Standards Act among them, say a rule or regulation may be made only "after previous publication". That means a draft comes first, with a date on it. Anyone may send an objection or a suggestion before that date. For rules, section 23 of the General Clauses Act makes the body consider it. Then the final text appears in the Gazette, the government's official newspaper.

Under the Food Safety and Standards Act it then goes before Parliament, which can change it or cancel it. A State rule goes before the State Legislature. But by then it has already been made.



The FSSAI Packaging Regulations, 2018, counted in days from the draft's date, 19 March 2018. Gazette copies reached the public on day 14 (2 April). The thirty days for objections ran from then, so they closed about day 44. Counting thirty from 19 March would have stopped at the dashed line, 14 days too soon. The final notification came on day 280 (24 December).

Illustration 1. Here is the trap with a draft's deadline. The date printed on the draft is not always the day the clock starts.

Open the Food Safety and Standards (Packaging) Regulations, 2018, notified by FSSAI on 24 December 2018 (Gazette of India, Extraordinary, No. 535). The top of the page says it appeared in the Gazette of India, Extraordinary, Part III, Section 4. Go to the English text. Read the paragraphs that begin "Whereas". Write down what each one tells you.

The first gives the draft's date, 19 March 2018. It says the draft invited objections "before the expiry of a period of thirty days from date on which the copies of Gazette containing the said notification was made available to the public". A later paragraph gives that date: 2 April 2018.

Suppose you had counted thirty days from 19 March. Work out how early you would have stopped.

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31 minus 19 = 12 days left in March
12 plus 2 = 14 days
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Your deadline would have fallen 14 days too soon. Read the notice for the day it counts from, not the date at the top of the draft.

The next paragraph says the objections received "have been considered". It does not say how many came, what they said, or what changed because of them.

Now read the paragraph that begins "Now, therefore". It names the power: clause (k) of section 92(2), "read with section 23 of the Food Safety and Standards Act". That section 23 is the Act's own section on packaging and labelling. It is not section 23 of the General Clauses Act. Two laws carry a section with the same number, and a note that mixes them up cites the wrong one.

Last, count the whole path, from the draft's date to the final notification.

```
12 days left in March
30 plus 31 plus 30 plus 31 plus 31 plus 30 plus 31 plus 30 = 244 days, April to
November
12 plus 244 plus 24 = 280 days
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The window for objections was thirty days. The whole path took 280. Regulation 1(2) then gave food businesses until 1 July 2019 to comply.

Figures quoted in this illustration are from [155].

WHERE THIS PICTURE BREAKS. This is one regulation's path. Another draft, from another body or under another Act, may set a different period or count it from a different day, so read each notice for itself. The 280 days hold for this regulation only. The notification does not say when it was laid before Parliament, so the Gazette alone cannot tell you whether that step has happened.

Illustration 2. The section that gives a power also tells you whether you will see a draft. Read three sections of the Food Safety and Standards Act side by side (https://indiacode.gov.in/handle/123456789/586348). In each, look for three phrases: "by notification", "with the previous approval of", and "after previous publication".

Section	Who makes it	A draft first?	Whose approval first?	Laid before
91(1), rules	the Central Government	the section does not say so	none named	Parliament (s.93)
92(1), regulations	FSSAI	yes: "after previous publication"	the Central Government's	Parliament (s.93)
94(1), State rules	a State Government	yes: "after previous publication"	FSSAI's	the State Legislature (s. 94(3))

Now take the third proposal on your department's list, a warning label on packaged foods high in sugar, salt or fat. The 2018 packaging regulation was made under section 92(2)(k), which covers "the manner of marking and labelling of foods under section 23". A label rule made by FSSAI is a regulation under section 92, so a draft must come first. That draft, and the date in its notice, is your department's door.

A rule under section 91 is different. The Act's words promise no draft, so the Act gives you no date to work to. The Pre-legislative Consultation Policy of 2014 asks departments to put drafts in public for at least thirty days anyway, and its heading says it covers subordinate legislation. But it is a decision of senior officials, not a law. A department may skip it and record its reasons in the note for the Cabinet. In 2022 the Law Ministry told the Rajya Sabha it keeps no record of compliance.

Then think about who reads your comment. Where section 23 of the General Clauses Act applies, the body making the rule must consider it. So must any authority whose approval the Act requires. The policy also asks for a summary of the feedback on the department's website. Write your comment as a public document with your name on it, because it may be read as one.

After the final text is made, section 93 lays it before Parliament for a total of thirty days while it is in session, which may run across two or more sessions. That is a second thirty, and it is not the period for objections.

WHERE THIS PICTURE BREAKS. The table is true of one Act. Every Act writes its own power, so read the section each time and never assume the pattern carries over. And "after previous publication" tells you a draft must come. It does not tell you how long the period is, which the draft's own notice sets.

MUST KNOW POINTS FOR YOU.

- "A regulation takes effect only once Parliament approves it" is wrong for the Food Safety and Standards Act. Section 93 lays each Central rule and each FSSAI regulation before Parliament after it is made; section 94(3) lays a State's rules before the State Legislature. The Houses may then modify or annul it, and anything already done under it stays valid. Do not tell anyone they can wait for Parliament.
- Before you plan a comment, open the section that gives the power. Find "by notification", "with the previous approval of" and "after previous publication". They tell you whether a draft will appear, and which bodies act before the final text.
- Count the objection period from the day the notice names. For the 2018 packaging draft, that was the day Gazette copies reached the public, 2 April 2018, not the draft's date of 19 March. If the notice does not say whether the first day counts, send the objection a day early.
- Two different thirties sit in the same process. The 2018 packaging draft's period for objections was thirty days. Section 93 keeps a made regulation before Parliament for a total of thirty days while it is in session, which may run across two or more sessions. Say which one you mean.
- Section 23 of the General Clauses Act makes the body consider an objection. It does not make the body accept it, or answer it. Once the final rule is in the Official Gazette, that publication is conclusive proof it was duly made.
- Ministries are "required to adhere" to the 2014 consultation policy as a decision of the Committee of Secretaries. It is not a law, so do not call a missing consultation unlawful on its strength alone; check whether the Act itself asks for previous publication.
- The final notification tells you the steps were taken. To find out what changed, set the draft beside the final text, clause by clause.

COMMON MISREADING. "Objections considered" in a final notification is read as "objections accepted". It records only that a step was taken. Whether any comment changed the text shows only when you compare the draft with the final version.

REPORTING IT. FSSAI may make this regulation only after publishing a draft, and only with the Central Government's approval (Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006, section 92(1)). Objections must reach it within the period its draft notice states.

EXERCISE 1 (retrieval). From memory, list what section 23 of the General Clauses Act, 1897 requires when an Act gives a power to make rules "after previous publication". Then say what section 93 of the Food Safety and Standards Act adds after a rule is made.

Record your confidence as a percentage before turning to the answer.

EXERCISE 2 (interpretation). Here is part of section 94(1) of the Food Safety and Standards Act.

> *the State Government may, after previous publication and with the previous approval of the Food Authority, by notification in the Official Gazette, make rules ...*

Suppose your State's food safety department plans rules under it. List the steps the section requires, in order, and name every body that must act. Then say one thing the section does not tell you.

EXERCISE 3 (critique). Here is a made-up note from a colleague.

> *FSSAI's draft on warning labels is dated 1 June, so we have thirty days from 1 June. If we miss it, no matter. The regulation cannot take effect until Parliament votes on it. We can write to our member of Parliament then.*

Find the errors.

EXERCISE 4 (teaching). A first-year resident in your department asks why you will not start writing a comment on a food regulation until you have read the Act. You have ten minutes and a whiteboard. Explain.

8 · Schemes and budgets: policy without a statute

Checked against the sources as they stood on 2026-10-02.

DEFINITION. A scheme is a programme the executive runs, with a name, a period, an amount of money and guidelines saying how it works. Some Union schemes, such as the National Mission on Edible Oils – Oilseeds (NMEO-Oilseeds), rest on no Act of their own.

Two articles of the Constitution carry the money. Under Article 112(1) the President lays before both Houses of Parliament, every financial year, a statement of the estimated receipts and expenditure of the Government of India, the annual financial statement. Under Article 282 the Union or a State may make grants for any public purpose, even where the purpose is not one on which that legislature may make laws.

The Union's executive power extends to the matters on which Parliament may make laws (Article 73(1)(a)). Neither the oilseeds release nor the Poshan 2.0 guidelines names the article it relies on; the guidelines name an Act instead.

A centrally sponsored scheme such as Mission Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0 is carried out through the State Governments and Union Territory administrations. The cost is shared between the Central Government and the State by a stated ratio, which differs by component and by kind of State. An anganwadi is "a child care and development center" set up under the Integrated Child Development Services Scheme (National Food Security Act, section 2(1)).

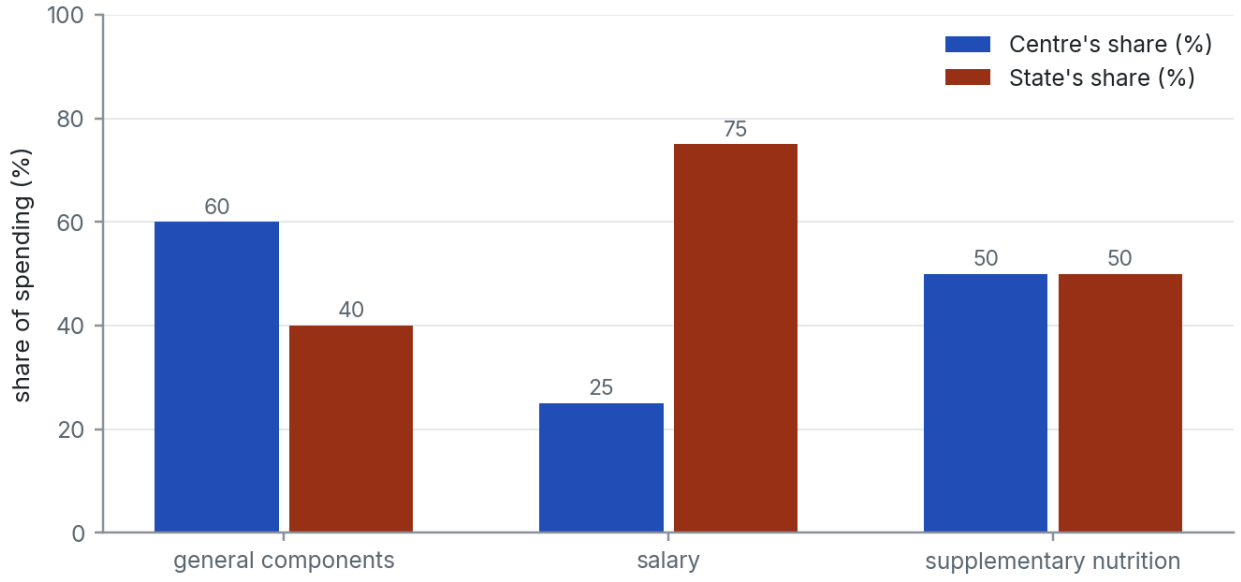
A scheme can also be the way a right in an Act is delivered.

A national policy statement is a third kind of document. The National Health Policy 2017 was approved by the Union Cabinet on 15 March 2017. It was not passed by Parliament, so it is not a statute. [156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162, 163, 164, 165, 166, 167, 168, 169, 170, 171, 172, 173, 174, 175, 176, 177, 178, 179]

IN PLAIN TERMS. Governments in India do not act on nutrition and health only through Acts. They also run schemes. A scheme is approved for a few years and given money. The States may carry it out and pay part of the cost.

A scheme is changed the way it was made: by the next approval, or by the next budget. You do not need Parliament to start one, and nothing in law stops it from ending, unless, like Poshan 2.0, it is how an Act's right is delivered.

Some schemes are the way a right written in an Act reaches people. Then the scheme can change while the right in the Act stays where it is.



Poshan 2.0 in a State with a legislature, under the 2022 guidelines: of every Rs 100, the Centre (the Central Government) pays 60 and the State 40 for general components, 25 and 75 for salary, 50 and 50 for supplementary nutrition. Each pair makes 100, so every component touches both budgets.

Illustration 1. Start with a sentence a colleague might put in your department's draft. It is made up.

> *Under the National Health Policy 2017, the government is committed to taxing unhealthy foods.*

Open the National Health Policy 2017 (https://nhsrcindia.org/sites/default/files/2021-07/National%20Health%20Policy%202017%20%28English%29%20.pdf). Search for "taxes on specific commodities". Section 3.1 says: "The Government could consider imposing taxes on specific commodities-such as the taxes on tobacco, alcohol and foods having negative impact on health". "Could consider" is not "is committed to". The sentence allows nothing and requires nothing. A tax on a food still needs the body that sets tax rates and the instrument that sets them, which the next section traces.

Now find who approved the policy. Search its text. The parts of it read for this book do not say. The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare's Year Ender of 18 December 2017 (https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=1513000) does: "The Cabinet in its meeting held on 15th March, 2017 approved the National Health Policy (NHP) 2017." That is a Cabinet decision, not an Act of Parliament.

Last, read what the policy says about law. Section 27 asks "whether to pass a health rights bill making health a fundamental right". It does not pass one. It "advocates a progressively incremental assurance based approach". The policy itself treats a legal right as something for the future.

So rewrite the sentence.

> *The National Health Policy 2017, approved by the Union Cabinet on 15 March 2017, says the government could consider taxes on foods having a negative impact on health. It does not impose one.*

WHERE THIS PICTURE BREAKS. This reads what one policy says, not what came after it. Whether later decisions cite the policy, or acted on its sentence about food taxes, is not in these texts. Nothing here links any later tax to this policy. And the held copy is an excerpt: sections 3.3 to 25 were not read, so this does not say what the rest of the policy contains.

Illustration 2. Here is how to read any scheme. Ask four questions. Who approved it? For what period? With how much money, from whose budget? Is there an Act under it?

Take two schemes. First, NMEO-Oilseeds. Open the Cabinet's release of 3 October 2024 (https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2061646). The first paragraph answers three questions: the Union Cabinet approved it, for 2024-25 to 2030-31, with an outlay of Rs 10,103 crore. A crore is 1,00,00,000, or ten million. Search the release for "Act". No Act is named.

Now search for "dietary". The mission "will promote awareness of recommended dietary guidelines for edible oils through an Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) campaign". So a campaign on cooking oil, of the kind your department might propose for the district, already sits inside a mission that rests on a Cabinet approval and a budget.

Before you quote the outlay, see what it is not.

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10,103 divided by 7 is about 1,443.3
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About Rs 1,443 crore a year on average. The release gives no year-by-year split, so no single year's spending can be read from it.

Second, Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0. Open its 2022 guidelines (https://wcd.gov.in/documents/uploaded/Mission%20Saksham%20Anganwadi%20and%20Poshan%202.0%20scheme%20guidelines.pdf). Section 2.7 calls it "an ongoing Centrally-sponsored programme being implemented through the State Governments/ UT administrations based on a cost sharing ratio". UT stands for Union Territory. Section 2.8 gives the ratios. A ratio such as 60:40, read "sixty to forty", means that of every Rs 100 the Centre (short for the Central Government) pays Rs 60 and the State Rs 40. The held excerpt of the guidelines does not list what its "general components" include. Here is the Centre's share from each row.

Category	General components (Centre's %)	Salary (Centre's %)	Supplementary nutrition (Centre's %)
States and UTs with a legislature	60	25	50
North-eastern and Himalayan States	90	90	90
UTs without a legislature	100	100	100

The State pays the rest. For a State in the first row:

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100 minus 60 = 40, the State's share of general components
100 minus 25 = 75, the State's share of salary
100 minus 50 = 50, the State's share of supplementary nutrition
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So a change to the food served under Poshan 2.0 in such a State touches two budgets, the Union's and the State's. Salary here is allowed only for selected staff, as the table's footnote says.

Now the fourth question, and the turn. Section 1.3 says the guidelines "are being issued under the provisions of Sections 4(a), 5(1) (a), 6 & 7 of National Food Security Act, 2013". The meal is a right in an Act. The scheme is how it is delivered. Section 3.1 gives the scheme's period: 2021-22 to 2025-26. The scheme's period, money and guidelines can end or change. The sections of the Act do not end with them.

Question	NMEO-Oilseeds	Poshan 2.0
Who approved it?	the Union Cabinet (release of 3 October 2024)	not named in the guidelines
For what period?	2024-25 to 2030-31	2021-22 to 2025-26
What money?	Rs 10,103 crore over the period	Centre and State, by a ratio
An Act under it?	none named	National Food Security Act, sections 4(a), 5(1)(a), 6 and 7

Figures quoted in this illustration are from [180, 181].

WHERE THIS PICTURE BREAKS. The ratios are those printed in the 2022 guidelines. They are shares of spending, not amounts spent, and they say nothing about what any State paid or what reached anyone. Poshan 2.0's approved period ended in March 2026, and no text held for this book says whether or how it was continued. The yearly average for the oilseeds mission is arithmetic on the total, not a figure the release gives.

MUST KNOW POINTS FOR YOU.

- A national policy is not a law. The Union Cabinet approved the National Health Policy 2017; Parliament did not pass it. It says only that the government "could consider" taxes on foods having a negative impact on health. Quote it as an intention, never as a commitment or a rule.
- For any programme, write down four things before you argue about it. Who approved it? For what period? With what money, from whose budget? Is there an Act under it?
- "Public health is a State subject, so the Union cannot pay for it" is wrong. Article 282 lets the Union make grants for any public purpose, even outside the subjects Parliament may make laws on.
- Before you propose a change to the food served under Poshan 2.0, cost both halves: in a State with a legislature the Centre and the State each pay 50 per cent of supplementary nutrition (2022 guidelines).

- Do not write "it is only a scheme" without checking. Poshan 2.0 delivers meals that the National Food Security Act makes a right: a free meal through the local anganwadi for pregnant women and lactating mothers (section 4(a)) and for children of six months to six years (section 5(1)(a)), and free meals for children who suffer from malnutrition (section 6). Changing the entitlement itself needs Parliament to amend the Act. The nutritional standards in Schedule II can be changed by Central Government notification (section 37).
- A scheme's approval has an end date: 2030-31 for the oilseeds mission, 2025-26 for Poshan 2.0 as approved. Before you call a scheme current, find the decision that continued it.
- An approval and an outlay tell you what was decided and budgeted. Ask for spending and results separately.

REPORTING IT. A district nutrition-awareness campaign would run as part of a scheme, not under an Act. It rests on the scheme's approval for a stated period and on money in the budget, and the same kind of decision can change it.

EXERCISE 1 (retrieval). From memory: what does Article 282 of the Constitution allow, and what does Article 112 require each year? Then give the four questions to ask of any scheme.

Record your confidence as a percentage before turning to the answer.

EXERCISE 2 (interpretation). Here is part of the first paragraph of the Cabinet's release of 3 October 2024.

> *The Union Cabinet, chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, has approved the National Mission on Edible Oils – Oilseeds (NMEO-Oilseeds) ... The Mission will be implemented over a seven-year period, from 2024-25 to 2030-31, with a financial outlay of Rs 10,103 crore.*

Say what this decides, and three things a reader might take from it that it does not say.

EXERCISE 3 (critique). Here is a made-up line from a draft note.

> *Public health is on the State List, so the Union Government has no way to fund an obesity programme in our district. Only the State can act.*

Find what is wrong, and say what the note should check instead.

EXERCISE 4 (teaching). A health secretary asks, on one page: "For a school nutrition-awareness campaign in our district, should we ask for a law or for a scheme?" Write the answer, answer first.

9 · When no single body decides

Checked against the sources as they stood on 2026-10-02.

DEFINITION. Authority over one proposal is often shared, in three common shapes.

First, two legislatures may make law on the same subject.

Second, one body may seat members of both governments. The Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council is set up under Article 279A. The Union Finance Minister chairs it. Its other members are the Union Minister of State in charge of Revenue or Finance, and from each State its Finance or Taxation Minister or another minister its government nominates. Each decision needs not less than three-fourths of the weighted votes of the members present and voting.

A recommendation is not a tax. The Central Government notifies the rate of central goods and services tax (CGST), under section 9(1) of the Central Goods and Services Tax Act, 2017. It does so "on the recommendations of the Council", at a rate not exceeding 20 per cent.

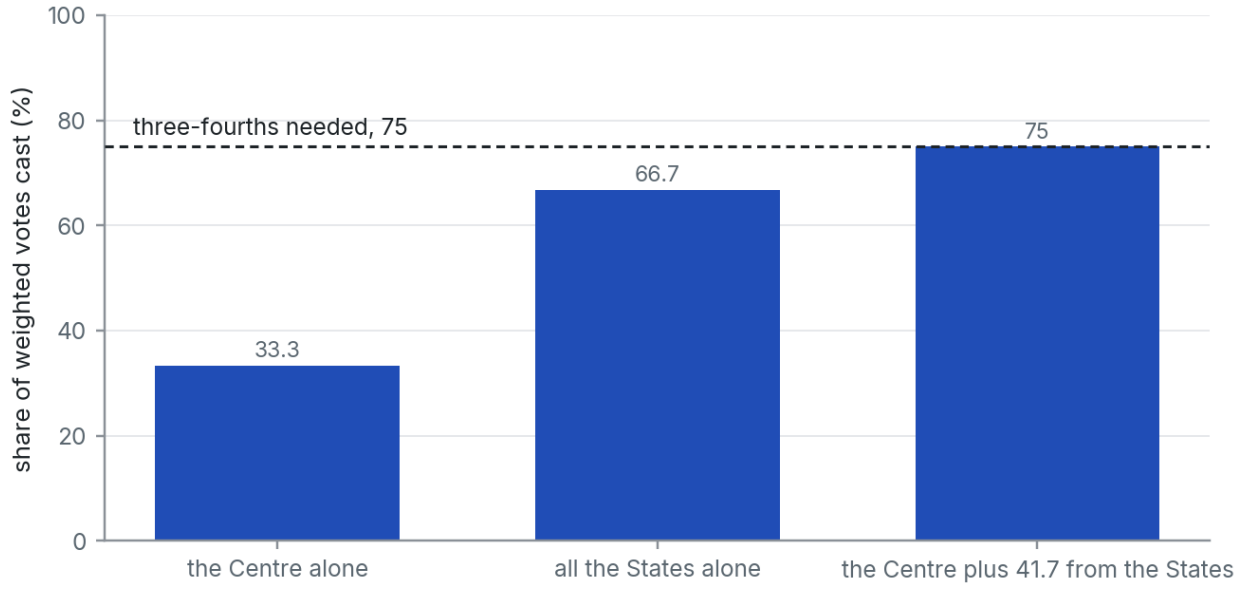
Third, several bodies may each hold a power over part of one thing. A food advertisement that misleads falls under section 24 of the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006. It also falls under section 21 of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019, which lets the Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) order it discontinued or modified.

A proposal addressed to "the government" names none of these bodies. [50, 182, 183, 184, 185, 186, 187, 188, 189, 190, 191, 192, 193, 194, 195, 196, 197, 198, 199, 200, 201, 202, 203, 204, 205, 206]

IN PLAIN TERMS. Sometimes no one body can say yes on its own. Here is the trap: a note that writes "the government should" has named no one, so no one has to answer it.

The GST Council is the clearest case. It recommends tax rates. It does not levy them. The Central Government then issues the notification that sets the central rate.

When several bodies must act, ask which one goes first. Address your note to it, and name every other body whose agreement is needed.



Weighted votes in the GST Council under Article 279A(9), per cent of votes cast. The Central Government (the Centre) alone has 33.3 and all the States alone 66.7; a decision needs three-fourths, 75, so neither side carries it alone. With the Centre in favour, 41.7 more must come from the States.

Illustration 1. Here is the trap with a tax rate. The body you hear about is not always the body that sets it.

Suppose a colleague's draft says this. It is made up.

> *The GST Council imposed a 40 per cent tax on sugary drinks from 22 September 2025.*

Step 1. Open the Press Information Bureau release of 3 September 2025, "Recommendations of the 56th Meeting of the GST Council" (https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2163555). In Annexure-I, find 2202 10. It is the code under which the tax tables list these drinks; the tables classify goods by numbered chapter, heading, sub-heading and tariff item. "All goods (including aerated waters), containing added sugar or other sweetening matter or flavoured" go to 40%. Now go to the note at the end. The recommendations "would be given effect through the relevant circulars/ notifications/ law amendments which alone shall have the force of law". The Council recommended. It did not impose.

Step 2. Find the notification. Open Notification No. 9/2025-Central Tax (Rate) of 17 September 2025 (https://egazette.gov.in/WriteReadData/2025/266209.pdf). The Central Government, "on the recommendations of the Council", notifies central tax at "20 per cent. in respect of goods specified in Schedule III". Serial number 1 of Schedule III is entry 2202 10, with the same description. Paragraph 2 puts the notification in force from 22 September 2025.

Step 3. Check the power. Section 9(1) of the Central Goods and Services Tax Act (https://taxinformation.cbic.gov.in/content/html/tax_repository/gst/acts/2017_CGST_act/active/chapter3/section9_v1.00.html) lets the Government notify central tax "at such rates, not exceeding twenty per cent., as may be notified by the Government on the recommendations of the Council". So the central rate on these drinks is 20 per cent. Under that section it could not be 40.

Step 4. Check it still stands. Notification No. 01/2026-Central Tax (Rate), in force from 1 May 2026, changes the tariff codes in serial numbers 2 and 3 of Schedule III. It leaves serial number 1 alone. Its note says the 2025 notification was last amended by No. 19/2025, which this book does not hold. So date the rate "as amended up to 01/2026-Central Tax (Rate), in force 1 May 2026".

Step 5. The States. Article 279A sends the Council's recommendations to the Union and to the States. The release calls 40% "a special de-merit rate" of GST, beside a Standard Rate of 18% and a Merit Rate of 5%. It does not split it between Union and States. The central notification sets central tax at 20%. What each State issued is not among this book's sources, so your note says no more about it than the release does.

Now rewrite the sentence.

> *At its 56th meeting on 3 September 2025 the GST Council recommended a 40 per cent rate on sugar-added and flavoured drinks. The Central Government notified central tax on them at 20 per cent from 22 September 2025 (Notification 9/2025-Central Tax (Rate), as amended up to 01/2026, in force 1 May 2026).*

Notice the order. The Council moved first. The notification is made "on the recommendations of the Council", so it could not come before them.

Figures quoted in this illustration are from [207, 208].

WHERE THIS PICTURE BREAKS. This traces the central side only. The States' notifications are not held, so the split of the 40 per cent between Union and States is not shown here. Amendment 19/2025 is not held either; the date to quote is the newest amendment you have opened. The rates hold until the Council recommends and the government notifies a change.

Illustration 2. Now see why neither side can go round the Council. Open the Constitution at Article 279A(9) (https://indiacode.gov.in/handle/123456789/618394). A decision needs "not less than three-fourths of the weighted votes of the members present and voting". The vote of the Central Government (the Centre) weighs "one-third of the total votes cast". The votes of all the State Governments together weigh "two-thirds".

Turn the fractions into percentages.

```
3 divided by 4 = 0.75, so three-fourths is 75 per cent
100 divided by 3 = 33.3 per cent, the Centre's weight
200 divided by 3 = 66.7 per cent, all the States together
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Now test each side alone.

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The States in favour, the Centre against: 66.7 per cent, short of 75
The Centre in favour, every State against: 33.3 per cent, short of 75
The Centre in favour: 75 minus 33.3 = 41.7 per cent still needed from the States
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Neither side can carry a decision alone. So a proposal for a higher tax on sugary drinks has to persuade the Union and enough of the State ministers on the Council. A note that argues only to the Union Finance Ministry has done half the job.

The Article does not say how the States' two-thirds is shared among the States present. It leaves the Council to set its own procedure (Article 279A(8)), which this book does not hold. So do not work out how many States a decision needs.

WHERE THIS PICTURE BREAKS. The arithmetic counts only votes of members present and voting, under the rule in Article 279A(9). It says nothing about how often the Council votes rather than agrees, how any member voted at the 56th meeting, or how the States' share divides among them.

Illustration 3. Now a different shape: no shared body, but two separate powers over one thing.

Suppose an advertisement for a packaged drink makes a claim your department thinks is misleading. The case is made up. Two Acts reach it.

Open the Food Safety and Standards Act (https://indiacode.gov.in/handle/123456789/586348) at section 24(1): "No advertisement shall be made of any food which is misleading or deceiving". Then open the Consumer Protection Act, 2019 (https://indiacode.gov.in/handle/123456789/613632) at section 21(1). Where the Central Consumer Protection Authority is "satisfied after investigation that any advertisement is false or misleading", it may order it discontinued or modified.

Now ask which department owns each Act. Open the Allocation of Business Rules (https://cabsec.gov.in/allocationofbusinessrules/completeaobrules/), Second Schedule. The Food Safety and Standards Act sits under the Department of Health and Family Welfare. The Consumer Protection Act, 2019 sits under the Department of Consumer Affairs. Two Acts, two departments, one advertisement. Your note names both and says which one you are asking to act.

Last, the orphan. Here is a made-up line from a department memo.

> *The government should stop the sale of sugary drinks to school children.*

Which instrument? Which government? Whose subject? The memo answers none of these. Sort your department's three proposals by what you already know.

Proposal	Who holds a part	Who moves first
higher tax on sugar-sweetened drinks	the GST Council; the Central Government; the States	the GST Council, since the notification follows its recommendation
a misleading drink advertisement	the Food Safety and Standards Act, section 24 (who enforces it is not traced here); the CCPA, under the Consumer Protection Act, section 21	each Act works on its own, so name the one you ask
a rule on what school canteens may sell	not yet traced: it touches food and it touches schools	trace it before you write

The third row is honest about a gap. A later section of this book builds the full method for closing it. Until then, "not yet traced" is a better line in a note than "the government".

WHERE THIS PICTURE BREAKS. These texts show that each power exists. They do not show whether either body will use it, how fast, or that the two would agree on the same advertisement. The CCPA's power to order applies only after an investigation. And the canteen row stays open: this section does not settle whose subject it is.

MUST KNOW POINTS FOR YOU.

- "The GST Council set the tax on sugary drinks" is wrong. The Council recommends, under Article 279A(4). The Central Government notifies the central rate under section 9(1) of the Central Goods and Services Tax Act.
- Central tax on sugar-added and flavoured drinks (entry 2202 10) is 20 per cent. It sits in Schedule III of Notification 9/2025-Central Tax (Rate), in force 22 September 2025, as amended up to 01/2026 from 1 May 2026 (amendment 19/2025 not read). Never write that the Union levies 40 per cent: section 9(1) caps the central rate at twenty.
- Under Article 279A(9) a GST Council decision needs three-fourths of the weighted votes, with the Centre holding one-third and the States together two-thirds. Neither side reaches 75 per cent alone.
- When several bodies must act, write down the order. Ask whose act the others rest on. That body moves first. Address your note to it, and name every other body that must act.
- A proposal addressed to "the government" is addressed to no one. If you cannot yet name the body, write "not yet traced" and list what you will open next.
- One tax change carries several dates: recommended 3 September 2025, notified 17 September, in force 22 September, amended in force 1 May 2026. Quote the date of the instrument that supports your sentence.
- A map of who shares a decision tells you whom to address and in what order. It does not tell you how they will vote, or how the States' votes divide.

COMMON MISREADING. "Recommended by the GST Council" is read as "in force". A recommendation becomes a tax only when a notification issues, and the notification carries its own date. The release of 3 September 2025 changed no rate by itself.

REPORTING IT. The GST Council recommends this rate under Article 279A, and its recommendation goes to the Union and the States. The Central Government notifies central tax under section 9(1) of the CGST Act.

EXERCISE 1 (retrieval). From memory: who sits on the GST Council, what share of the weighted votes does a decision need, and how are the votes weighted? What does section 9(1) of the CGST Act cap?

Record your confidence as a percentage before turning to the answer.

EXERCISE 2 (interpretation). Here are rows 1 to 4 of Schedule III of Notification No. 9/2025-Central Tax (Rate), 17 September 2025. The heading of the Schedule is "Schedule III– 20%".

S. No.	Chapter, heading, sub-heading or tariff item	Description
1	2202 10	All goods (including aerated waters), containing added sugar or other sweetening matter or flavoured
2	2202 91 00, 2202 99 90	Other non-alcoholic beverages [other than those specified in Schedule I of this notification]
3	2202 99 90	Caffeinated Beverages
4	2202	Carbonated beverages of fruit drink or carbonated beverages with fruit juice

Say what the 20% is, who set it and under what power, and two things the table does not tell you.

EXERCISE 3 (critique). Here is a made-up line from a draft press note.

> *From 22 September 2025 the Union Government has levied 40% GST on cola, and it can raise this further whenever it chooses.*

Find the errors and rewrite the sentence.

EXERCISE 4 (teaching). A journalist has three minutes and asks: "Who actually decided the tax on sugary drinks?" Answer in plain words, with one quotable sentence.

10 · The people around a decision

DEFINITION. An actor around a policy decision is a person or organisation that tries to shape the decision, or is affected by it, without holding the power to take it.

An actor's interest is what it stands to gain or lose from the decision. Every policy favours some and costs others, so every actor around it has an interest.

Lobbying is representing an organisation's case before government in order to influence policy. Inside lobbying takes the case directly to lawmakers and officials. When you put your own or your department's case to an official, this book calls that lobbying too.

Disclosure is stating the interest, so that others can weigh the advice. Disclosure does not remove the interest.

A conflict of interest is what an adviser or researcher has when they stand to gain from one answer to the question they inform.

An interest does not remove a right to be heard. [209, 210, 211, 212, 213, 214, 13, 215, 216, 217, 218, 219, 220, 221, 222, 223, 224, 225, 226, 227, 228, 229, 230, 231, 232, 233, 234, 235, 236, 237]

IN PLAIN TERMS. Around every decision stand many more people and organisations. They do not hold that power, and they still try to move it. Call each of them an actor.

Here are the usual ones. Professional bodies, such as an association of doctors. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and consumer groups. The media. Researchers, which includes you.

A government department that advises, but does not decide, is an actor too.

For each actor, ask one question: what does it stand to gain or lose? The answer is its interest. A group that works for clean air or children's health has one too.

Actors push in two ways. Inside lobbying takes the case straight to the people in government: a meeting, a letter, a comment on a draft. Outside lobbying takes it to the public, through the press or a campaign, so that the public presses the government.

An interest does not take away the right to speak. What you do with an actor's interest is weigh it, not silence it.

The same goes for you. You might gain from one answer through a grant, a job or a result that makes your name. Then you have a conflict of interest. Write it down at the front of your note. That is disclosure. It lets the reader weigh your advice. It does not make the pull go away.

A later book in this series gives all this a formal shape, the policy triangle of Walt and Gilson. It looks at four things together: the content of a policy, its context, its process and its actors. This section gives you the actors.

Illustration 1. Start with a first draft that fails. Suppose your department's made-up note proposing a higher tax on sugar-sweetened drinks has this paragraph under "Stakeholders", the word drafts often use for what this section calls actors:

"Stakeholders: the government, the public, industry and doctors. All stakeholders support action on obesity."

Read it with two questions for each name. Does it decide, or does it push? What does it stand to gain or lose?

"The government" fails the first question. The last section found that the GST Council recommends the rate and the Central Government notifies it. The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare is also "the government", and it sets no tax rate. In their study of food taxes in India, Summan and colleagues describe the health ministries as playing "a largely advisory role" in tax decisions. One word has hidden a decider and an adviser.

"The public" and "industry" fail the second question. They name no one, so they name no interest. Which industry? A company selling sweetened drinks and a mill selling it sugar can both lose sales. Summan and colleagues also report that farmers' incomes depend partly on sugar supplied to the drinks industry. Which public? A student buying a drink, a parent, a shopkeeper.

"All stakeholders support action" fails both. It is a claim about what other people want, and the draft gives no evidence for it. Actors whose interests point in opposite directions do not all support the same thing.

Now rebuild it. The rows below use groups that Summan and colleagues interviewed or listed for Indian food taxes, from 18 interviews held between February and September 2024 and a review of documents. The third column keeps to what their paper reports. Two names need expanding: the Breastfeeding Promotion Network of India (BPNI), and Nutrition Advocacy in Public Interest (NAPi). Both are civil society organisations (CSOs): groups formed by citizens, outside government and outside business, to work for a public cause.

Actor	Job around the decision	What it stands to gain or lose	How it pushes
GST Council	shares the decision: recommends the rate	revenue, balanced against keeping taxed goods affordable	not applicable: it decides
Central Government, Ministry of Finance	shares the decision: notifies the central rate	revenue	not applicable: it decides
Ministry of Health and Family Welfare	advises	its health programmes and aims	inside government
Food and beverage industry associations	pushes	sales and profit	lobbying; the paper reports lobbying against front-of-pack labels
Sugar mills and cane farmers	pushes	income from sugar sold to drinks makers	industry associations, such as the Indian Sugar Mills Association, which the paper lists

CSOs such as BPNI and NAPi	pushes	the public health aims they campaign for	complaints to authorities, campaigns
Researchers	inform	funding for their research	evidence and briefs
Students and young adults who buy the drinks, and their families	affected	what they pay, if the tax reaches the price	not reported in the paper

Read down the second column. Two rows hold a share of the decision. Six push, advise, inform or are affected. That is the usual shape: a few deciders, many actors.

Then read the third column. The interests point in different directions. The industry rows stand to lose from a higher tax. The civil society row stands to gain what it campaigns for. That is why "all stakeholders support action" could not have been true.

The media are not in the table, on purpose. Summan and colleagues report what their interviewees said about media coverage, but not what media organisations themselves stand to gain or lose. Leave a row out rather than fill it with a guess.

Figures quoted in this illustration are from [238].

WHERE THIS PICTURE BREAKS. The table says who stands around the decision and which way each interest points. It does not say how strong any actor is, or who will win. Do not forecast the outcome from it.

The rows come from one paper. Its findings rest on 18 interviews with informants who were mostly based in Delhi, and on a review of documents. Its Table 3 calls its entries "examples". So the table is a starting list for this proposal, not a complete or measured map, and a different proposal, such as a school-canteen rule, has a different set of actors.

Illustration 2. Now take two made-up events, one after the other, and sort what each one changes.

First event. Suppose the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) publishes a draft regulation on warning labels for packaged foods, and a made-up association of snack makers sends a long objection. A colleague says the objection should go in the bin, because the association has a commercial interest.

Check that against what a draft is for. The FSSAI's own Packaging Regulations of 2018 record that their draft was published "inviting objections and suggestions from the person likely to be affected thereby", and that the objections received "have been considered". The section on how a rule is made showed the same pattern for rules that an Act requires to be published in draft. A snack maker is plainly a person likely to be affected. Its interest is plain, and so is its right to object.

So do not bin the objection. Read it as you would read anyone's argument. Are its premises true? Does its conclusion follow from them? Knowing the association's interest tells you where to look hardest. It does not tell you the answer.

Second event. Suppose a made-up drinks company offers your department a grant to survey what school canteens in the district sell. Now the interest is yours.

Ask the question from the definition: do you gain from one answer? If the grant might be renewed, a report the funder likes is worth more to the department than one it dislikes. That is a conflict of interest, even if nobody means to bend anything. Ioannidis and colleagues, writing about medical research, note that conflicts of interest "can also affect the design, analysis, and interpretation of results". The pull works at every step, not only at the end.

Three responses are open to you. Decline the grant. Accept it and disclose it. Accept it and say nothing. This book's rule is that the third is never open. Disclosure means writing the funder, and any other gain, at the front of the report, where a reader meets it before the findings. It lets the reader weigh the work. It does not remove the pull, and that is why some departments decline.

Your interests are not only money. Walt and colleagues observe that funders increasingly require researchers to translate their research, "forcing them to become policy actors". Once your department sends a note to a district officer, you are an actor around that decision. Your interests include your department's name, and the answer you hoped to find before you looked.

WHERE THIS PICTURE BREAKS. Both events are made up. The Packaging Regulations show one real draft that invited objections; they do not show how the FSSAI weighed any particular objection, and nothing here says how much weight an objection with a commercial interest behind it gets.

Disclosure is the floor, not the whole answer. For tobacco, a treaty goes further: Article 5.3 of the World Health Organization (WHO) Framework Convention on Tobacco Control requires the countries that joined it to protect their tobacco control policies from the tobacco industry's commercial interests. How far that reasoning carries to food companies, and the guidance of WHO and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) on industry interference, belong to a later book in this series.

MUST KNOW POINTS FOR YOU.

- The error is to treat the loudest actor as the decider. A campaign, a press storm or a powerful company can move a decision. None of them can take it.
- Refuse a stakeholder list that says "industry", "the public" or "the government". Ask for each actor by name. Ask what it stands to gain or lose.
- An interest is not a reason to silence an actor. Use the objector's interest to decide where to look hardest.
- When an advocacy group's figure appears in your note, check it as hard as an industry figure.
- Disclose every interest you have in the decision you write about, money or not, at the front of the note.
- For a food tax in India, do not send your note to the Ministry of Health as if it decided. Summan and colleagues held 18 interviews in 2024 and reviewed documents. They report that the Ministry of Finance and the GST Council "determine tax design and rates".
- When a trainee hands you a stakeholder table, point at each row and ask two questions aloud: does this actor decide, or push? What does it lose if the proposal goes through?

- A map of actors tells you who will push and in which direction. It does not tell you who will win. Judge the argument on its evidence, and do not forecast the outcome from the map.

COMMON MISREADING. "This group works for a public good, so it has no interest to declare." A public interest group seeks a good that reaches everyone. It still stands to gain when the decision goes its way: a campaign won, a reputation made, future funding. Its interest points in a different direction from a company's. It is still an interest, and its claims are checked like anyone else's.

REPORTING IT. Interests: this note was prepared by [names], [department]. Its funding came from [funder, or "no outside source"]. [If the funder has a stake in the decision: X sells Y.] The authors have [no other interests in this decision / these other interests: ...].

EXERCISE 1 (retrieval). Without looking back, answer three questions. What is an actor's interest? What is the difference between inside and outside lobbying? What does disclosure of a conflict of interest do, and what does it not do?

Record your confidence as a percentage before turning to the answer.

EXERCISE 2 (critique). Here is a made-up "Stakeholders" paragraph from a department's proposal for a rule on what school canteens in the district may sell.

"School principals, parents and the canteen contractors all agree that junk food should be removed from canteens. The local soft-drink distributor has a conflict of interest and so should not be consulted. Our department has no interests to declare, because we receive no money from industry."

Find three errors. For each, say what is wrong and what the paragraph should say instead.

EXERCISE 3 (teaching). A journalist has three minutes and asks: "Should drinks companies even be allowed to comment on a tax on sugary drinks? They will just protect their profits." Answer without jargon, and give one sentence they can quote.

11 · Finding who decides: the tracing method

DEFINITION. Tracing who decides is a fixed sequence of six steps that takes a proposal to the body that can turn it into policy, and to the power that body would use.

1. Name the instrument the proposal needs: an Act; a rule or regulation under an existing Act; a rate, order or other notification under an existing Act. Or say none is needed: an executive decision, such as a scheme, can act without a new law.
2. Find whose subject it is: the Union, the States or both. The answer comes from the Seventh Schedule under Article 246 of the Constitution, or from a provision of an Act that already covers the matter.
3. Find the body that holds the power to make that instrument, and the numbered provision that gives it the power. For a scheme, that provision is the executive power of the Union (Article 73) or of the State (Article 162), used by the decision that approved it, such as a Cabinet approval.
4. Find the process the instrument must pass before it binds, such as previous publication of a draft for objections, an approval, notification in the Gazette, commencement on a notified date, and laying before the legislature. Not every instrument passes all of these, and they are not always in this order: a regulation, for example, is laid before Parliament after it is made and notified.
5. List every other body whose agreement the process requires, and the bodies or officers who carry the decision out.
6. State the result in one sentence: X decides, under Y, by process Z, with W's agreement. [239, 240, 241, 242, 243, 244, 178, 182, 245, 246, 247, 248, 249, 250, 251, 252, 253, 254, 255, 256, 257, 258, 259, 260, 261, 262, 263, 264, 265, 77, 266, 267, 268, 269, 270, 271, 272, 273, 274, 275, 276, 277, 278, 279, 280, 281, 282, 283, 284, 285, 286, 287, 288, 289, 290, 291, 292, 293, 294, 295, 296, 297, 298, 299, 300]

IN PLAIN TERMS. **Step 1. Name the instrument.** What would have to exist on paper for the proposal to be policy? If you cannot name one, the proposal is not yet ready to trace.

Step 2. Find whose subject it is. If an Act already covers the matter, read what it says about itself. If not, find the entry in the Seventh Schedule's three lists.

Step 3. Find the body and the provision. Which body can make that instrument? Which numbered section or article gives it the power? "The government" is not a body. "The minister" is usually not the holder of the power.

Step 4. Find the process. What must happen before the instrument binds anyone?

Step 5. List who else must agree, and who carries it out. A body whose approval the process needs is a second decider.

Step 6. Write one sentence. X decides, under Y, by process Z, with W's agreement.

The trace can stop, because the documents you have do not answer a step. Then write down where it stopped, the candidates, and the document that would settle it.

Or the trace can find that the decision was taken years ago. Then your proposal is really about carrying the decision out, and it goes to different people.

A finished trace tells you who can act. It never tells you whether they will.

Illustration 1. Start with a trace that does not finish. Your department's made-up proposal reads: "The Health Department should ban junk food in school canteens in the district."

Step 1. The instrument. "Ban" could mean a regulation, an order from the State to its own schools, or a new Act. The proposal does not say which. "Junk food" has no definition, so no instrument could be written from it. Before you trace, rewrite the proposal so that a body could act on it: "School canteens in the district should not sell sugar-sweetened drinks."

Step 2. Whose subject. Look first for an Act that already covers food sold in canteens. The Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 (the FSS Act) does. It defines a food business as any undertaking, "whether public or private", that handles food, and the definition "includes food services, catering services, sale of food". Its definition of premises names "food canteens". Section 2 declares that "the Union should take under its control the food industry". Now put that beside entry 52 of the Union List: "Industries, the control of which by the Union is declared by Parliament by law to be expedient in the public interest." The words match. The Act does not name the entry. The match is your reading, and you should say so in a note.

But a school canteen is also part of a school. Education is entry 25 of the Concurrent List, and public health is entry 6 of the State List. So a second route is open: the State acting for the schools it runs. The section on where a body's power comes from showed that a State's executive power reaches as far as its Legislature's power to make laws (Article 162).

Step 3. Body and provision. Route one is the Food Authority, which makes regulations under section 92(1) of the FSS Act "with the previous approval of the Central Government and after previous publication". Route two is the State Government, through its school education department, under its executive power.

Here the trace forks, and the documents in hand cannot close the fork. They do not say whether the Food Authority has already made a regulation on what school canteens may sell. They do not say whether Chhattisgarh has issued an order. They do not say how far the Food Authority's duty under section 16(1), "to ensure safe and wholesome food", stretches into deciding which foods a canteen may offer. And Article 162 adds a limit of its own: where Parliament and the State can both make laws, the State's executive power is subject to the power a law of Parliament gives the Union. So the two routes can meet, and which one governs a canteen rule is a question this trace leaves open.

The split runs inside the Union government too. The Allocation of Business Rules give the FSS Act to the Department of Health and Family Welfare. They give "Elementary Education" and "Secondary Education" to the Department of School Education and Literacy.

So write the trace as far as it goes, and mark where it stops.

Step	Answer so far
1 instrument	a regulation under the FSS Act, or a State order for its own schools
2 subject	the food business: the Union, under the FSS Act's section 2; the school: Parliament and the State both (Concurrent List entry 25); public health: the State (State List entry 6); the section "Union, State or local: whose subject is it" lists every entry a canteen rule touches
3 body and provision	the Food Authority, FSS Act section 92(1); or the State Government, under its executive power
4 process	for a regulation: a draft for objections, the Central Government's approval, notification, laying before Parliament (section 93); for a State order: not found in the documents held
5 who else must agree	the Central Government, for a regulation
6 one sentence	not yet possible: two candidate deciders
where it stopped	step 3; read next the Food Authority's list of regulations and the State school education department's orders

The fork is the finding. The first draft, "the Health Department should ban junk food", had hidden it behind one word.

Figures quoted in this illustration are from [129].

WHERE THIS PICTURE BREAKS. This trace is limited by what is held. A regulation or a State order on school canteens may already exist; this book does not hold one and does not say either way. The book in this series on India's regulatory architecture maps the food regulators.

Matching section 2's words to Union List entry 52 is a reading, not a ruling. Whether a canteen rule falls under the food industry, education or public health is the kind of question courts decide. The trace tells you which questions to ask. It does not answer them for you.

Illustration 2. Now a trace that finishes. Proposal: a higher tax on sugar-sweetened drinks.

Step 1. The instrument. A rate notification. GST rates are set by notification under the GST Acts, not by a new Act each time. Find the notification now in force for the central tax: Notification No. 9/2025-Central Tax (Rate), on the e-Gazette at egazette.gov.in. Its first line names the power it uses: "sub-section (1) of section 9" of the Central Goods and Services Tax Act, 2017 (the CGST Act).

Step 2. Whose subject. Article 246A(1) gives Parliament and "the Legislature of every State" power to make laws on goods and services tax "imposed by the Union or by such State". Both.

Step 3. Body and provision. Under Article 279A(4)(e), the GST Council makes recommendations to the Union and the States on "the rates including floor rates with bands of goods and services tax". Under section 9(1) of the CGST Act, the central tax is levied "at such rates, not exceeding twenty per cent., as may be notified by the Government on the recommendations of the Coun-

cil". So the Council recommends, and the Central Government notifies. Its notification cannot go above 20 per cent.

Step 4. Process. The Council meets and recommends. After its 56th meeting, on 3 September 2025, the Council recommended "a special de-merit rate of 40% for a select few goods and services", as the Press Information Bureau's release reports. The release itself says the decisions take effect through "notifications/ law amendments which alone shall have the force of law". So the release is not the instrument. The Central Government then notified the rates. In Notification 9/2025, "the Central Government, on the recommendations of the Council, hereby notifies the rate of central tax", and Schedule III carries 20 per cent. The first entry of Schedule III is "All goods (including aerated waters), containing added sugar or other sweetening matter or flavoured". The notification came into force on 22 September 2025.

Notice that the release's 40% and the notification's 20 per cent are different numbers. The Central Government's notification sets only the central tax. A note saying "the Union levies 40%" would be wrong.

Step 5. Who else must agree. The States. Each has a minister on the Council (Article 279A(2)(c)), and Article 246A(1) gives each State Legislature power to make laws on the GST it imposes. What each State has enacted and notified is not held for this book. Inside the Union, the Allocation of Business Rules give the GST Council and the CGST Act to the Department of Revenue in the Ministry of Finance.

Step 6. One sentence. "The GST Council recommends the rate (Constitution, Article 279A(4)(e)); the Central Government notifies the central tax under section 9(1) of the CGST Act, up to 20 per cent; the State share rests on State law under Article 246A, not traced here. The central instrument now in force is Notification No. 9/2025-Central Tax (Rate), Schedule III, as amended by Notification No. 01/2026-Central Tax (Rate), in force 1 May 2026."

Look at who is missing from the sentence: the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. In the last section's table it sat in the row marked "advises".

Figures quoted in this illustration are from [301, 208, 207].

WHERE THIS PICTURE BREAKS. The trace is as current as the copies read: Notification 9/2025 and its amendment 01/2026, in force 1 May 2026, which leaves the first entry of Schedule III alone. 01/2026 names an earlier amendment, 19/2025, which this book has not read. The next Council meeting can change any of it.

The trace names who sets the rate. It says nothing about whether a higher rate would change what people drink, or about the States' share, which sits in laws not traced here.

Illustration 3. The third trace runs on a decision already taken, to show the whole chain from end to end. Proposal, as it might have been put before 2003: no smoking in public places. Tobacco control is the main precedent a later book in this series studies. Here it is traced only for its bodies and powers.

Step 1. The instrument. An Act, with rules for the detail. Open the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products (Prohibition of Advertisement and Regulation of Trade and Commerce, Production, Supply and Distribution) Act, 2003 (COTPA), on the website of the National Tobacco Control Pro-

gramme, the Union health ministry's tobacco programme (ntcp.mohfw.gov.in). Section 4 reads: "No person shall smoke in any public place".

Step 2. Whose subject. Section 2 declares "that the Union should take under its control the tobacco industry". It is the same form of words as the FSS Act's section 2, and it matches Union List entry 52 in the same way.

Step 3. Body and provision. Parliament made the Act. Section 31(1) gives the detail to the Central Government: it "may, by notification in the Official Gazette, make rules".

Step 4. Process, with its dates. The President's assent came on 18 May 2003. An Act can be passed and not yet in force, and section 1(3) of COTPA leaves the start to dates the Central Government notifies. A notification of 25 February 2004, Statutory Order (S.O.) 238(E), appointed 1 May 2004 for sections including 4 and 31. Four years later the Central Government made the Prohibition of Smoking in Public Places Rules, 2008, "In exercise of the powers conferred by section 31", in force on 2 October 2008. Every rule under COTPA is laid before each House of Parliament for a total of thirty days (section 31(3)).

Step 5. Who carries it out. Rule 5 makes "The authorised officers mentioned in Schedule III" competent to act on breaches of section 4. Read down Schedule III. It runs from tax inspectors to station masters, heads of hospitals, school principals and teachers, police officers, and "Representatives of Panchyati Raj Institutions". Union, State and village officials all carry out a decision that Parliament and the Central Government took.

And the treaty. India signed the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control on 10 September 2003. It ratified the Convention on 5 February 2004. Ratifying is the step by which a country becomes a Party, bound by the treaty. Article 8(2) requires each Party to act "in areas of existing national jurisdiction as determined by national law". Now line up the dates. The President's assent to COTPA came nearly four months before India signed. The Act's preamble, its opening statement of why it was made, cites World Health Assembly resolutions, the later of them from 1990, and not the Convention. The treaty binds India to act. It is not the power under which anyone in India acts. That power is section 4 and section 31.

Step 6. One sentence. "Parliament decided, in section 4 of COTPA 2003; the Central Government made the detailed rules under section 31, by notification, laid before Parliament; the authorised officers listed in Schedule III of the 2008 Rules carry it out."

Figures quoted in this illustration are from [302, 303, 304].

WHERE THIS PICTURE BREAKS. COTPA is read here as enacted. The Amendment Act of 2007 is not held, and the 2008 Rules are read in an unofficial consolidated print, so any later change is unchecked.

The trace shows who decided and who enforces. It shows nothing about whether smoking in public places fell, or how often the officers in Schedule III act. That is a question about carrying policy out, for the book in this series on implementation. Whether tobacco is a good template for food is a question for a later book.

MUST KNOW POINTS FOR YOU.

- The error is to name the minister who announced a measure as the body that decides it. The power to make an instrument usually sits with a body an Act names.
- If you cannot fill Y with a numbered provision, you have not traced the proposal yet, and the note is not ready to send.
- A press release, a speech or a meeting's recommendation is not an instrument. The GST Council's own release says its decisions take effect through notifications "which alone shall have the force of law". Before you tell anyone a measure is in force, find the notification and its date.
- A treaty is not the power to act. India is a Party to the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, and the Convention itself leaves action to "national law". When someone cites a treaty as the reason a body can act, ask for the Indian provision.
- A trace that forks is a result. Write both candidate deciders, the step where the trace stopped, and the document that would settle it.
- Deciding and carrying out are different jobs, often done by different people. If your proposal is about enforcement, send it to the people who enforce.
- The central GST rate on sugar-added drinks is 20 per cent, in Schedule III of Notification 9/2025-Central Tax (Rate), as amended to 01/2026 (in force 1 May 2026; 19/2025 not read). The 40% in the GST Council's release is the GST rate it recommended, not the Union's share. Never say the Union levies 40%.
- When a trainee's proposal says "the government should", hand it back with three blanks: X, Y and Z. Ask them to fill each from a document they can name.
- Before you rely on a trace, check the newest amendment each copy names.

COMMON MISREADING. "The trace found a body with the power, so the proposal is feasible." The trace shows that a body can act. Whether it will depends on its own priorities, on the actors pushing for and against, and on timing. None of these are in the instruments. A trace can be complete for a proposal that has no chance this year.

REPORTING IT. The power to make this [instrument] lies with [body] under [provision]. It would pass through [process], and needs the agreement of [other body]. Whether [body] will act is a separate question, which this note does not answer.

EXERCISE 1 (retrieval). From memory, list the six steps of the trace in order, and write the one-sentence form the answer takes.

Record your confidence as a percentage before turning to the answer.

EXERCISE 2 (teaching). A journalist has three minutes and asks: "Who can raise the tax on sugary drinks in India?" Answer without jargon, give one sentence they can quote, and say what you are not sure of.

PRACTICE. Ten problems on this technique, easiest first. Work them on paper before turning to the answers, which are in the appendix at the back under this section's name.

1. Here is a made-up provision from a made-up Act.

"The Board may, with the previous approval of the State Government and after previous publication, by notification, make regulations to carry out the purposes of this Act."

Name the body that makes the instrument, the instrument, the other body that must agree, and the process.

2. Here are three entries of the Seventh Schedule.

1. Union List, entry 52: "Industries, the control of which by the Union is declared by Parliament by law to be expedient in the public interest."
2. State List, entry 6: "Public health and sanitation; hospitals and dispensaries."
3. Concurrent List, entry 18: "Adulteration of foodstuffs and other goods."

For each, say which legislature can make laws on it, under Article 246.

3. The parts below come from a made-up trace, in no order. Write the one-sentence answer. Then say which steps the parts leave unanswered.

- provision: section 12 of the made-up State Food Act
- must agree: the State Government, by previous approval
- body: the State Food Commission
- instrument: regulations

4. Trace the proposal "Packaged foods high in sugar, salt or fat should carry a warning label" as far as these provisions take you.

- FSS Act, section 16(1): "It shall be the duty of the Food Authority to regulate and monitor the manufacture, processing, distribution, sale and import of food so as to ensure safe and wholesome food."
- FSS Act, section 92(1): "The Food Authority may, with the previous approval of the Central Government and after previous publication, by notification, make regulations consistent with this Act and the rules made thereunder to carry out the provisions of this Act."
- FSS Act, section 93: every regulation made under the Act "shall be laid, as soon as may be after it is made, before each House of Parliament".
- Allocation of Business Rules, Second Schedule, Department of Health and Family Welfare, item 3(a): "The Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006".

Then say what your trace does not settle.

5. A made-up district meeting proposes: "Shops near schools in the district should be stopped from selling tobacco."

Use these facts. Section 6 of COTPA, as enacted in 2003, forbids selling cigarettes or other tobacco products to anyone under eighteen. It also forbids it "in an area within a radius of one hundred yards of any educational institution". The National Tobacco Control Programme's list of "Notifications on date of effect of various provisions of the Act" includes General Statutory Rules (G.S.R.) 687(E), dated 18 September 2009, "For Section- 6(b)". Section 12(1) lets certain officers enter and search where they suspect the Act is being broken. They are police officers not below sub-inspector, and officers of a State's food and drug regulator, authorised by the Central or State Government.

Trace the proposal. Then say what your trace does not settle.

6. Here are four parts of the preamble of a real instrument, the Food Safety and Standards (Packaging) Regulations, 2018, notified on 24 December 2018. The dots mark words left out.

- "Whereas the draft of certain regulations ... dated the 19th March, 2018 was published as required under Sub-section (1) of section 92 of Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 ... inviting objections and suggestions from the person likely to be affected thereby, before the expiry of a period of thirty days from date on which the copies of Gazette containing the said notification was made available to the public"
- "And whereas copies of the said Gazette were made available to the public on the 2nd April, 2018"
- "And whereas objections and suggestions received on the said draft regulations have been considered by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India"
- "Now, therefore, in exercise of the powers conferred by clause (k) of sub-section (2) of section 92, read with section 23 of the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 ... the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India hereby makes the following regulations"

"Read with" means the two provisions are used together: section 92(2)(k) gives the power, and section 23 supplies the subject, the marking and labelling of foods.

You read this preamble for its dates in section 7. Now work backwards through the trace. Which steps does the preamble answer? Which does it leave out? For each one it leaves out, name the provision you would read next.

7. Here is a worked trace. Find the steps that broke.

```
proposal: packaged foods high in sugar, salt or fat should carry a warning label
instrument: an order
body: the Union Minister of Health and Family Welfare
provision: the Allocation of Business Rules, which give the FSS Act to the minis-
ter's department
process: the minister announces it
who else must agree: no one
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8. The Press Information Bureau's release of 3 October 2024 says the Union Cabinet approved the National Mission on Edible Oils – Oilseeds. It says the Mission "will promote awareness of re-

commended dietary guidelines for edible oils" through a campaign. Here is a worked trace of a proposal about it. Find the steps that broke.

```
proposal: the oilseeds mission's awareness campaign should tell people to use less
cooking oil
instrument: an amendment to the Act behind the oilseeds mission
subject: agriculture, so the trace must find the State List entry
body: Parliament
process: a Bill passed by both Houses, then the President's assent
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9. A made-up newspaper headline reads: "Government sets 10% cut in cooking oil."

The words it rests on come from the Prime Minister's radio address, Mann Ki Baat, of 23 February 2025. The Press Information Bureau released them in English: "For example, one method I suggested was 'reducing the consumption of edible oil by ten percent (10%)'. Decide that you will use 10% less oil every month."

Trace the headline. Then say what your trace does not establish.

10. A line from a made-up report by a public health department reads:

"We call on the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare to impose a 40% tax on sugary drinks."

Trace the request, rewrite the line so it is addressed to the right bodies, and say what your trace does not establish.

12 · What a frame is

DEFINITION. To frame an issue is to choose which of its aspects an account makes prominent and which it leaves out. In Entman's (1993) account, as reported by Koon, Hawkins and Mayhew in a 2016 review of framing research on health policy, the choice serves four functions. The account defines a problem, diagnoses its cause, passes a moral judgement and suggests a remedy.

A frame need not show all four. Selection alone is enough to frame.

An episodic frame tells an issue through one case or event, with its details. A thematic frame takes the broad view: the trend over time and what led to it.

Agenda setting, the first stage of the policy process in the model of section 1, starts with the choice of which issues get attention at all. [305, 306, 307, 308, 309, 310, 311, 312, 313, 314, 315, 316, 317, 318, 319, 320]

IN PLAIN TERMS. Any account of a problem leaves things out. It has to: no report, speech or note can say everything. What it keeps in, and what it drops, is its frame.

A frame usually does four jobs.

1. **Problem.** What does it say is wrong?
2. **Cause.** Whom or what does it say is to blame?
3. **Judgement.** What verdict does it pass: who is at fault, what is fair?
4. **Remedy.** What does it say should be done?

These four come from a writer named Entman, as a 2016 review by Koon and colleagues reports them. Not every account carries all four. But every account leaves something out, so every account has a frame. Your own notes do too.

An **episodic** frame tells the issue through one case: one child, one shop, one day. A **thematic** frame tells the trend: what changed over years and why. **Agenda setting** starts with choosing which issues get talked about at all, a choice made before any frame is chosen. **Priming** is when what you read first tilts how you judge what comes next.

Illustration 1. Start with your department's second proposal, a rule on what school canteens may sell. Suppose two made-up letters about it reach the district newspaper on the same day. Neither carries a number, and neither is from a real person.

> *Letter A. Children fill up on fried snacks because parents no longer pack lunch. Schools should hold talks for parents on packing a healthy tiffin.*

> *Letter B. Children eat what the canteen sells, and the canteen sells what earns most. The rule on what canteens may sell should change.*

Take a pen and fill in the four labels for each letter. Do it before you read on.

Function	Letter A	Letter B
Problem	children fill up on fried snacks	children fill up on fried snacks
Cause	parents no longer pack lunch	the canteen sells what earns most
Judgement	parents have fallen short	the arrangement is at fault, not the child
Remedy	talks for parents	a rule on what canteens may sell

Look at the first row. The two letters name the same problem. Every row after it differs. Letter A never mentions the canteen, and Letter B never mentions the home. Neither of these is a false statement. Each is a choice of what to leave out, and that choice is its frame.

Now look at the last row. Letter A's remedy is something a school can do on its own. Letter B's remedy needs whoever holds the power to set rules for canteens. So the frame has already decided where the proposal would be sent, before anyone has traced who decides.

Your own department's note will face the same choice. Suppose its draft opens like this, again made up: "Overweight among the district's schoolchildren is driven by packaged snacks sold near schools." Fill in the labels. Cause: packaged snacks near schools. Left out: play space, sleep, family income, what is cooked at home. The note is not wrong to choose. It is wrong only if it pretends it did not.

WHERE THIS PICTURE BREAKS. The two letters were written to differ in frame and in nothing else. Real texts mix frames, leave some of the four labels blank, and hide the judgement in a single word. Labelling a real paragraph is slower and less certain than this, and two careful readers can label the same paragraph differently.

The labels say what a text chose. They do not say whether its cause is the true one. That needs evidence, not labelling.

Illustration 2. Now try a real text, where a speaker names the frame he is rejecting. Open the Press Information Bureau's English rendering of the Prime Minister's 119th Mann Ki Baat broadcast, 23 February 2025, at https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2105618. Search for "cosmetic". The words belong to Dr Devi Shetty, a guest on the broadcast, whom the Prime Minister introduces as "a very distinguished doctor".

> *Obesity today is not a cosmetic problem; it is a very serious medical problem.*

The sentence does the first job, the problem, out loud. It swaps one frame for another: not a matter of appearance, a matter of medicine. Read on to the next sentence but one for the cause.

> *The main cause of obesity today is poor quality of food intake especially excess intake of carbohydrates that is rice, chapatti and sugar and of course large consumption of oil.*

The cause sits in what a person eats. Now search for "my advice" to find the remedy.

> *So my advice to all the youngsters... start exercising control your diet and be very very active and watch your weight.*

Fill in the four labels. Problem: a serious medical problem. Cause: what people eat. Judgement: the problem is to be taken seriously, not dismissed as looks. Remedy: each young person exercises and controls their diet. Notice the mix. The problem is put in medical words, but the remedy is put on the individual. Nothing in the message asks what is sold, advertised or taxed. That is what this frame leaves out.

The same broadcast also shows agenda setting. Search for "new discussion". The Prime Minister says of his earlier speech: "I raised a very important topic, which has started a new discussion in the country - this topic is 'obesity'." Choosing the topic comes before any frame. The textbook definition speaks of the media choosing which issues get attention. A head of government with a national broadcast is doing the same kind of choosing, and that reading is this book's, not the textbook's.

WHERE THIS PICTURE BREAKS. A broadcast is a short spoken text with guests chosen to support one message. A long report or a court judgment carries several frames at once, and one sentence will not show you its frame. Read the whole text before you label it.

The quoted words are an English rendering of a Hindi broadcast, as the Press Information Bureau titles it. A frame can turn on one word, so check the original language before you build an argument on a single word of a translation.

Illustration 3. The last move is the difference between an episodic and a thematic frame. Suppose, again as a made-up case, that two reporters cover the canteen proposal.

The first reporter visits one school. She writes about one Class 6 boy, what he bought at the canteen on Monday, and what his mother says. That is an episodic frame: one case, its details.

The second reporter writes about how what is sold near schools has changed over years, and why. She quotes no single child. That is a thematic frame: the broad view, the trend and its causes.

The United States textbook this section draws on says episodic frames "may create more sympathy", while a thematic frame may leave a reader "less sympathetic". Notice the word "may". It is offered as a tendency, from American news, not as a law. Use it as a question to ask of a story, not as a fact about Indian readers.

Ask what each story makes easy to think. The boy's story makes his choices visible, and his mother's. The trend story makes the canteen's stock visible, and whoever decides it. Each story can lead a reader to a different remedy.

WHERE THIS PICTURE BREAKS. Most real stories mix the two: a thematic report opens with one family, then widens. Labelling a whole story as one or the other is a simplification. Label each part instead.

The claim about sympathy is the textbook's, stated as "may", from United States coverage. This book holds no study of Indian readers that tests it.

MUST KNOW POINTS FOR YOU.

- When someone claims to be neutral, ask which frame they are using and what it leaves out.
- Before you agree or disagree with a paragraph, write its four labels: problem, cause, judgement, remedy. Then write one line on what it leaves out.
- When you cite the four functions, cite them as Entman's, as reported by Koon and colleagues (2016).
- When a paper says "frame", check which it means: a value, a problem, a metaphor or an argument. Koon and colleagues found the word used for all four.
- Keep the three ideas apart in a meeting. Agenda setting decides whether obesity is discussed at all. Framing decides how it is described once it is. Priming is what a first story does to the next judgement. Calling all three "framing" loses the one you need.
- Labelling a frame tells you what a text chose to show. Never answer an argument only by naming its frame.
- The frame of a proposal decides where it gets sent. Choose the frame of your own note on purpose, and say it in the first lines.

EXERCISE 1 (retrieval). From memory: name the four functions a frame serves, as Koon and colleagues report Entman. Then say in one line each what an episodic frame, a thematic frame, agenda setting and priming are.

EXERCISE 2 (interpretation). Here is a made-up opening paragraph of a district health report. Write its four labels and one line on what it leaves out. Say whether it is episodic or thematic.

> *Over the past decade, the snacks sold within sight of our schools have shifted towards packaged foods. Families report less time to cook. The district has a duty to act before a generation grows up on this food.*

EXERCISE 3 (teaching). A first-year resident says: "Framing is spin. Researchers should not frame; they should report the data." Explain, in ten minutes with a whiteboard, why that cannot be done, and what a researcher should do instead.

13 · The frames obesity is argued in

Checked against the sources as they stood on 2026-10-02.

DEFINITION. Obesity is argued in several frames, each placing the cause, and so the responsibility, somewhere different. The studies this book has opened and read name these among others.

Obesity is a matter of personal choice and effort. It is the product of a food environment that makes unhealthy food cheap and easy. It is the result of manipulation by commercial interests. It is a disease or medical condition. It is a question of social justice. (These are named in Barry and colleagues 2009 and in three studies Koon and colleagues review; see the table below.)

The largest measurement among them is a United States survey by Barry, Brescoll, Brownell and Schlesinger (2009). It was fielded from late 2006 to early 2007 to 1,009 adults in a national web panel recruited by random telephone dialling; its completion rate was 75 per cent.

Respondents were shown seven short accounts of why Americans had become heavier, drawn, in the authors' words, from "elite discourse". The seven were: sinful behaviour, disability, eating disorder, food addiction, time crunch, manipulation by commercial interests, and a toxic food environment. The authors put sinful behaviour at the end that blames the person most. They put manipulation and the toxic food environment at the end that blames the person least. The four between them mix personal and outside causes, in no clear order. Three of the seven line up with frames above: sinful behaviour with personal choice, toxic environment with food environment, manipulation with commercial interests.

A majority called each of the seven important. The toxic food environment led, at 77.5 per cent (adjusted so that the sample's mix matches the national population). Sinful behaviour came last, at 50.5 per cent.

The Indian evidence among them is one study of taxes and subsidies on food (Summan and colleagues, 2026). It rests on 18 interviews, held between February and September 2024 with people mostly based in Delhi, and on a review of published and official documents.

None of them measures which frame dominates news or official texts in India. [321, 322, 323, 324, 325, 326, 327, 328, 329, 330, 331, 332, 333, 334, 335, 336, 337, 338, 339, 340, 341, 342, 343, 344, 345, 346, 347, 348, 349, 350, 351]

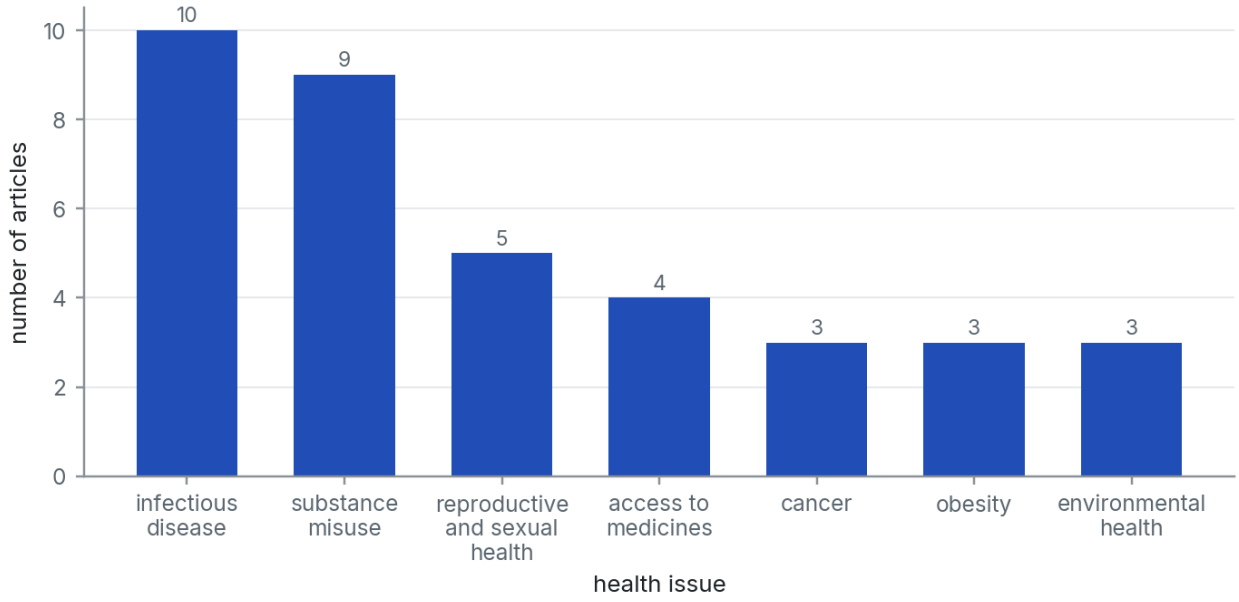
IN PLAIN TERMS. Obesity is argued in a handful of frames that keep coming back. Each one puts the cause somewhere different.

- **Personal choice.** The cause is what each person eats and how much they move.
- **Food environment.** The cause is what is cheap, easy and everywhere.

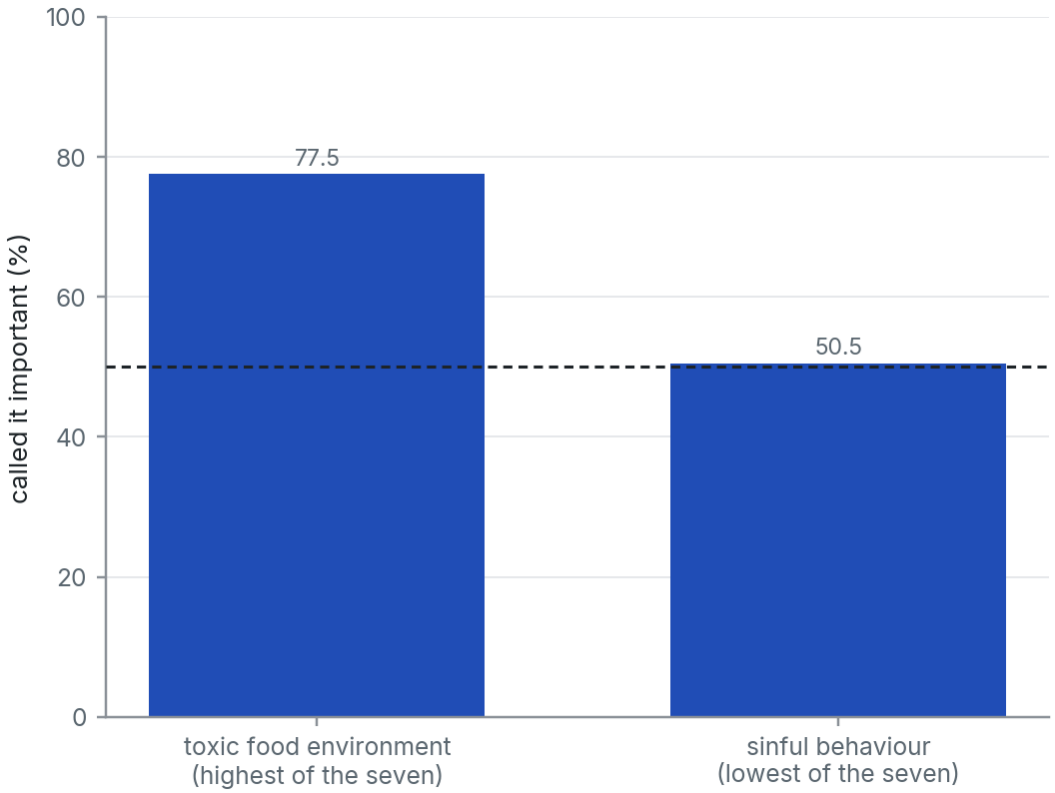
- **Commercial interests.** The cause is what companies make, sell and advertise.
- **Disease.** Obesity is a medical condition, to be diagnosed and treated.
- **Justice.** The question is who bears the burden, and whether that is fair.

One study, by Saguy and Riley, also found a frame that rejects the problem itself: body diversity.

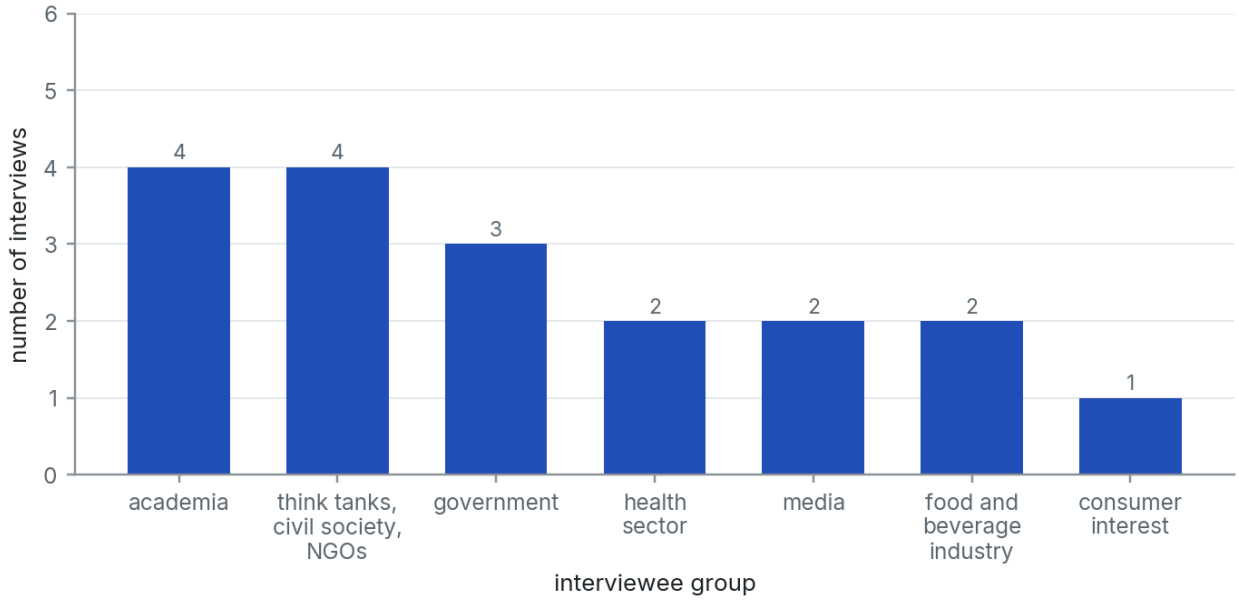
So you can name the frames that keep coming back. You cannot yet say which one is winning in India.



Articles by health issue in Koon and colleagues' review of framing and health policy, 52 articles from 1996 to 2014. Infectious disease 10, substance misuse 9, reproductive and sexual health 5, access to medicines 4, cancer 3, obesity 3, environmental health 3. These seven counts, the ones the review's text gives, add to 37, so they do not cover all 52 articles. Obesity has 3.



Barry and colleagues' United States survey (2006-07, 1,009 adults, weighted): the share calling an account an important explanation, for the highest and the lowest of the seven. The toxic food environment 77.5 per cent; sinful behaviour 50.5 per cent. Both bars pass the dashed line at 50 per cent, so even the last account was called important by a majority. Important meant explaining a lot for at least 10 in every 100 Americans with weight problems, not being the cause.



The 18 interviews in Summan and colleagues' study of food taxes and subsidies in India, February to September 2024, by group: academia 4; think tanks, civil society and non-governmental organisations 4; government 3; health sector 2; media 2; food and beverage industry 2; consumer interest 1.

Illustration 1. Start with a sentence you may hear in your department: "Most people blame obesity on the food environment now." It sounds like a finding. Take it apart.

Its likely source is the survey by Barry and colleagues. Open it at https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC2879183/ and find the section on the seven metaphors. Each respondent read seven short accounts of why Americans had become heavier. For each, they said for how many of every 100 Americans with weight problems it "explains a lot". A score of 10 or more counted as calling it an important explanation.

Now read the result. The toxic food environment was called important by 77.5 per cent, the highest of the seven. Sinful behaviour was called important by 50.5 per cent, the lowest. Both are majorities.

Here is the trap. "Called important" means the respondent thought the account explained a lot for at least 10 in every 100 people with weight problems. It does not mean they thought it was the cause. Most held several accounts at once: 42 per cent called at least five of the seven important, and only 11 per cent called two or fewer. So "most people blame the food environment" turns a several-cause picture into a one-cause one.

Then ask Book 0's questions about the sample. Who? Adults in the United States, in a web panel recruited by random telephone dialling. When? Late 2006 to early 2007. How many? 1,009, with a completion rate of 75 per cent. The authors say the sample departed from the national population in several ways and weighted their percentages to correct for it. Nothing in it tells you about India.

Now sort the frames you have met. The table is this book's sorting of the frames named in the held studies, with the study that names each.

Frame, in this book's words	Where it puts the cause	Named in
personal choice and effort	each person's eating and activity	Barry, "sinful behavior"; Saguy and Riley, "risky behavior"; Kwan, "market choice"
food environment	what is cheap, easy and everywhere	Barry, "toxic food environment"
commercial interests	what companies make, sell and advertise	Barry, "manipulation by commercial interests"
disease	a medical condition in the body	Saguy and Riley, "disease" and "illness"; Kwan, "medical"
justice	who bears the burden, and whether it is fair	Kwan, "social justice"; Jenkin and colleagues, "market justice vs social justice"
body diversity	no cause: it rejects the problem	Saguy and Riley, "body diversity"

Barry's four middle accounts (time crunch, food addiction, eating disorder, disability) mix personal and outside causes, as the authors say. They do not sit in one row.

Figures quoted in this illustration are from [352].

WHERE THIS PICTURE BREAKS. The sorting is this book's, made to help you read. The studies do not use one shared list, and the same word ("medical", "disease") can carry different weight in each. Treat the rows as reading aids, not as categories any of the studies tested.

The percentages are what one United States sample said in 2006 and 2007, when shown accounts the authors wrote. Different wording, a different year or an Indian sample could give a different order.

Illustration 2. Now look at how much research there is behind any claim about obesity frames in policy. Open the scoping review by Koon, Hawkins and Mayhew (a map of what has been studied, not a pooled analysis) at https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC4916318/ and find the paragraph on the health issues covered.

The review searched for studies that showed a frame affecting a health policy. It kept 52 articles, from 1996 to 2014, from 12 countries. The United States gave the most, 15. By health issue, it counts infectious disease 10, substance misuse 9, reproductive and sexual health 5, access to medicines 4 and environmental health 3. Its 6 studies on non-communicable diseases split into cancer 3 and obesity 3.

So three studies in a review of the whole field were on obesity. Two were from the United States and one from New Zealand. Read the Appendix rows for the three and you can see the frames each found. None is from India.

The review also says what it left out. Studies of how the news media frame obesity were excluded, because they showed effects on public opinion rather than on a policy. So this review cannot tell you which frame dominates the news, and neither can anything else held here.

Now the Indian study. Open Summan and colleagues at https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC13586620/ and find Table 1. The authors held 18 interviews between February and September 2024: 4 in person and 14 online. These were key informant interviews, with people chosen because they know the policy area. Count the groups in the table. Academia 4. Think tanks, civil society and non-governmental organisations 4. Government 3, one each from finance and health, the executive and the legislature. Food and beverage industry 2. Health sector 2. Media 2. Consumer interest 1.

Now read for frames. Search for "raise revenue". A health finance official, in the article's report, says: "the tax policy is supposed to raise revenue and that's it". That is a revenue frame. In it, a tax exists to collect money, so a health aim is out of place. Then search Table 3 for the health ministry's row. Among the things it could do, the authors list: "Frame health taxes as important public health tools." That is a health frame for the same tax. The authors also report that taxes on junk foods are perceived as regressive: falling hardest on those with least money. That is a fairness frame, and it can be used against the tax. It is the justice frame of the first table, applied to who pays. The revenue frame is not in that table: it belongs to arguments about taxes.

Look again at who was asked. Two industry voices and one consumer voice, mostly in Delhi, and the authors themselves say mostly urban. This shows that the revenue and health frames are both present among people close to the decision. It does not show how common either is.

Figures quoted in this illustration are from [353, 238].

WHERE THIS PICTURE BREAKS. Interviews show which frames people near a decision use. With 18 people, chosen for what they know and found partly through one another, they cannot show how common a frame is, nor which one wins. The quotations are the article's report of what was said, chosen by its authors to illustrate their themes.

The review's count of three obesity studies is of studies found by June 2014 that met its rules. Later studies, or studies the review's rules left out, could change the picture.

MUST KNOW POINTS FOR YOU.

- Never say "most people blame the food environment". Say "an important explanation among several", with the country, the years and the sample.
- Do not sort a person, a ministry or a newspaper into one frame. Expect people to hold the personal and the environmental frame together, and argue with both.
- A United States survey from 2006-07 is not Indian public opinion. No study held here measures which frames Indians hold about obesity.
- In Indian argument over food taxes, expect a revenue frame. In Summan and colleagues' interviews, a health finance official is reported saying that tax policy "is supposed to raise revenue and that's it". A health case for a tax has to meet that frame head on, not ignore it.
- Expect the fairness frame too. Summan and colleagues report that taxes on junk foods are perceived as falling hardest on poorer buyers. A note on a food tax that does not say who pays will be answered in that frame.
- The research on obesity frames in policy is thin. Koon and colleagues found 3 obesity studies among 52 on framing and health policy up to 2014, none from India.
- Before you use an interview study's frames, count who was asked. Such a study shows that a frame exists among people near the decision, never how common it is.
- Know what would overturn these findings. One is an Indian survey that put the same accounts to a random sample and found a different order. Another is a review that found many obesity framing studies from India. Until then, quote each finding with its country, its years and its sample.

COMMON MISREADING. "Barry and colleagues found that 78 per cent of people blame the food environment." Not quite. The paper's table gives 77.5 per cent, and its text rounds it to 78. These people called the food environment an important explanation.

That meant it explained a lot for at least 10 in every 100 Americans with weight problems. Most of them called other accounts important too. The figure shows how widely an account is accepted as part of the story. It does not show who is blamed.

EXERCISE 1 (retrieval). From memory: name Barry and colleagues' seven accounts of obesity, from most personal blame to least, as far as the authors order them. Then give the survey's country, years and sample size.

EXERCISE 2 (critique). Here is a sentence from a classmate's draft note, made up for this exercise. "Studies show that 78% of people blame obesity on the food environment, so the public in Chhattisgarh will support a tax on sugary drinks."

Find each step that does not hold. Say what you would write instead.

EXERCISE 3 (teaching). A journalist has three minutes and asks: "How do Indians see obesity: as their own fault, or as the fault of the food industry?" Answer without jargon, with your confidence, and give one sentence they could quote.

14 · The frame sets the menu

Checked against the sources as they stood on 2026-10-02.

DEFINITION. A frame's diagnosis of cause carries an implied remedy, so each frame makes some measures sayable and leaves others outside the discussion. Koon and colleagues' review reports this as a premise of framing research.

The held measurement is the United States survey by Barry and colleagues (2009): 1,009 adults, late 2006 to early 2007. It asked about sixteen measures against obesity, besides the seven accounts of cause. Which accounts a respondent endorsed predicted which measures they supported, beyond what their background, health and politics predicted.

The sinful-behaviour account went with less support for many of them. It went with support for one: letting health insurers charge higher premiums to policyholders who are overweight or do not exercise. Support for a tax on junk food went with the environment and industry accounts, not with the sinful-behaviour account. The food addiction account went with support for warning labels saying such foods may be addictive.

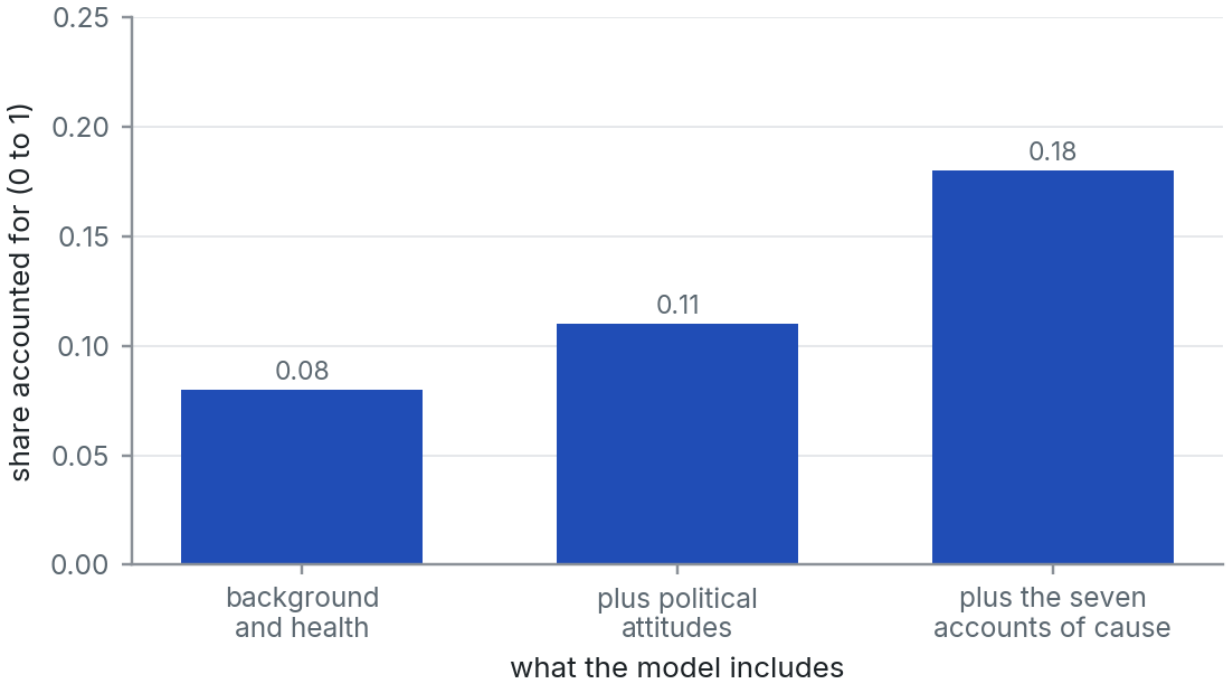
These are associations measured once, in one country. [354, 355, 356, 357, 358, 359, 360, 361, 362, 363, 364, 365, 366, 367, 368, 369, 370, 371, 372, 373, 374, 375, 376, 377, 378, 344]

IN PLAIN TERMS. A frame names a cause. A cause points to a remedy. So once a frame is in place, some measures sound sensible and others sound beside the point.

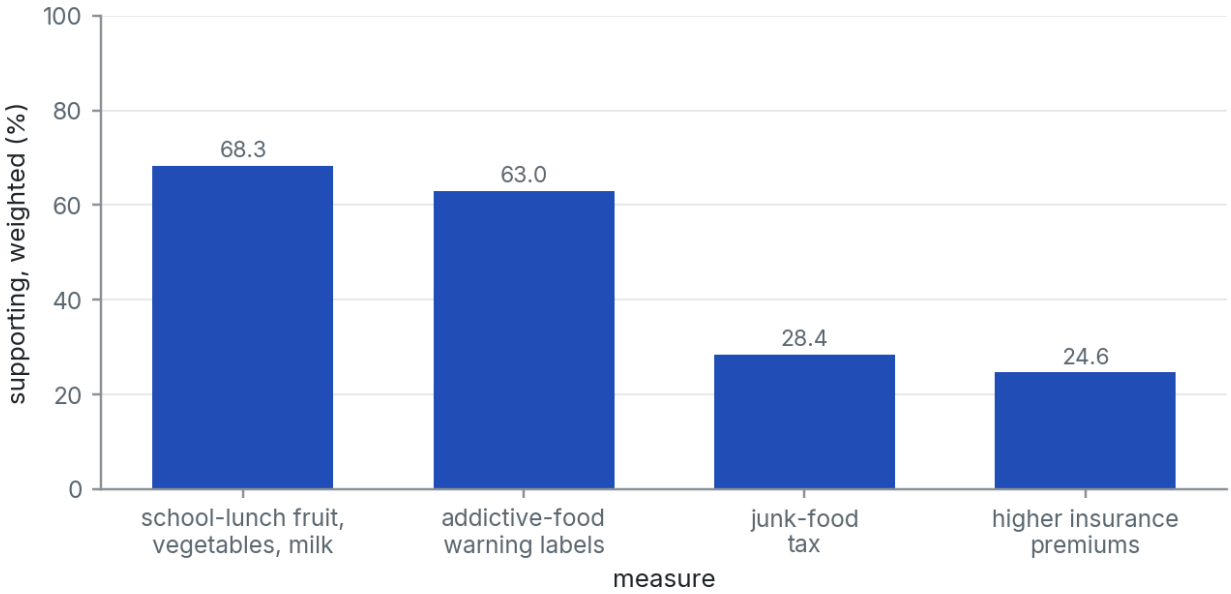
- If obesity is about each person's choices, the sensible measures are advice, campaigns and asking people to change.
- If obesity is about the food around us, the sensible measures are about that food: what schools sell, what labels say, what costs more.
- If obesity is a disability or a disease, the sensible measures are treatment and protection from unfair treatment.

One survey in the United States found a link of this kind (it tested a disability account, not a disease frame). What people believed caused obesity went with which measures they supported.

So before you argue for a measure, ask which frame makes it sayable. Then ask which frame the person deciding is using. If the two do not match, your evidence may never be heard.



Barry and colleagues' United States survey (2006-07; models run on 952 to 973 of the respondents, unweighted), measures aimed at helping or protecting people. The share of differences in support between respondents that the model accounted for: 0.08 with background and health alone, 0.11 with political attitudes added, 0.18 with the seven accounts of cause added. Most differences, 0.82 of them, stay unexplained.



Four of the sixteen measures in Barry and colleagues' United States survey (2006-07, 1,009 adults), weighted share supporting strongly or somewhat. Free fruit, vegetables and low-fat milk at school lunches, even at 50 dollars a year more in tax: 68.3 per cent. Addictive-food warning labels: 63.0. A junk-food tax: 28.4, a measure that went with the environment and industry accounts. Higher insurance premiums for policyholders who are overweight or do not exercise: 24.6, the one measure the sinful-behaviour account went with.

Illustration 1. Start with three Indian public texts, all from official sources. For each, find the frame and then the menu: the measures it makes easy to say.

First, the Prime Minister's Mann Ki Baat broadcast of 23 February 2025. Open https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2105618 and search for "10% less". The call is "Decide that you will use 10% less oil every month." Then search for "personal choice":

> *Friends, using less oil in food and dealing with obesity is not just a personal choice but also our responsibility towards the family.*

The frame widens personal choice to the family, but it stays with people's own decisions. The menu follows: each household uses less oil, and each person challenges others. In the broadcast he says he "will request and challenge 10 people if they can reduce oil in their food by 10%". Nothing in the passage asks what oil costs, how it is sold or what goes into packaged food.

Second, FSSAI's Eat Right India page. Open https://fssai.gov.in/eat-right-india. FSSAI describes "a large-scale effort to transform the country's food system". It lists "regulatory, capacity building, collaborative and empowerment approaches". This is a food-system frame. The cause sits in the system that supplies food, so the menu includes regulation, the rules a regulator writes, alongside education.

Third, the Press Information Bureau release of 3 September 2025 on the 56th GST Council meeting, at https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2163555. Search for "de-merit". The Council proposed "a special de-merit rate of 40% for a select few goods and services". Sugar-added drinks are among those goods. "De-merit" is a judgement in one word: the product is the problem, and a higher price is the remedy. The release's opening line also lists "Health" among the rate change's aims.

Now hold the three side by side.

Text	Where it puts the cause	What its menu holds
Mann Ki Baat, 23 Feb 2025	each person and family	using less oil at home; challenging others
Eat Right India page	the food system	regulation, capacity building, collaboration and "empowerment"
GST release, 3 Sep 2025	the product	a higher tax on named goods

Here is the trap. A colleague may quote the Prime Minister's call in a note asking for a tax on sugary drinks. The call does not support that. Its frame is personal and family responsibility, and its menu is household action. It is evidence that obesity is on the national agenda, not that a tax is.

Figures quoted in this illustration are from [379, 207].

WHERE THIS PICTURE BREAKS. Each text was read for its frame, not checked for its effect. A text's menu is what it makes easy to say. That does not mean its author opposes everything else, and one government can speak in several frames in the same year.

The table is this book's reading of three short passages. A longer document from any of these bodies could carry other frames.

Illustration 2. Now the evidence that a frame and a menu travel together in people's heads. Open Barry and colleagues' survey at https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC2879183/. It is the same United States survey as in the last section: 1,009 adults, late 2006 to early 2007.

Respondents rated sixteen measures. Four of the support figures show the range. The weighted share supporting (strongly or somewhat):

- free fruit, vegetables and low-fat milk at school lunches, even at 50 dollars a year more in tax: 68.3 per cent;
- warning labels on foods high in sugar or fat, saying such foods may be addictive: 63.0 per cent;
- a tax on junk food like the taxes on cigarettes and alcohol: 28.4 per cent;
- higher health insurance premiums for policyholders who are overweight or do not exercise: 24.6 per cent.

Now the link to frames. The authors asked which of the seven accounts predicted support for each measure. Read their results as a menu.

- Those who leaned on the food-environment account were more likely to support measures across the board. The industry account went with support for the helping-or-protecting measures and for the junk-food tax.
- Those who leaned on the sinful-behaviour account were less likely to support most measures. The exception was the higher insurance premiums, which they were more likely to support.
- The food-addiction account went with support for the addictive-food warning label.
- The disability account went with support for anti-discrimination protection and funding for treatment, and with opposition to the higher premiums.

Look again at the junk-food tax. You might expect people who blame individuals to want to tax them. The survey found the opposite pattern. Support for the tax went with blaming the environment and industry. The authors suggest people saw the tax as hitting the industry, not the buyer. That is their reading, marked "suggesting" in the paper.

How big is the link? Take the group of measures aimed at helping or protecting people: sidewalks required by zoning, addictive-food warning labels, free air time for health messages, a ban on high-fat, high-sugar advertising on children's media, healthier cooking in restaurants, and anti-discrimination protection. For this group the authors built a statistical model of support. Building such a model is beyond this book; read its result as a share. With background and health alone, the model accounted for 0.08 of the differences in support from one respondent to the next, on a scale where 0 is none and 1 is all. Adding political attitudes took it to 0.11. Adding the seven accounts took it to 0.18. So, for these measures and in this sample, beliefs about cause added more than politics did. This was the group where beliefs mattered most.

Now say what this does not show. It is one survey, at one time, in one country. It found that beliefs and support go together. It did not show that changing someone's frame changes their support. The authors say an experiment is needed for that, and none is held here.

Figures quoted in this illustration are from [352].

WHERE THIS PICTURE BREAKS. An association measured once cannot tell you which came first. A person may support a tax and then find the environment account convincing, as easily as the other way round.

Most of the differences in support remained unexplained even by the fullest model: 0.18 leaves 0.82. Beliefs about cause are one influence among many.

The measures and the accounts were worded for Americans in 2006 and 2007. The models ran on 952 to 973 of the 1,009 respondents, and their results were not weighted to the national population. An Indian sample, other wording or another decade could give a different pattern.

Illustration 3. Now use the rule on your own department's three proposals, and on the people who would decide them.

A higher tax on sugar-sweetened drinks is sayable in a food-environment or a commercial frame: the product is the problem. In a personal-choice frame it sounds like punishing the buyer. Now add the person who decides. Suppose your note reaches someone who holds the revenue frame from the last section. Summan and colleagues report a health finance official saying that tax policy "is supposed to raise revenue and that's it". In that frame a health aim does not belong in a tax at all. Your evidence on health will not be heard until the frame is met.

A rule on what school canteens may sell is sayable only if the cause sits in what is sold. In a frame where the cause is what parents pack, the sensible remedy is advice to parents.

A warning label on packaged foods high in sugar, salt or fat is sayable in several frames. In Barry's survey, the addictive-food label went with the food-addiction account. On FSSAI's page, regulation sits inside a food-system frame. The same measure can be argued from more than one frame, and you should choose the one your decider already holds.

Notice the order of work this gives you. First the frame, then the measure, then the evidence. A later book in this series takes this further under the name of the Overton window. It is named here and taught there.

WHERE THIS PICTURE BREAKS. Matching a frame to a decider is a reading of words, not a forecast. A decider who holds the revenue frame may still accept a health tax for other reasons, such as revenue itself.

The frame decides what can be said, not what is true or what works. A measure that fits the decider's frame can still fail, and one that does not fit can still be right.

MUST KNOW POINTS FOR YOU.

- Before you argue for a measure, name the frame that makes it sayable. Then name the frame the decider holds.
- "People who blame individuals will back a tax on junk food" is the wrong way round, on the one survey held. Support for a junk-food tax went with the environment and industry accounts, not with the sinful-behaviour account.

- In that survey, for measures aimed at helping or protecting people, adding beliefs about cause raised the share explained from 0.11 to 0.18. That was the largest gain of the three groups of measures. It is not evidence that changing the frame changes support.
- Never write "framing obesity as environmental raises support by X". Say what was found: beliefs and support went together.
- The Prime Minister's 2025 call to use 10% less oil is framed as personal and family responsibility, and its menu is household action. Do not cite it as support for a tax or a regulation.
- When you quote the GST release's "special de-merit rate", you take on its frame: the product is the problem. If you are writing to inform rather than to argue, call it by its number and its legal basis and let the reader judge.
- In Barry's survey, the disability account went with support for anti-discrimination protection and treatment funding, and with opposition to higher insurance premiums. For other single measures it predicted nothing either way. The survey did not test a disease frame.
- The menu rule tells you which measures a frame makes sayable. It does not tell you which measure works, or whether the body that must act will act.

REPORTING IT. In one United States survey (2006-07, 1,009 adults), beliefs about what causes obesity went with which measures people supported. Support for a tax on junk food went with blaming the food environment and industry, not individuals. No experiment showing that a change of frame changes support is known to us.

EXERCISE 1 (retrieval). From memory, answer for Barry and colleagues' survey. Which account of cause went with support for each of these?

1. A junk-food tax.
2. Higher insurance premiums for policyholders who are overweight or do not exercise.
3. Warning labels saying foods may be addictive.

Then give the survey's country, years and sample size.

EXERCISE 2 (critique). Here is the opening of a made-up memo from your department to the State health secretary, asking for a higher tax on sugar-sweetened drinks.

> *Young people today lack the discipline to refuse sugary drinks. Parents have stopped supervising what their children consume. We therefore request a higher tax on these drinks.*

Name the frame of the first two sentences. Say why the request in the third sentence sits badly with it, and rewrite the opening so that frame and request match. Say what your rewrite still does not establish.

EXERCISE 3 (teaching). A health secretary asks for one page: "Why does it matter how we describe obesity, if the data are the same?" Answer first, no methods section.

15 · Reading the frame in a public argument

DEFINITION. In section 12 you met the four jobs a frame does. Reading the frame of a public argument applies them to one passage at a time. You write down five things, and each one carries the passage's own words as its evidence.

The problem is what the passage says is wrong or at stake. The cause is whom or what it holds responsible. The judgement is what its value words say: how bad the problem is, whose duty it is, what is fair. The remedy is what it says should be done, and by whom. The fifth is what the passage leaves out: the causes, remedies and actors that a rival account of the same problem would put in.

A slot the passage does not fill is recorded as not stated. It is never filled from what the reader already believes. [380, 381, 382, 383, 384, 385, 386, 387, 388, 389, 390, 391, 392, 393, 394, 395, 396, 397, 398]

IN PLAIN TERMS. Write five lines. Next to each, copy the words from the passage that put it there.

1. **Problem.** What does the passage say is wrong, or at stake?
2. **Cause.** Whom or what does it hold responsible?
3. **Judgement.** Which value words does it use?
4. **Remedy.** What does it say should be done, and who is to do it?
5. **Left out.** What would someone who sees the problem differently put in?

If you cannot copy words for a line, write "not stated". Do not fill the line from what you already think.

Watch for cue words — a word or short phrase that carries a frame in a few letters. A metaphor is one kind: a "sea" of cheap food puts the cause outside the eater, and a "war" makes the problem an enemy. A cue word is a clue, not a verdict. The whole passage decides the frame.

Then do two more things. Write the counter-frame — the problem, cause, judgement and remedy an opponent would give the same facts. Then run all five lines on your own draft. Your note has a frame too.

Illustration 1. Start with a reading that goes wrong. You are collecting public texts on your department's first proposal, a higher tax on sugar-sweetened drinks. You open the Press Information Bureau (PIB) release of 3 September 2025 on the 56th meeting of the GST Council.

You already know the Council recommended moving sugar-added drinks to a 40% rate. So the tempting reading writes itself: a health frame, with obesity as the problem, sugary drinks as the cause, and a higher tax as the remedy. Before you write that down, run the five lines. For each one, copy words from the release.

The opening points name the focus of the reform: “Common-man, Labour-intensive Industries, Farmers and Agriculture, Health, Key Drivers of the economy”. “Health” is in that list, but the release’s health items are others, such as “Exemption of GST on all individual health insurance policies”. No sentence in the body ties health to the drinks. The opening points describe the change as turning a four-rate structure into a “citizen-friendly ‘Simple Tax’”. That has “a Standard Rate of 18% and a Merit Rate of 5%”, and “a special de-merit rate of 40% for a select few goods and services”. The next paragraph gives the purpose: to “provide relief to individuals, common man, aspirational middle class”. Sugar-added drinks appear only in an annexure, as one line in a list headed “(28% to 40%)”, beside pan masala.

Now fill the grid from those words alone.

Slot	Words in the release	What the tempting reading put there
problem	a “4-tiered” rate structure; “relief” owed to “common man”	obesity
cause	not stated	sugary drinks
judgement	“citizen-friendly”, “relief”, “de-merit”	drinks harm health
remedy	two main rates, and a “de-merit” rate for “a select few goods”	a higher tax on drinks
left out	why any good is “de-merit”; obesity; who drinks these drinks	—

The body of the release, and the annexure rows on drinks, do not name obesity or say why these drinks are in the 40% list. The health frame in the right-hand column was yours. You brought it to the text, because you know what your proposal is for.

One word in the release does carry a judgement: “de-merit”. It says these goods deserve less favour than the “merit” goods at 5%. It does not say what is wrong with them. So in your grid, “de-merit” goes in the judgement line, and the cause line stays “not stated”.

This matters as soon as you write. Suppose your note says “the GST Council recommended a higher rate on sugary drinks to fight obesity”. You have put a reason in the Council’s mouth that its own release does not give.

Figures quoted in this illustration are from [207].

WHERE THIS PICTURE BREAKS. An empty slot in one press release shows what that text says. It does not show that the Council had no health reason. Other texts may state one, such as the questions and answers the release says were issued with it, or a minister’s speech. Read those before you say what the Council intended.

Researchers read the same classification differently. Summan and colleagues write that the drinks “have been classified as demerit goods and taxed at the highest rate, signalling a shift towards public health considerations”. That is their reading of the classification, and a frame of their own. Cite it as theirs, not as the Council’s.

The 40% is the combined rate the Council recommended in 2025, and the rate can change. The reading lesson does not depend on the number.

Illustration 2. Now a clean case, and the two steps that finish the method. In its section on investment, the National Health Policy 2017 of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare men-

tions food taxes in one sentence. The section is 3.1, whose heading is “Ensuring Adequate Investment”.

“The Government could consider imposing taxes on specific commodities-such as the taxes on tobacco, alcohol and foods having negative impact on health”. The sentence before it reads: “General taxation will remain the predominant means for financing care.”

Run the five lines.

Slot	Words in the policy
problem	money for health care (“Ensuring Adequate Investment”, “financing care”)
cause	not stated
judgement	“foods having negative impact on health”
remedy	“taxes on specific commodities”, which “the Government could consider”
left out	the tax as a way to change what people eat or drink; who pays it

The frame is financing. The food tax appears as one source of money for care, next to taxes on “tobacco, alcohol”. The judgement on the foods is there, but the tax is not offered as a way to make people buy less of them.

Write the counter-frame. Ask what an opponent of a food tax would say, using the same facts. You do not have to invent this. Koon and colleagues list a 2011 study by Fogarty and Chapman, a content and frame analysis of Australian newspaper coverage of a tax on drinks the study calls alcopops. Koon and colleagues’ table gives no sample size or years. The study found two frames for the tax and two against it: “2 in favor of alcopops tax (consumption reduction, loophole) and 2 against (substitution, revenue raising)”.

Look at “revenue raising”. The National Health Policy places the food tax under raising money for care, and says so with approval. The opponents’ frame uses the same idea as an accusation: the tax is about money, not health. One idea sits in the judgement slot of two frames, with opposite signs.

An Indian version of a counter-frame is on record too. Summan and colleagues quote a health finance official they interviewed: “You can’t have too many objectives thrust into tax policy, the tax policy is supposed to raise revenue and that’s it”. Here the judgement is a rule about what a tax is for, and the remedy is to keep health out of it.

Run it on your own sentence. Suppose your department’s draft, which is made up, says: “Sugary drinks are cheap and sold at every school gate, so the GST Council should raise the rate further to protect children.”

Slot	Words in your draft
problem	not stated outright; children drinking sugary drinks is implied
cause	“cheap and sold at every school gate”
judgement	“protect children”
remedy	“the GST Council should raise the rate further”

left out	who pays the higher price; what a higher rate would change; any other remedy

Your draft puts the cause in the surroundings, the price and the place of sale. Its judgement is a duty to children. That frame is a choice you made, and an opponent can see it as clearly as you can see the policy's. The next step is not to scrub the frame out. You cannot write without one. It is to know which one you chose, and what it leaves out.

WHERE THIS PICTURE BREAKS. Fogarty and Chapman's study is of alcohol, in Australia, in newspapers. It shows that a tax can be argued in a frame and a counter-frame. It does not show which frames appear in Indian arguments about sugary drinks, or how often.

The official's words are one person's, quoted in one article. They show that a revenue frame exists among Indian officials. They do not show how widely it is held, or that it is the Ministry of Finance's position.

The National Health Policy sentence is one line of a long document. Reading it as a financing frame describes that line, in that section. Elsewhere the same policy may frame diet differently.

MUST KNOW POINTS FOR YOU.

- The error is to read into a text the frame you expected to find. Copy words for every slot, and write "not stated" where there are none.
- For every passage you quote in a note, write five lines first: problem, cause, judgement, remedy and what it leaves out.
- The same idea can be praise in one frame and an accusation in another. Label the judgement from the words around the idea, never from the idea alone.
- Before you argue for a proposal in a meeting, write its counter-frame: the problem, cause, judgement and remedy an opponent would give.
- Never put a reason in a body's mouth that its own text does not give.
- A trainee will often call a paragraph "neutral" because it opens with a fact. The judgement and remedy usually turn up in the last sentence.
- One passage is not a body's frame, and one body is not "the government".
- The method tells you what a text says, and what it leaves out. It does not tell you whether the cause it names is the real cause, or whether its remedy would work.

COMMON MISREADING. "A paragraph that states only facts has no frame." Every account chooses which facts to put in, in what order, and in which words. A paragraph of true sentences

still has a problem, a cause, a judgement and a remedy, or leaves some of them out on purpose. Run the five lines on it, and the frame shows.

EXERCISE 1 (interpretation). A classmate writes in a draft note (made up for this exercise): "The Government of India frames obesity as a matter of personal choice." Here are short passages from three Government of India texts.

- The Prime Minister, in his Mann Ki Baat address of 23 February 2025: "To become a fit and healthy nation, we will certainly have to deal with the problem of obesity." Later: "You can decide that while buying oil for cooking, you will buy 10% less oil."
- The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), on its Eat Right India page: "Eat Right India adopts an integrative or 'whole of the government' approach, since the movement brings together food-related mandates of the agriculture, health, environment, and other ministries."
- The National Health Policy 2017: "seven priority areas for improving the environment for health", one of which is "Balanced, healthy diets and regular exercises."

For each passage, say whether it supports or goes against the classmate's sentence, and which slot shows it. Then rewrite the sentence so it says only what these passages show.

EXERCISE 2 (teaching). A journalist has three minutes. She asks: "My report on the sugary-drinks tax just gave the facts. How can it have a frame?" Explain, with no jargon, and give her one sentence she could quote.

EXERCISE 3 (retrieval). From memory: write the five lines this section asks you to fill for a passage. Then say what you write when the passage gives you no words for one of them, and the two further steps that finish the reading.

PRACTICE. Ten problems on this technique, easiest first. Work them on paper before turning to the answers, which are in the appendix at the back under this section's name.

1. Label the problem, the cause, the judgement and the remedy in this made-up passage.

"Fried snacks are sold at the gate of every school in the town, and children buy them every day. It is wrong that parents cannot protect their children from this. The municipality should license the stalls at school gates."

2. Label the four slots in each made-up sentence. Where a slot is not stated, write "not stated". Where you think a slot is implied, say so separately.

1. "Obesity is rising among young adults in the district."
2. "Each of us must take charge of what is on our own plate."
3. "Food companies spend crores advertising to children, and the regulator does nothing."

3. Each made-up phrase below comes from a different argument about obesity. For each, say which slot it mainly fills, and what it suggests about where the cause lies.

1. "a sea of cheap, sugary choices"
2. "a personal choice"

3. “a burden on the public purse”
4. “protect our children”
5. “a war on sugar”

4. The National Health Policy 2017 says, in its section on preventive and promotive health:

“The policy prerequisite is for an empowered public health cadre to address social determinants of health effectively, by enforcing regulatory provisions. The policy identifies coordinated action on seven priority areas for improving the environment for health”

The second of the seven areas is “Balanced, healthy diets and regular exercises.”

Fill the five lines for diet, as this passage presents it.

5. In the Mann Ki Baat broadcast of 23 February 2025, the Prime Minister played messages from guests. This one is from the athlete Neeraj Chopra, in his own words, not the Prime Minister’s. He opens by calling obesity “a very important issue for our country”, then says:

“And I would also like to tell that parents should also play some outdoor sport or the other and take their children along and create a good healthy lifestyle, eat well and give your body an hour or however much time you can in a day for exercise. And I would like to add one more thing, recently our Prime Minister had said that the oil used in food should be reduced by upto 10%, because many times we eat a lot of fried food items which have a huge impact on obesity. So I would like to tell everyone to avoid these things and take care of their health.”

Fill the five lines.

6. Write the counter-frame to the passage in problem 5, from FSSAI’s Eat Right India page. In section 14 you placed this page’s cause in the food system, and its menu in regulation, training, joint work and informing people. Take the cause from there. Fill the other three slots only from these two sentences of the page:

- “Further, it builds on the collective action of all stakeholders — the government, food businesses, civil society organizations, experts and professionals, development agencies, and citizens at large.”
- “Furthermore, since foodborne illnesses and various diet-related diseases cut across all age groups and all sections of society, it also adopts a ‘whole of society’ approach, bringing all stakeholders together on a common platform.”

Then say in which slot the two frames differ most.

7. Here is a worked reading of the “Why ‘Eat Right’?” page on FSSAI’s Eat Right India portal. It read these three sentences:

- “Safe foods and healthy diets are critical in the context of India’s high burden of food borne diseases, under-nutrition, micronutrient deficiencies and growing incidence of obesity and non-communicable diseases (NCDs) like hypertension, diabetes and heart related diseases.”
- “In addition, the current food production and consumption food practices are threatening the environment and the future of our planet.”

- "This underlines the need to focus on preventive healthcare through ensuring safe, healthy food for all people in an environmentally sustainable way."

Find the lines that broke.

```
text: FSSAI, "Why 'Eat Right'?" page
problem: obesity
cause: "the current food production and consumption food practices"
judgement: "critical"
remedy: "preventive healthcare" (clinics and screening)
frame: the food system causes obesity
```

8. A made-up paragraph from a draft department note reads:

"Sugar-sweetened drinks are now at the highest GST rate. Children in our district are flooded with these drinks at every school gate. The rate should go higher still."

A classmate's worked reading follows. Find what broke.

```
problem: none stated; the paragraph reports facts
cause: none stated
judgement: none
remedy: none
verdict: neutral, no frame
```

9. Summan and colleagues, in a 2026 study of food taxes in India, quote a health finance official they interviewed:

"You can't have too many objectives thrust into tax policy, the tax policy is supposed to raise revenue and that's it..."

In section 13 and section 14 you read this as a revenue frame. Do the two parts they did not: fill its "left out" line, and say what your reading does not establish.

10. A made-up newspaper headline reads: "Centre declares war on sugar".

Read its frame. Then say what you would have to check before you repeated the headline's claim in your note, and what the frame reading cannot tell you.

16 · What evidence can settle in a policy choice, and what it cannot

DEFINITION. Evidence is facts, actual or asserted, known through experience or observation, offered in support of a conclusion. It is not the conclusion.

In a policy choice, evidence can answer three kinds of question: how big a problem is, and for whom; what an option does, compared with doing something else; and what it costs. The choice also turns on questions that evidence does not settle.

Oxman and colleagues use "evidence-informed policymaking" for policymaking in which the evidence used, and the judgements made about it, are found and stated systematically and openly. The rest of the process need not be. As an analyst, the researcher's part in it is to set out the options with the evidence for each, its uncertainty, and the judgements the choice still needs. [399, 400, 401, 402, 403, 404, 405, 406, 407, 408, 409, 410, 411, 412, 413, 414, 415, 416, 417, 418, 419, 420, 421]

IN PLAIN TERMS. Take any policy choice and split it into questions. Some of them, evidence can answer:

- **How big is the problem, and for whom?** A survey can count it.
- **What does an option do, compared with something else?** A study or a model can estimate it.
- **What does it cost?** That can be worked out.

Others, evidence cannot settle on its own:

- **Which outcomes matter most?** That is a question of values.
- **Who gains and who loses, and is that fair?** Whether it is fair is a value judgement.
- **Can it be done?** This is called feasibility. Evidence can inform it (costs, capacity, what the law allows), but whether the bodies with the power will commit to it is a judgement.
- **Is now the time?** That is a judgement of timing.

So any sentence that says "the government should" has a hidden premise. It is a value premise — a premise that says what matters, or what ought to be done. Leave it hidden, and the evidence seems to say something it cannot say.

Illustration 1. Start with a sentence that goes wrong. Suppose a made-up draft of your department's note ends:

"Modelling evidence proves that the GST Council should raise the tax on sugary drinks further."

Take it apart the way you take apart any argument: premises first, then the conclusion. The evidence is a modelling study that Summan and colleagues report in their 2026 paper on food taxes in India. It "found that a 10%–30% additional health tax could reduce demand by 7%–30% for SSBs". SSBs are sugar-sweetened beverages: drinks with sugar added.

Premise: a model projects that an extra tax of 10% to 30% could cut demand for sugar-sweetened drinks by 7% to 30%.

Conclusion: the GST Council should raise the tax further.

Grant the premise. Now ask whether the conclusion follows. It does not, and you can name each gap.

Question the conclusion needs	Can evidence settle it?	What it needs
Would a further rise cut demand here, now?	partly	a judgement that the model applies to India's drinks at today's rate
Would less demand mean less obesity?	partly	evidence on weight, which a demand model does not give
Is a fall in demand worth the higher price paid by those who keep buying?	no	a value premise
Who pays more, and who loses income?	partly	evidence can say who; whether that is fair is a value premise
Would the Council, where the Union and the States sit, agree?	no	a judgement of feasibility
Is this the moment, soon after the 2025 change?	no	a judgement of timing

Three of these gaps are questions evidence can at least narrow. Three are not. The draft hid all six inside one word: "proves".

Notice the starting point too. The 2025 reform already moved sugar-added drinks to a combined rate of 40%. The study Summan and colleagues cite modelled an "additional" tax. Their sentence does not say what the tax was additional to. So you cannot tell from it whether the model's starting rate matches today's.

Now rewrite the sentence so that it says only what it can:

"Summan and colleagues report a modelling study projecting that an additional health tax of 10% to 30% could reduce demand for sugar-sweetened drinks by 7% to 30%. We have not read the study, and the range is wide. Whether a further rise is worth its cost to the households that pay it, and whether the GST Council would agree, are judgements this evidence does not make."

The rewrite is longer and less exciting. It is also the version that survives a hostile reader.

Figures quoted in this illustration are from [238, 207].

WHERE THIS PICTURE BREAKS. The 7% to 30% is a projection of demand from a model, as Summan and colleagues report it. It is not a measured fall, and it is not a change in weight or in obesity. This book has not read the study, so the figures can be stated only as theirs. They hold for the tax range the study modelled, 10% to 30% extra, and for the setting it modelled, which the quoted sentence does not name.

The table's "partly" and "no" are not fixed for all time. A good study of who buys sugary drinks at each income level would turn "who pays more" from partly into mostly. No study turns "is it worth it" into a fact.

Illustration 2. Now watch the same evidence produce two conclusions. Suppose two members of your department, both made up, read the same projection and agree on it. They still disagree about what to propose.

The first says: "Cutting how much sugary drink children consume matters most. A higher price is a cost worth paying. Propose a further rise."

The second says: "A tax on a drink that poorer households also buy may be regressive." The textbook meaning of a regressive tax is "a tax applied at a lower overall rate as individuals' income rises". In other words, it takes a bigger share of a poorer household's income. "I would propose a rise only if the money went back into children's health in the same districts."

Write each argument with all its premises.

	First colleague	Second colleague
evidence premise	an extra tax could cut demand by 7% to 30%	the same
value premise	less sugary drink for children outweighs a higher price	a cost that falls harder on poorer households must be returned to them
conclusion	propose a further rise	propose a rise only with the money returned

The evidence row is the same. The conclusions differ because the value row differs. More modelling of demand would not move either of them.

Some of the disagreement is about facts, though. How much of the extra tax would poorer households actually pay? A study of purchases by household income could answer that. It would tell the second colleague how large the regressive effect is. It would not tell her whether that size is acceptable.

Then check feasibility, because the second option depends on it. Summan and colleagues write that earmarking — tying a tax's money to one use — "would be challenging as India does not allow for the earmarking of tax revenues, and would require additional legislation". So the second proposal needs a new law before it needs a new rate. That changes who must act, and the tracing method tells you how to find them.

As the analyst here, your job is not to pick between the colleagues. It is to lay out both options, with the same evidence, its uncertainty, and the value premise each one rests on, so that the people who decide can see what they are deciding.

Figures quoted in this illustration are from [238].

WHERE THIS PICTURE BREAKS. The two colleagues and their sentences are made up. Summan and colleagues do report that "concerns over regressivity, farmer livelihoods, and administrative feasibility" have to be engaged with. They do not measure how regressive a tax on sugary drinks in India is, and neither does this section.

Their statement on earmarking is theirs, and the law behind it is not traced here. Before a note relies on it, find the provision.

Not every value disagreement hides a factual one. This one did. Some do not, and then the honest note says the choice is a value choice and stops there.

MUST KNOW POINTS FOR YOU.

- The error is to write "the evidence shows we should". "Should" needs a value premise. Write that premise out in your note, as a premise.
- Before you write a recommendation, split the choice into questions. Give each side its own sentences.
- A projected effect from a model, or a result from another country, is evidence about that setting. Using it for your district is a judgement that it applies. Say so in the same sentence as the number.
- Summan and colleagues report a modelling study of an extra health tax of 10% to 30%. It projects that demand for sugar-sweetened drinks could fall by 7% to 30%. Quote it as their report, and never as a fall in obesity.
- When someone in a meeting says "the evidence is not settled", ask which question is unsettled.
- Say how sure the evidence is, in the note, by naming its kind and its range: "one modelling study, reported by others, projects 7% to 30%" is not "several measured studies found".
- A trainee's discussion section often ends "hence the government should". Ask them to write the value premise that sentence needs, and to name the body that would act.
- Sorting the questions shows which ones evidence can answer. Judging a study's quality is a separate skill.

REPORTING IT. "The best available evidence, [named source], suggests that [option] would [effect, with its range], in [the setting it was measured or modelled in]. Whether that effect is worth [the cost, and who bears it] is a judgement the evidence does not make. So is whether [deciding body] can act on it now."

EXERCISE 1 (critique). A made-up abstract ends: "Our survey found that most college canteens in the district sell sugary drinks. Therefore the State must ban the sale of sugary drinks in college canteens."

Lay the argument out as premises and a conclusion. Name each premise the conclusion needs that the survey does not supply, and say whether evidence could supply it.

EXERCISE 2 (teaching). A journalist has three minutes. She asks: "Does the evidence prove that a tax on sugary drinks works?" Answer her with no jargon, with honest confidence, and give her one sentence she could quote.

EXERCISE 3 (retrieval). From memory: name the three kinds of question evidence can answer in a policy choice, and the four it cannot settle on its own. Then say what extra premise any sentence containing "should" needs.

17 · Informing policy and campaigning for it

DEFINITION. The same evidence can be put to two different jobs. Informing policy sets out the options open to the body that decides, what the evidence says about the effects of each, and how uncertain that evidence is, without choosing among the options. The OpenStax textbook *American Government* calls the people who do this policy analysts. Campaigning for policy, also called advocacy, starts from a position about what ought to be done and argues for one option; the same textbook calls these people policy advocates.

Both jobs are legitimate. The defect is a document that does one job while presenting itself as doing the other, most often a campaign presented as a neutral account of the evidence. [422, 423, 424, 425, 426, 427, 428, 429, 430, 431, 432, 433, 434, 435, 436]

IN PLAIN TERMS. You can do two different jobs with the same evidence.

The first job is informing. You set out the options open to the body that decides. For each option you say what the evidence shows, and how sure anyone can be. You do not pick one.

The second job is campaigning, also called advocacy. You start from what you think ought to happen, and you argue for one option.

Both jobs are honest work. The trouble starts when a document does one job and looks like the other. The usual case is a campaign dressed as a neutral summary of the evidence.

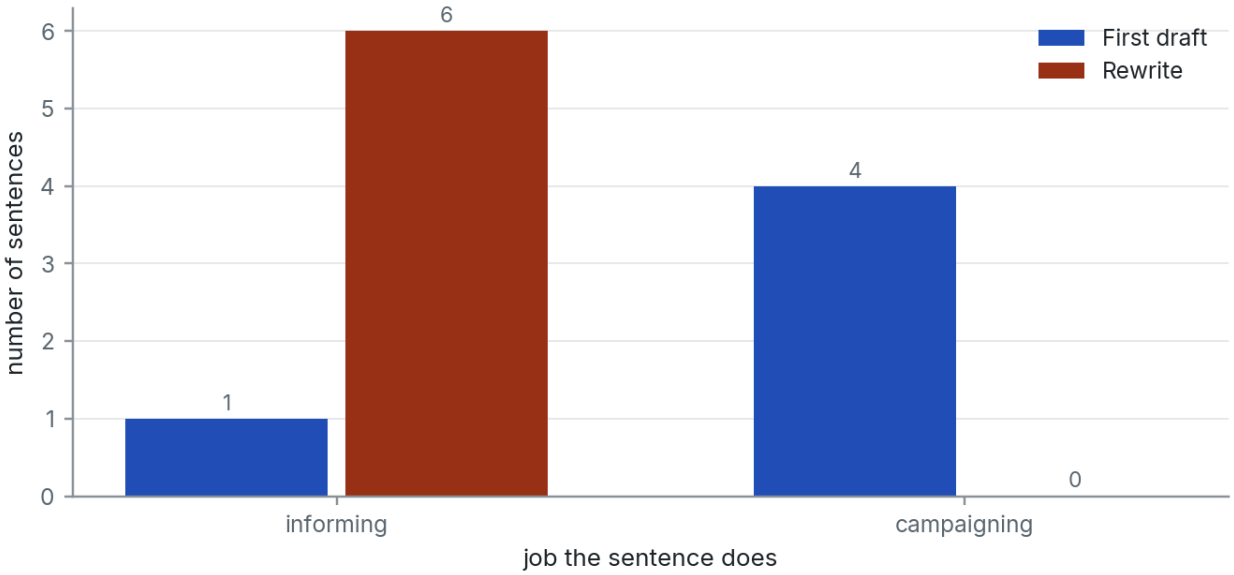
Here are four marks to look for.

Mark	What it looks like
Mark 1: Selective evidence	only the studies that support one option are cited, and the reader is not told how they were chosen
Mark 2: Uncertainty changed	ranges, model assumptions and limits are dropped; or, the other way, doubt is made up about evidence the writer dislikes
Mark 3: A value written as a finding	"the evidence shows we must…" — a judgement about what ought to be done, written as if a study had found it
Mark 4: An interest not declared	the writer, the department or the funder stands to gain or lose from the decision, and the document does not say so

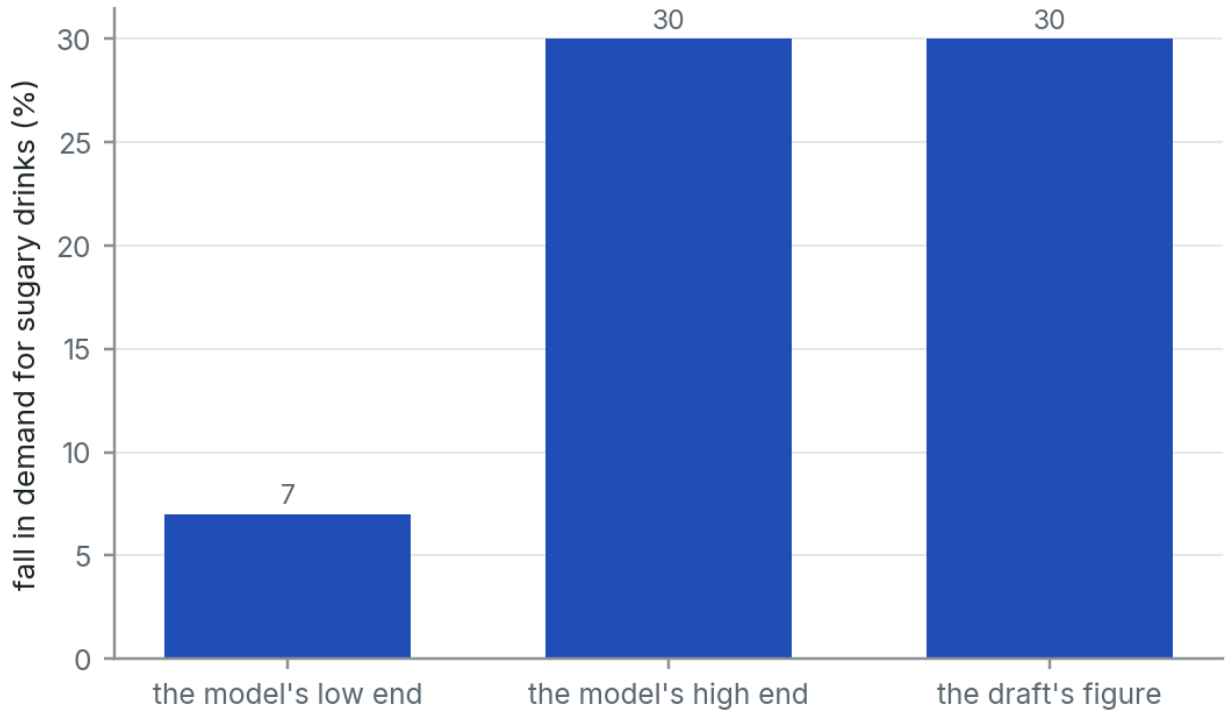
Mark 3 is the commonest in health writing. A conclusion about what ought to be done needs a value premise: a premise that says what matters, or what ought to be done. No study supplies one.

Mark 2 cuts both ways. A campaign for an option drops the doubt. A campaign against it often adds doubt that the evidence does not carry.

Decide which job a document does before you write its first line. Then say so, in the document. "This note sets out the options and does not recommend one." Or: "This letter argues for a higher tax."



A made-up paragraph of a department's note on a sugary-drinks tax, sentence by sentence, in a first draft and a rewrite. The first draft has 1 informing sentence and 4 campaigning ones. The rewrite keeps every fact, moves each value into a sentence that says it is a value, and adds a declaration of the department's position: 6 informing sentences and none campaigning.



Mark 2, uncertainty changed, in a made-up draft note. The modelling study that Summan and colleagues report, in a 2026 study of food taxes in India, estimated that an extra health tax of 10% to 30% could cut demand for sugary drinks by 7% to 30%. The draft wrote a flat 30%: it kept the top end of the range and dropped the word model.

Illustration 1. Back to the running setting of this book. You are the postgraduate in community medicine in Chhattisgarh. Your department has asked for a note on the first running proposal, a higher tax on sugar-sweetened drinks, for a district committee. The note is meant to inform.

Suppose this is the first draft of its main paragraph. The draft, and the facts about the department in it, are made up for the example.

> *A tax on sugary drinks works: it cuts demand by 30%. Every expert we spoke to agreed that the rate should go higher. The drinks industry opposes the tax only to protect its profits. The evidence shows that the rate must rise at the GST Council's next meeting. The GST Council's 56th meeting recommended a rate of 40% on sugar-added and flavoured drinks.*

Suppose two more facts. The three experts you spoke to all work in health. And your head of department has already said in a newspaper that the rate should rise. The draft says neither.

Take the draft one sentence at a time. For each, ask which job it does, and which mark, if any, it carries.

Sentence	Job	Mark	Why
A tax works: it cuts demand by 30%	campaigning	2	the only figure behind it is a modelled range, 7% to 30%, for an extra tax of 10% to 30%; the draft keeps the top end and drops the word model
Every expert we spoke to agreed	campaigning	1	all three work in health; nobody from the tax side or the industry was asked, and the reader is not told
The industry opposes it only for profit	campaigning	3	a judgement about motives, written as a fact; what can be checked is that Summan and colleagues report the industry arguing for lower rates
The evidence shows the rate must rise	campaigning	3	"must" is a value; no evidence contains it
The 56th meeting recommended 40%	informing	none	a fact, from a source you can open

The draft as a whole carries mark 4 as well. The department has a public position at stake, and the note does not say so.

Now rewrite it. Keep every fact. Move each value into a sentence that says it is a value.

> *The GST Council's 56th meeting, on 3 September 2025, recommended a special de-merit rate of 40% that covers sugar-added and flavoured drinks. One modelling study, reported by Summan and colleagues in a 2026 study of food taxes in India, estimated that an extra health tax of 10% to 30% could cut demand for sugary drinks by 7% to 30%; that is a model's estimate, not a change measured in India. Summan and colleagues report that the drinks industry argues for lower rates and against the de-merit class. We spoke to three people, all working in health, and to nobody from the tax side or the industry. Whether the rate should rise further is a choice between health, government revenue and the cost to poorer buyers, and this note does not make it. Our department has said in public that the rate should rise.*

Sentence	Job
The 56th meeting recommended 40%	informing

Sentence	Job
One modelling study estimated 7% to 30%, a model	informing
Summan and colleagues report the industry arguing for lower rates	informing
We spoke to three people, all in health	informing
Whether to raise it is a choice; this note does not make it	informing
Our department has said in public that the rate should rise	informing

The fifth sentence names a value choice and does not make it. That is informing. The last sentence is a declaration: it tells the reader where the department stands, so they can weigh the rest.

Count the two drafts.

Job	First draft	Rewrite
informing	1	6
campaigning	4	0

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first draft: 1 plus 4 = 5 sentences
rewrite: 6 plus 0 = 6 sentences
```

The rewrite is one sentence longer, because the declaration is new.

Figures quoted in this illustration are from [207, 238].

WHERE THIS PICTURE BREAKS. The labels are judgements, and a careful reader can argue about one or two. “The industry argues for lower rates” informs only if it is true and sourced; written without a source, it is an accusation.

A count of campaigning sentences is a check on your own draft, not a grade. A note with no campaigning sentence can still mislead, by what it leaves out. Mark 1 lives in the studies that are missing, not in any sentence that is there.

Illustration 2. Now suppose your department decides it does want to campaign. That is its right. Then it writes a different document, and says what it is. Here is a made-up letter that campaigns openly, using the same facts.

> *This letter asks the State Government, whose minister sits on the GST Council, to press there for a higher rate on sugar-added drinks. We argue for it because we judge that children’s health should count for more than the revenue and price concerns on the other side. That is our judgement, not a finding of any study. The evidence we rely on is one modelling study, reported by Summan and colleagues in a 2026 study of food taxes in India, which estimated that an extra tax of 10% to 30% could cut demand by 7% to 30%; it is a model, not a change measured in India. The case against is real: the tax falls hardest on poorer buyers, and the industry argues for lower rates. Our department receives no money from any drinks company.*

Put the letter through the four marks.

Mark	First draft of the note	The letter
Mark 1: Selective evidence	fails: only one side was asked, and the reader is not told	passes: it names the case against
Mark 2: Uncertainty changed	fails: a modelled range became a flat 30%	passes: it keeps the range and the word model
Mark 3: A value written as a finding	fails: "the evidence shows the rate must rise"	passes: "that is our judgement, not a finding"
Mark 4: An interest not declared	fails: the department's public position is hidden	passes: it says what it wants, and declares that no drinks company pays the department

The letter campaigns from its first line, and it passes all four marks. The marks do not catch campaigning. They catch campaigning that pretends to be something else.

So, before you write, choose. If the committee asked for the options, write the note, and keep your view out of it or label it. If your department wants a higher rate, write the letter, and say so in its first sentence. Oliver and Cairney put this choice as being an "issue advocate" or an "honest broker". The honest broker passes on research "honestly, clearly, and in a timely fashion" and seeks to stay "neutral"; the other option is to "recommend specific policy options". They warn that the line between the two is "very difficult to negotiate or identify in practice", because people who decide often value candid judgements from people they trust more than new research. When that happens, give the opinion in a sentence that says it is yours.

WHERE THIS PICTURE BREAKS. The letter is made up and tidy. A real campaign letter is judged by people who know the other side's best case. Naming "the case against" in one line does not answer it.

Passing the four marks makes a document honest about its job. It does not make it right. An openly labelled campaign can rest on weak evidence, and an honest note can still miss the study that matters.

MUST KNOW POINTS FOR YOU.

- The error is to treat a sentence with a number or a citation in it as informing. Ask what was left out before you ask whether what is there is right.
- Decide which job a document does before you write its first line.
- Give a value its own sentence in a note meant to inform. Make that sentence say it is a choice.
- Refuse "the evidence shows we must" in any document you sign, including a trainee's draft you are correcting. Split it in two: what the evidence shows, in one sentence; what you think should be done, in another, marked as yours.
- Watch for doubt as well as for confidence. If the studies agree and the summary says "the evidence is unclear", that is mark 2 run backwards.
- Declare your department's own position and money, even when nobody asks.
- Oliver and Cairney find the line between the two jobs "very difficult to negotiate or identify in practice". They add that the policy studies they reviewed may suggest enga-

ging so far that the division "become blurry". When you cannot hold the line, label each sentence that gives your view.

- The four marks tell you whether a document is honest about its job, not whether its evidence is good or its option right. An openly labelled campaign can rest on weak evidence.

COMMON MISREADING. The tempting reading is that informing means having no view. It does not. The analyst may hold a strong view, and may state it. What makes a document informing is that its account of the evidence is not bent towards that view. Any view in it is labelled as a view. A note with a clearly marked last sentence, "our own judgement is that the rate should rise", still informs.

REPORTING IT. "This note sets out the options open to the decision maker. For each, it says what the evidence shows and how certain it is. It does not recommend one. Our department's own position is stated in the last paragraph."

EXERCISE 1 (retrieval). From memory: name the two jobs a document can do with evidence, and the four marks of a document that says it informs but campaigns.

EXERCISE 2 (critique). A made-up "evidence summary" reaches the district committee from a drinks makers' association. It reads, in part:

> *The evidence on sugary-drink taxes is mixed and uncertain. Taxes in some countries have not reduced obesity. A tax would hurt small shopkeepers and poorer families. The committee should therefore wait for better evidence before supporting any change.*

Say which job the document does, which marks it carries, and what you would ask its authors for.

EXERCISE 3 (teaching). Audience: a journalist, three minutes. They ask: "Your department wrote a note on the sugary-drinks tax. Are you for it or against it?" Your note was written to inform. Your head of department has said in public that the rate should rise. Give your answer, with one sentence the journalist can quote.

PRACTICE. Ten problems on this technique, easiest first. Work them on paper before turning to the answers, which are in the appendix at the back under this section's name.

1. Say whether each sentence informs or campaigns.

1. Option A costs more than option B and reaches fewer people.
2. Option B is the only responsible choice.
3. We recommend option A.
4. The study did not measure what happened after the first year.
5. Nobody who cares about children could oppose option A.

2. Each sentence comes from a document that calls itself a neutral summary. Name the mark (1 to 4) each one carries.

1. "Three studies found the option worked." The writer found five studies and left out the two that did not find it worked.
2. "The option will cut cases by a fifth." The study it cites gave a range from a twentieth to a fifth.
3. "The evidence shows we have a duty to act."
4. The summary was written by a company that sells the product the option would favour, and it does not say so.
5. "The evidence on this option is too uncertain to act on." The writer dislikes the option, and the studies agree closely with each other.

3. Rewrite this sentence so that it informs. Keep whatever in it could be a finding.

"The evidence proves that every school canteen must stop selling sugary drinks."

4. Here are three sentences from the Press Information Bureau release of 3 September 2025 on the 56th meeting of the GST Council.

1. "Next-generation GST reforms, as announced by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi from the ramparts of Red Fort on 15th August 2025, represent a strategic, principled, and citizen-centric evolution of a landmark tax framework, which will enhance the quality of life of every last citizen"
2. "The 56th meeting of the GST Council was held in New Delhi under the chairpersonship of the Union Finance & Corporate Affairs Minister Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman."
3. "The same would be given effect through the relevant circulars/ notifications/ law amendments which alone shall have the force of law."

Say whether each informs or campaigns. Then say which you would carry into your department's note, and why.

5. Here are three sentences from Summan and colleagues' 2026 study of food taxes and subsidies in India. The study drew on a review of published work and on interviews with people who work on these taxes.

1. "Fiscal policy ownership is concentrated within the Ministry of Finance and the GST Council, which determine tax design and rates, while health-oriented ministries play a largely advisory role."
2. "By contrast, earmarking tax revenue for health initiatives, such as small-scale farming or public awareness campaigns, may garner greater public acceptance."
3. "This, however, would be challenging as India does not allow for the earmarking of tax revenues, and would require additional legislation."

"Earmarking" means setting a tax's money aside for one named use. Say what job each sentence does. Then say whether the paper marks its suggestion as a suggestion.

6. The Prime Minister spoke in the 119th episode of the radio address Mann Ki Baat, on 23 February 2025. The Press Information Bureau released an English rendering. In it he said:

“Decide that you will use 10% less oil every month.”

And later:

“Friends, using less oil in food and dealing with obesity is not just a personal choice but also our responsibility towards the family.”

Say what job each sentence does. Is either a fault under this section’s rule? If you quote them in your department’s note, how do you quote them?

7. A colleague sorts a sentence from a made-up draft note. Here is their worked answer. Find the step that broke.

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sentence: “Our survey of students at one college, described in section 2 of this
note, proves that the district needs a tax on sugary drinks.”
it names a survey, so it rests on evidence
it points to section 2 of the note for the methods, so it can be checked
job: informing
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8. Here is a made-up “background” paragraph for the district committee, with a worked answer. Find the steps that broke.

> *Taxes on sugary drinks have been studied in many countries. The studies we reviewed all found that demand fell after a tax. Industry claims that the tax hurts poorer families are not supported by the evidence. The committee can therefore be confident that a higher rate will reduce obesity in the district.*

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the paragraph uses no “should” and no “must”
it recommends no option in so many words
it reports what studies found
job: informing, no marks
```

9. In the same address, the English rendering has the Prime Minister say this. “According to a study, one in every eight people today is troubled by the problem of obesity.”

A colleague wants to open your department’s informing note with this sentence, as the size of the problem. What do you do? Then say what the sentence, as it stands, does not establish.

10. Here is a made-up line from the conclusion of a draft district report. “Our findings show that the GST Council should raise the rate on sugary drinks to protect children.”

Classify the line, rewrite it so the report informs, and say what your rewrite does not establish.

18 · Worked journey: A one-page note on one Indian proposal

DEFINITION. The build target of this book is a written one-page note on one Indian policy proposal that names the body that would have to act. A note meets the target when it answers nine questions, in this order.

Every factual line rests on a source that has been opened, with the passage found and read against the line. [422, 53, 251, 253, 437, 438, 439, 440, 441, 442, 443, 444, 445, 446, 447, 448, 449, 450, 451, 452, 436, 453, 454, 455, 456]

IN PLAIN TERMS. The note answers nine questions, always in this order.

Line	Question	The tool, from
1	What is the proposal, in one sentence?	a proposal is not a policy
2	What instrument would it need?	the tracing method, step 1
3	Whose subject is it?	Union, State or local; the tracing method, step 2
4	Which body decides, under which provision?	where power comes from; the tracing method, step 3
5	What process must it pass, and how far has it got?	how Acts and rules are made; the tracing method, step 4
6	Who else must agree?	when no single body decides; the tracing method, step 5
7	What frame is it argued in, and what is the counter-frame?	reading the frame
8	What can the evidence settle, and what can it not?	what evidence can settle
9	Which job does this note do?	informing and campaigning

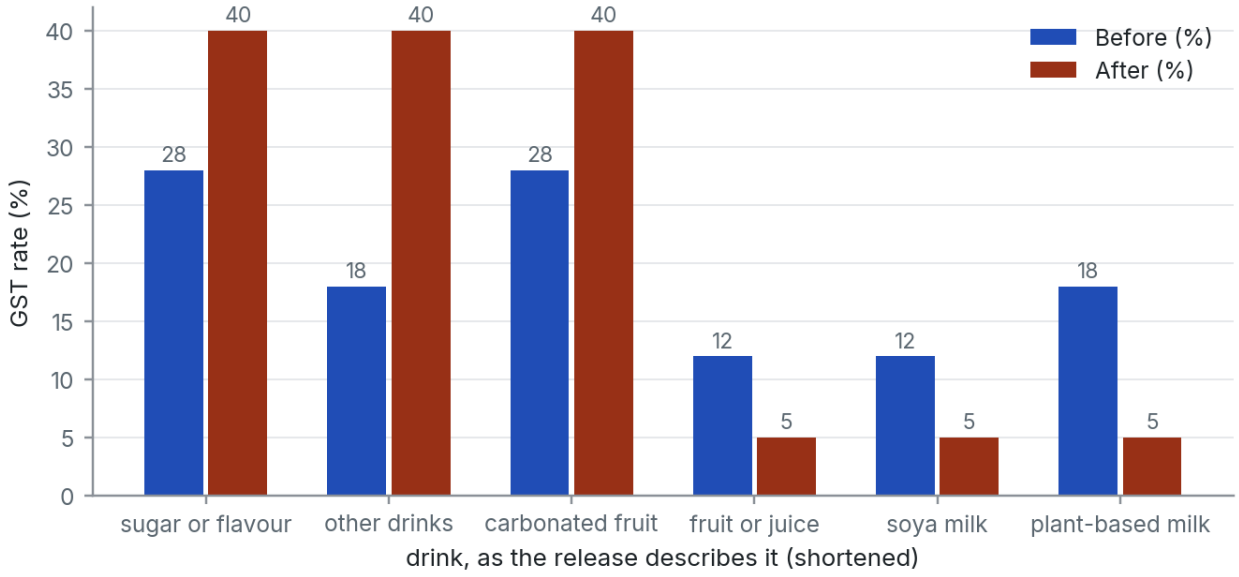
Lines 2 to 6 end in the one sentence the tracing method taught: X decides, under Y, by process Z, with W's agreement.

Two rules hold for every line.

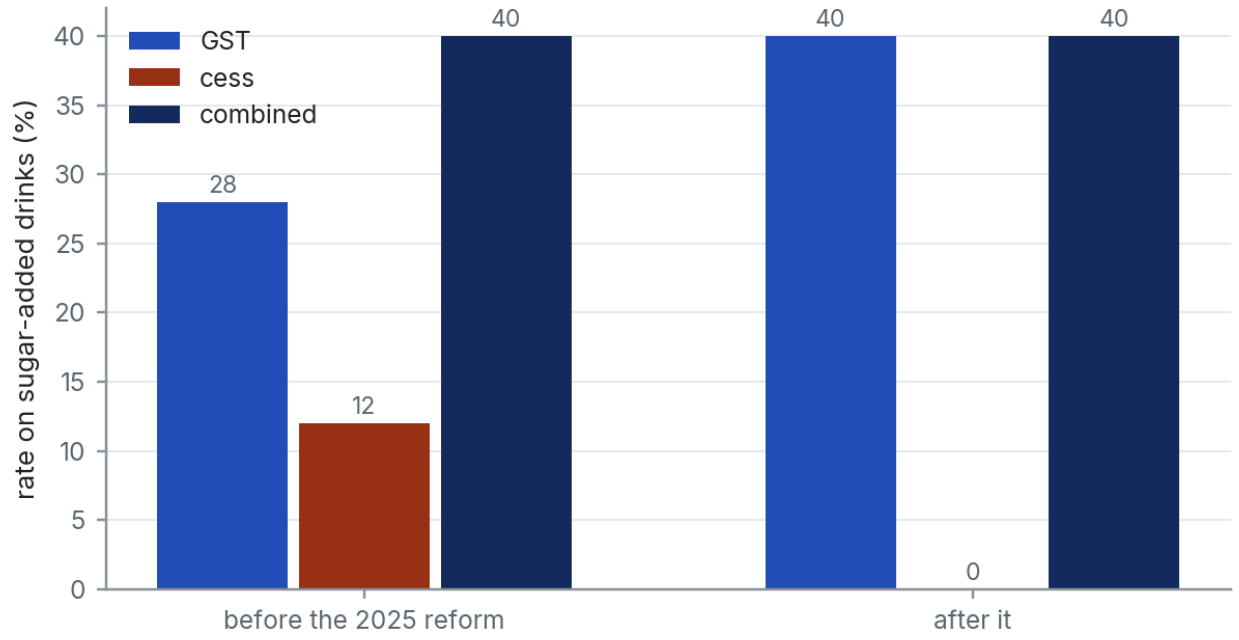
First, check each factual line against the passage it rests on. Find the source. Confirm it is the one named. Find the passage. Read it.

Second, write down what you did not check. If you did not read the newest amendment, say so in the note.

Put a date on the note. A reader needs to know when your note was true.



The goods and services tax (GST) rates the 56th GST Council meeting recommended for drinks under heading 2202, before and after, as the release of 3 September 2025 lists them. Drinks with added sugar or flavour, other non-alcoholic drinks and carbonated fruit drinks went to 40%; drinks based on fruit pulp or juice, soya milk or plant milk went to 5%. The before rates are GST alone: for sugar-sweetened drinks, a 2026 study by Summan and colleagues reports that the old 28% came with a 12% cess, so their combined rate was already 40.



Drinks with added sugar or flavour, before and after the 2025 GST reform. Before it, a 2026 study by Summan and colleagues reports, they paid 28% GST and a 12% cess, a combined 40. After it, one rate of 40% and no cess. The GST rose by 12 points; the combined rate did not rise.

Illustration 1. Start with the failure, because it is the commonest one. Suppose this is the first draft of your note's middle, made up for the example. Every line in it sounds right.

> 1. *Proposal: tax sugary drinks more heavily, to reduce obesity among the district's school children.*
> 2. *The Union government taxes sugary drinks at 40%.*
> 3. *The GST Council decided this rate at its 56th meeting.*
> 4. *The 2025 reform raised the tax on sugary drinks by 12 percentage points, from 28% to 40%.*
> 5. *The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare should ask the GST Council to raise it further.*

A percentage point is the gap between two percentages: from 28% to 40% is 12 points. Now check each line against the passage it should rest on.

Line	What the source says	Verdict
1	not a fact; it is the proposal	keep, but "to reduce obesity" is the proposer's aim, not a finding
2	central goods and services tax (CGST) Act s.9(1): the central tax is "not exceeding twenty per cent."; Notification 9/2025 puts these drinks in its 20 per cent schedule	wrong: the Union's tax is 20 per cent; 40% is the combined rate the release gives
3	the release itself: its recommendations take effect through notifications, "which alone shall have the force of law"	wrong body for the decision: the Council recommends; the Central Government notifies the central tax
4	the release's table: 28% to 40%; a 2026 study by Summan and colleagues, which combined interviews with a review of published work: the reform folded the earlier 28% rate and a 12% cess into one rate	misleading: 28 plus 12 is 40, so the combined rate on these drinks did not rise
5	Article 279A(2): the members are finance or taxation ministers, or a minister each State names	wrong address: the Ministry of Health is not a member, and the Council moves first; "should" is campaigning in a note meant to inform

Check the arithmetic in line 4.

```
40 minus 28 = 12
28 plus 12 = 40
```

The first line is the gap the draft reports. The second is why the gap means nothing here: the old 28% came with a 12% cess on top, so the total was already 40. A cess is an extra tax charged alongside the main one. The study calls it a compensation cess; the law that levied it is not among the sources read.

Four of the five lines fail. Not one of the four failures is a typing slip. Each is a claim that sounds like the sources and is not what they say.

WHERE THIS PICTURE BREAKS. The draft is made up, and its errors are gathered on purpose. A real first draft usually has one or two, which is harder: one wrong line among right ones is easier to miss.

The cess point holds for the drinks the 2026 study describes, which paid the 28% rate and the 12% cess. The release also moved "other non-alcoholic beverages" from 18% to 40%, and the sources held do not say what cess, if any, those paid. For them, do not repeat the "did not rise" line.

Illustration 2. Now build the note properly, one line at a time. The date you check everything is 2 October 2026.

Line 1. The proposal. "Raise the GST on the drinks in the release's 'added sugar or other sweetening matter or flavoured' entry above its present rate." One sentence, no claim about effects.

Lines 2 to 4. Instrument, subject, body. The section on finding who decides traced this proposal. The instrument is a rate notification. The subject is both governments' under Article 246A(1). The GST Council recommends rates to the Union and the States (Article 279A(4)(e)). The Central Government notifies the central tax under section 9(1) of the CGST Act, up to 20 per cent. The GST Council moves first, so the note is addressed to it.

Line 5. The process, and where it stands. Look at what the 56th meeting recommended for drinks. Here are the rows for drinks under heading 2202 in the release's table. The names are short forms of the release's own descriptions: "sugar or flavour" stands for drinks "containing added sugar or other sweetening matter or flavoured", and "other drinks" for "other non-alcoholic beverages".

Drink	Before (%)	After (%)
sugar or flavour	28	40
other drinks	18	40
carbonated fruit	28	40
fruit or juice	12	5
soya milk	12	5
plant-based milk	18	5

The recommendation went in both directions: up for drinks in the added-sugar or flavoured entry, other non-alcoholic drinks and carbonated fruit drinks; down for drinks based on fruit, soya or plant milk, sweetened or not. Then the instrument. Notification No. 9/2025-Central Tax (Rate) put "All goods (including aerated waters), containing added sugar or other sweetening matter or flavoured" in its Schedule III, at 20 per cent central tax, from 22 September 2025. Notification No. 01/2026-Central Tax (Rate), in force 1 May 2026, re-wrote two other entries of Schedule III and left that one alone.

Two things you did not check go in the note. 01/2026 names an earlier amendment, 19/2025 of 31 December 2025, which you have not read. And no source you hold says how the rest of the 40% is set.

Line 6. Who else must agree. Article 279A(9) says a Council decision needs three-fourths of the weighted votes cast. The Union's vote counts for one-third. The States' votes, all together, count for two-thirds. The section on when no single body decides turned these into percentages.

```
3 divided by 4 = 0.75, so three-fourths is 75 per cent
Union alone: 33.3 per cent, short of 75
States alone: 66.7 per cent, short of 75
with the Union's yes: 75 minus 33.3 = 41.7 per cent still needed from the States
```

So neither side can change the rate alone. The article does not say how the States' two-thirds is shared among them, so do not work out how many States a change needs. Chhattisgarh's voice in the vote is the minister its State Government names to the Council (Article 279A(2)(c)).

Line 7. The frame. The section on reading the frame ran its five lines on this release. Here is the sentence that created the rate, read the same way.

Line	The release's words
Problem	"the current 4-tiered tax rate structure"
Cause	not stated
Judgement	"citizen-friendly", "Simple Tax", "de-merit"
Remedy	"a 2 rate structure ... a special de-merit rate of 40% for a select few goods and services"
Left out	why these goods are de-merit; any health reason; who pays

The release frames the rate as part of a simpler tax, with a class of goods to be taxed hardest. It gives no health reason in that sentence. The health frame is argued by others. The 2026 study reads the de-merit class as "signalling a shift towards public health considerations"; that is the study's reading, not the release's words. The same study proposes, as a role advocacy groups could take on, to "Advocate for higher taxes on unhealthy foods". Against the proposal stand three counter-frames, all reported in the same study. A health finance official it interviewed said "the tax policy is supposed to raise revenue and that's it". Taxes on junk foods are "perceived as regressive", which means they take a larger share of a poorer buyer's income. And the drinks industry argues for lower rates and against the de-merit class.

Line 8. The evidence. What can it settle, and what not?

Question	What the sources held say	What that does not mean
How big is the problem?	in 2018, Indian adults reported about 0.2 servings of sugar-sweetened drinks a week, against 0.7 for South Asia	nothing about children, or about this district; self-reported intake
What would a higher tax do?	one modelling study, reported in the 2026 study: an extra tax of 10% to 30% could cut demand by 7% to 30%	a model's estimate, not a change measured in India; demand, not weight
What did the 2025 change do?	the 28% rate and 12% cess became one 40% rate	not a rise in the combined rate on these drinks

Question	What the sources held say	What that does not mean
Should the rate rise further?	no evidence can say	a choice between health, revenue and the cost to poorer buyers

Line 9. The job. The department asked for the options, so the note informs. It says so in its first line.

Here is the note, addressed to the body that moves first.

> ***A higher tax on sugar-sweetened drinks: who decides.*** *For the GST Council, which moves first; the Central Government notifies after it. Checked on 2 October 2026.*
>
> *This note informs. It sets out who decides and what the evidence says. It does not recommend.*
>
> *Proposal. Raise the GST on the drinks in the "added sugar or other sweetening matter or flavoured" entry above its present rate.*
>
> *Who decides. The GST Council recommends GST rates to the Union and the States (Constitution, Article 279A). The Central Government then notifies the central tax under section 9(1) of the CGST Act, up to 20 per cent.*
>
> *Where it stands. After its 56th meeting, on 3 September 2025, the Council recommended a special de-merit rate of 40% that covers these drinks. The Central Government's Notification 9/2025-Central Tax (Rate) put them in its 20 per cent schedule from 22 September 2025. A 2026 amendment, in force 1 May 2026, left that entry unchanged. We have not checked the December 2025 amendment it names. No source we hold says how the rest of the 40% is set.*
>
> *Who else must agree. A Council decision needs three-fourths of the weighted votes cast. The Union's vote counts for one-third and the States' together for two-thirds, so neither can change the rate alone. Chhattisgarh's voice is the minister the State Government names to the Council.*
>
> *How it is argued. The release that set the rate presents it as part of a simpler tax, with a de-merit class for a few goods, and gives no health reason. A 2026 study by Summan and colleagues reads the de-merit class as a shift towards health, and proposes that advocacy groups argue for higher taxes on unhealthy foods. Against: the view that tax policy exists to raise revenue; the view that such taxes fall hardest on poorer buyers; and an industry that argues for lower rates.*
>
> *What the evidence says. One modelling study, reported in the 2026 study, estimated that an extra tax of 10% to 30% could cut demand for these drinks by 7% to 30%. That is a model, not a change measured in India, and we have not read the model itself. The same study says the 2025 change folded an earlier 28% rate and a 12% cess into one rate, so the combined rate on these drinks did not rise. None of the sources behind this note measured the tax's effect on children's weight.*
>
> *What it cannot settle. Whether to raise the rate weighs health against revenue and the cost to poorer buyers. That judgement belongs to the people who decide.*

Last, check it line by line, as you checked the failed draft.

Note line	Source opened	Passage found and read
Council recommends rates	Constitution, Article 279A(4)	yes
central tax up to 20 per cent	CGST Act, section 9(1)	yes
rest of the 40%	none held	not read, and the note says so
40% recommended, 3 September 2025	the release of that date	yes
20 per cent schedule from 22 September 2025	Notification 9/2025	yes
2026 amendment left the entry alone	Notification 01/2026	yes; the December 2025 amendment not read, and the note says so
three-fourths, one-third, two-thirds	Constitution, Article 279A(9)	yes
Chhattisgarh's minister	Constitution, Article 279A(2)(c)	yes
the frames and counter-frames	the release; the 2026 study	yes
the modelled 7% to 30%	the 2026 study	yes in the study; the model itself not read, and the note says so
28% and 12% cess became 40%	the 2026 study	yes

Every line is either checked, or named as not checked.

Figures quoted in this illustration are from [208, 207, 238].

WHERE THIS PICTURE BREAKS. The note is true as of the date on it. The next GST Council meeting or the next rate notification can change line 5 without anything else changing. Before you reuse it, open the newest amendment again.

The note says who decides and how the argument runs. It does not say whether the Council will act, and it does not say whether a higher rate would change what children in the district drink or weigh. A complete note can describe a proposal that goes nowhere.

The three counter-frames come from 18 interviews, mostly with people based in Delhi, and from the published work the study reviewed. They show that the arguments exist. They do not show how widely each is held.

MUST KNOW POINTS FOR YOU.

- Write the trace sentence before anything else: X decides, under Y, by process Z, with W's agreement.
- The error is to write "the GST Council sets the rate". It recommends. Write "recommends", and name the notification.
- Refuse "the Union taxes sugary drinks at 40%". Section 9(1) of the CGST Act caps the central tax at 20 per cent, and the central notification puts these drinks at that rate. The 40% is the combined rate the release gives.

- Do not read "28% to 40%" as a rise of 12 points in the tax on sugary drinks. A 2026 study by Summan and colleagues reports that the old 28% came with a 12% cess, and the 2025 change folded both into one rate.
- Address the note to the body that holds the decision job for the instrument. Where several bodies must act, name them all and say which moves first. For a GST rate, the GST Council recommends first and the Central Government then notifies the central rate.
- Date the note, name the newest amendment you opened, and name what you did not open.
- Put the frame in the note, including the one the deciding body itself uses.
- The note tells its reader who can act, through which instrument, and how the argument runs. It does not tell them whether that body will act, or whether the instrument would change anyone's health.

COMMON MISREADING. The tempting reading is that a finished note is a case for the proposal. It is not. A note can name the body, the provision, the process and every vote that would be needed. It can still describe a proposal that is weak, or that will never be taken up. The note is an address and a map. Whether to go there is the decision it leaves to the reader.

REPORTING IT. "The GST Council recommends the rate (Constitution, Article 279A). The Central Government notifies the central tax under section 9(1) of the CGST Act, up to 20 per cent. Checked on 2 October 2026."

EXERCISE 1 (retrieval). From memory: list the nine lines of the note in order, and the two rules every line must pass.

EXERCISE 2 (build). Write your own one-page note on one Indian policy proposal on obesity, naming the deciding body. Choose a proposal other than the tax on sugar-sweetened drinks. Two from this book are open to you. One is a rule on what school canteens may sell. The other is a warning label on packaged foods high in sugar, salt or fat. Or choose one from your own setting.

Produce:

- the note, on one page, in the nine lines, with the date you checked it;
- beneath it, a table with one row for each factual line: the source you opened, and whether you found and read the passage;
- one sentence saying which job the note does.

EXERCISE 3 (critique). A colleague hands you this made-up one-page note on the second running proposal of this book.

> *A rule on school canteens. The government should ban sugary drinks in school canteens. The Ministry of Education will make this rule. Studies prove that banning sugary drinks in schools reduces obesity. This is the only responsible choice for our children.*

List what is wrong with it, against the nine lines and the two rules.

EXERCISE 4 (interpretation). Your own note has a frame too. Take the finished note in this section's second illustration. Run the five lines from the section on reading the frame on it. Then say what the note leaves out, and whether that is a fault.

EXERCISE 5 (teaching). Audience: a health secretary, one page, answer first. The question: "If we wanted the tax on sugary drinks raised further, who would have to act, and what would it take?"

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An entry marked outstanding has not yet been checked against the source itself. Nothing in these sections rests on one: the reasoning is a derivation you can check with a calculator, and the entry records an anchor still to be supplied.

Appendix · Worked answers

1 · A proposal is not a policy

EXERCISE 1. A proposal is what someone wants a public body to do. It stays a proposal until a body with the power to decide has decided it. A policy is what a public body has decided and does about a public problem. It includes what the decision leads to, and a choice not to act. A programme is the work a public body does to carry a policy out.

The four stages are agenda setting, enactment, implementation and evaluation. Agenda setting has two parts: identifying the problem, and specifying the alternative solutions.

EXERCISE 2. Statement by statement:

1. Not yet a policy. A speech in favour of something is not a decision recorded in a form that binds anyone. It may show that a proposal has support. Check whether any order or instrument was issued, by whom, and under what power.
2. Wrong as stated. The National Health Policy 2017 is a policy, approved by the Cabinet on 15 March 2017. But its sentence on taxes says the Government "could consider" them. That keeps an option open and decides no tax. To claim a tax, you need the instrument that set it, issued by the body that holds the power to tax.
3. The conclusion does not follow. A choice not to act, by a body that could act, is itself policy. The accurate sentence is: "No order on sugary drinks in school canteens has been found." You would also have to check which body holds the power before you could say it has chosen not to act.
4. A description of a programme, or of practice, if it is true. It says what is done. It does not say what policy it carries out, or who decided it. Check the order or guideline behind the visits, and check that the visits actually happen.

EXERCISE 3. Draw three boxes in a row on the board: "someone wants it", "a body with power decides it", "public bodies carry it out". Put "proposal" under the first, "policy" under the second, and "programme" under the third.

Point at the first box. That is where the unit is. Wanting a tax, even unanimously, is a proposal. Your unit has no power to tax anyone.

Ask the resident three questions about the tax. Who would decide it? Under what power? Where would the decision be written down? They will not know yet. Say that this is the right place to be stuck. The rest of this book is a method for answering those three questions.

End with the losers. Ask them to list who would pay more and who would sell less. Those people will argue against the proposal, so the unit should know them first.

EXERCISE 4. Item by item:

1. Agenda setting, its first part: a problem is identified as worth acting on. No decision on what to do. The committee is made up, and in any case agreeing that a problem exists decides no action.
2. Enactment, in the sense of a decision by a body with power: the Cabinet approved a policy statement. It is a decision. What the policy commits anyone to, beyond that, depends on what each sentence in it says.
3. Evaluation, or the raw material for one. It records an outcome after a measure. It is not a decision, and by itself it does not show that the guidance caused the rise. Sales outside the school gate may have risen for other reasons.

2 · Four jobs around a decision: propose, advise, decide, carry out

EXERCISE 1. Propose, advise, decide, carry out.

For minimum support prices, the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP) recommends. The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) approved the kharif prices for 2026-27.

EXERCISE 2. Two bodies are named. The Food Authority makes the regulation: it holds the decide job. The Central Government must give its previous approval: it shares the decide job, because without its approval no regulation can be made.

Two steps come first. The Central Government's approval must be given. The draft must have been published first, so that the public can object ("after previous publication"). Then it is made by notification.

The sentence does not say who proposes or advises. It does not say how long the previous publication must last, or who carries the regulation out. Other sections answer some of these. Section 14(2) makes the Scientific Committee responsible for scientific opinions to the Food Authority, and section 13(3)(g) lists a panel on labelling. Section 12(2) has the Central Advisory Committee advise on the Authority's work programme and priorities. Sections 30(1) and 36(2) name the State's Commissioner of Food Safety and the district's Designated Officer.

EXERCISE 3. The note puts the Food Authority (FSSAI) in the carry-out job. Under the Act, the State Government appoints a Commissioner of Food Safety "for efficient implementation" (section 30(1)). There is a Designated Officer for each district (section 36(2)). Checking that food businesses in a district follow the rules is work for those State officers.

The error looks reasonable because the Food Authority is the best-known name in food safety. It does hold the decide job for regulations. But the body that makes a rule is not the body that checks it in a district.

The fix: "We will write to the Commissioner of Food Safety, Chhattisgarh, and to the Designated Officer for the district." Whether school canteens fall within the Act at all is a separate question this note must not assume.

EXERCISE 4. Quotable: "The expert commission recommends the price. A Cabinet committee decides it."

Then the detail. The Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices studies costs and recommends prices. The Government also considers the views of the States and the Central Ministries. For the 2026-27 kharif crops, the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs approved the prices.

Calibrate. The releases do not say how often the committee changes what the commission recommends. So do not claim that it always agrees, or that it often overrules.

3 · Where a body's power comes from

EXERCISE 1. First the Constitution. Then an Act of Parliament or of a State Legislature. Then a rule or regulation, made under a section of an Act. Last, a notification or order, issued under a provision.

Article 73 sets how far the executive power of the Union reaches: to the matters Parliament has power to make laws on. Article 162 does the same for a State: to the matters its Legislature has power to make laws on.

EXERCISE 2. The body acting is the Central Government. The provision is section 1(2). The Act is the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023, Act 22 of 2023.

Open section 1(2) of the Act next. It leaves the date the Act starts to the Central Government, by notification in the Gazette. It also lets different provisions start on different dates. So the provision does give this body the power to set the dates by notification.

The opening words cannot tell you which sections came into force on which date. That is in clauses (a) to (c) further down. They also cannot tell you whether a later notification has changed those dates.

EXERCISE 3. The note treats an Act that has been passed as an Act in force. Section 1(2) leaves the starting date to the Central Government, by notification, and allows different dates for different provisions.

Notification G.S.R. 843(E) of 13 November 2025 brings most of sections 3 to 17 into force only eighteen months from the date of publication. Counting from 13 November 2025, that is 13 May 2027. Section 6(9) comes in after one year. So on 2 October 2026 these sections were not in force, on the notification's own words.

The error looks reasonable because the Act carries "2023" in its title and can be downloaded. A title year is the year of passing, not the year of starting.

A fixed sentence: "The Act was passed in 2023. Under notification G.S.R. 843(E), most of sections 3 to 17 come into force eighteen months after 13 November 2025." Whether a school health app falls within the Act at all is a separate question that the note would have to check.

EXERCISE 4. "The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India would decide. It would make a regulation under section 92(1) of the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006. It needs the Central Government's previous approval, and the draft must be published first. The regulation is made by notification."

The answer names the body, the provision, the Act, the second body whose approval is needed, and the kind of instrument. It does not claim that the Authority will act, or what the label would say. Those are separate questions. That a warning label is a matter on which the Authority may make regulations is a further step this answer has not checked.

4 · Union, State or local: whose subject is it

EXERCISE 1. Item by item:

1. Article 246. List I, the Union List (Parliament alone). List II, the State List (the State Legislature alone, for its State). List III, the Concurrent List (both).
2. Public health is State List entry 6. Adulteration of foodstuffs is Concurrent List entry 18.
3. Under Article 254(1), Parliament's law prevails, and the State law is void to the extent of the clash. Under Article 254(2), a State law reserved for the President and given his assent prevails in that State, until Parliament legislates again.
4. It lets the State Legislature, by law, give powers and responsibilities to panchayats, including for the matters in the Eleventh Schedule. The Schedule gives nothing by itself.

EXERCISE 2. The entries:

- State List entry 6, public health and sanitation.
- Concurrent List entry 18, adulteration of foodstuffs, if the rule is framed as a food standard.
- Concurrent List entry 33(b), trade in and supply of foodstuffs, because the rule stops a sale.
- Concurrent List entry 25, education, because the place is a school.
- Union List entry 52, with section 2 of the Food Safety and Standards Act, because the Union has taken the food industry under its control.
- Eleventh Schedule entry 17 (schools) and entry 23 (health), and Twelfth Schedule entry 6 (public health), as subjects Chhattisgarh may hand to panchayats and municipalities.

What the entries cannot tell you: whether a law on this already exists. Which body would make the rule. Which entry governs if they overlap.

What to open next: the Food Safety and Standards Act and the regulations made under it, to see what the Union has already covered. Then Chhattisgarh's panchayat and municipal Acts, to see what has been handed down.

EXERCISE 3. Two errors.

First, food is not named on the Union List. Adulteration of foodstuffs is Concurrent List entry 18. Trade in and supply of foodstuffs is Concurrent List entry 33(b). The Union's hold over the food industry comes from section 2 of the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006. There Parliament declared Union control of the food industry. That brings in Union List entry 52.

Second, a State can legislate on a Concurrent subject. But a State provision that clashes with Parliament's Act is void (Article 254(1)). The exception is a State law reserved for the President and given his assent (Article 254(2)).

A fixed version, in three sentences: "Food standards are a Concurrent subject (List III, entries 18 and 33(b)). Parliament has taken the food industry under Union control (Food Safety and Standards Act, section 2). A State law on food in schools must not clash with that Act."

EXERCISE 4. Draw three columns on the board: Union, State, local.

Under State, write "public health, List II entry 6". That is why the health department is one place to send it.

Under both Union and State, write "Concurrent: food adulteration 18, foodstuffs 33(b), education 25". Explain that on these subjects both Parliament and the State may make law, and that if they clash Parliament's Act wins.

Under Union, write "food industry under Union control, Food Safety and Standards Act section 2".

Under local, write "only what the State hands down by law (Articles 243G and 243W)".

The mechanism: a canteen rule touches entries in all three columns. Sending it to one department sends it to one of several governments that may have a say. Before choosing a recipient, find every entry, then read the Union's food law to see what it already covers. The next sections go inside each government to find which office holds the subject.

5 · Inside the Union government: Cabinet, ministries, departments

EXERCISE 1. Item by item:

1. Article 77(3) of the Constitution.
2. The Allocation of Business Rules, 1961 say which department owns which subject. The Transaction of Business Rules, 1961 say who decides a case. They also say which cases must go to the Cabinet.

3. The First Schedule lists the ministries and departments. The Second Schedule lists the subjects each one owns.
4. No decision is taken or order issued until all the departments concerned agree. If they do not, the Cabinet decides. A case counts if a decision in one department is likely to affect the business of another.

EXERCISE 2. The lead is the Department of Health and Family Welfare. Item 3(a) gives it the Food Safety and Standards Act, the Act under which a food label is regulated.

Others the Explanation to rule 4(1) might bring in, because the decision could affect their business:

- the Department of Consumer Affairs, item 6, "Regulation of Packaged Commodities";
- the Ministry of Food Processing Industries, whose items cover the industries that make biscuits, confectionery, ready-to-eat foods and soft drinks.

Whether either must in fact concur depends on how the case is framed. The lookup cannot settle that.

What the lookup does not tell you: which body makes the label rule, and under what section. The rules give a department a subject, not a power. The power to make the regulation comes from the Act.

EXERCISE 3. The Ministry of Food Processing Industries owns "Aerated water and soft drinks" (item 6) as an industry to develop. It owns neither of the two things the letter asks for.

The tax: the Goods and Services Tax Council is with the Department of Revenue (item 18A). So is the Central Goods and Services Tax Act (item 21(a)).

The safety limits: the Food Safety and Standards Act is with the Department of Health and Family Welfare (item 3(a)).

Split the letter in two, addressed to the departments that own each subject. Or address one note to both and say that rule 4(1) needs them to agree. Either way, cite the items.

EXERCISE 4. Quotable: "No single ministry owns a sugary drink. The tax, the factory and the safety standard each belong to a different office."

Then the detail. The Union government's own rulebook gives the drinks industry to the Ministry of Food Processing Industries. It gives tax to the Finance Ministry's Department of Revenue. It gives food safety law to the Health Ministry. The packet falls under Consumer Affairs.

How sure: certain about the rulebook as amended up to 22 July 2026, because it is published. Less sure about what any of them will do. The rulebook says who owns a subject, not who acts.

6 · How an Act is made

EXERCISE 1. Item by item:

1. In order:

- pre-legislative consultation
- Cabinet decision
- introduction (the first reading)
- second reading
- third reading

- the other House
- assent

1. First, the public consultation on the draft, if the department holds one. The 2014 policy asks for it, in paragraph 2. Second, a committee that examines the Bill. The Rajya Sabha booklet says a Select or Joint Committee can take evidence from experts.
2. It deals only with the matters listed in Article 110(1), such as a new tax or a change to one. The Rajya Sabha may only suggest changes, within fourteen days. The Lok Sabha may take them or leave them (Article 109).

EXERCISE 2. Established, at most: one House, or perhaps both, voted to pass a Bill.

Not established:

- That both Houses agreed to the same text (Article 107(2)). A news line can say "Parliament passed" when only one House has voted.
- That the President has assented. The Bill becomes an Act only on assent (Article 111).
- That the Act is in force. Look for its commencement clause, usually in section 1. If it names a date to be notified, look for that notification.
- That canteens must do anything yet. An Act often leaves the detail to rules or regulations, made later.

What to check: the Bill's status on the Houses' websites, the Act in the Gazette after assent, and the notification bringing it into force.

EXERCISE 3. No law requires it. The thirty days comes from the Pre-legislative Consultation Policy. That is a decision of senior civil servants, made on 10 January 2014. It is a policy, not a statute. So "illegally" is wrong.

The Policy itself lets a department skip consultation and record its reasons in the note for the Cabinet (paragraph 11). Nothing in the Policy asks for those reasons to be published, so your department may not be able to tell whether reasons were recorded.

A fair version: "The draft was not placed in the public domain before it went to the Cabinet. The Union's Pre-legislative Consultation Policy of 2014 asks for at least thirty days of public consultation. We ask the Ministry to publish its reasons, and to consult before the Bill is introduced."

EXERCISE 4. Answer first: through the owning Union department, the Law Ministry, the Union Cabinet and both Houses of Parliament, then the President. Our evidence can get in at two points. One is the public consultation on the draft, if one is held. The other is the parliamentary committee that examines the Bill.

The route, in order:

1. The Union department that owns the subject prepares the draft.
2. It may publish the draft for at least thirty days under the Pre-legislative Consultation Policy. It may also skip that and record why.
3. The Ministry of Law is consulted, and the Cabinet decides.
4. Parliament: introduction, possible reference to a committee, debate, clause by clause, passage, then the same in the other House.
5. The President's assent. Then a notification bringing it into force.

What we should do now: watch the department's website for a draft. Prepare a two-page memorandum of evidence, ready to send to the committee if the Bill is referred. If the Bill is circulated for opinion, the opinions are gathered through the State Governments, so the Government of Chhattisgarh would be asked.

What this page cannot say: how long any step takes, or whether such a Bill will be brought at all.

7 · How a rule or regulation is made, and where the public gets in

EXERCISE 1. Section 23 asks for three things. First, a draft goes out for the people likely to be affected. Second, a notice goes with it, giving the date from which the draft will be taken up. Third, the body making the rule must consider every objection or suggestion that arrives before that date. So must any body whose approval is needed. It then adds a consequence: once the final rule is in the Gazette, that is conclusive proof it was duly made.

Section 93 adds a step after the rule is made. It goes before each House of Parliament for a total of thirty days while it is in session, which may run across two or more sessions. If both Houses agree, they can change it or cancel it. What was done under it before that stays valid.

EXERCISE 2. Steps: the State Government publishes a draft first ("after previous publication"). FSSAI, the Food Authority, must approve before the rules are made. The State Government then makes them by notification in the Official Gazette. Section 94(3) also has every State rule laid before the State Legislature after it is made.

Bodies: the State Government and FSSAI.

The section does not say how long the objection period is, or from which day it runs. The draft's own notice sets that. Nor does it say which State department drafts the rules.

EXERCISE 3. First, the period runs from the day the draft's notice names. In the 2018 packaging case that was the day Gazette copies reached the public, two weeks after the draft's date. Read the notice before counting.

Second, "thirty days" is assumed. The notice sets the period; check it.

Third, Parliament does not vote a regulation into effect. Section 93 lays it before both Houses after it is made. The Houses may modify or annul it, but it has been made already, and what was done under it stays valid.

The fix: "Find the draft notice and the date it counts from. Send our objection before that date, to FSSAI, and copy the Central Government, whose approval section 92 requires."

EXERCISE 4. Draw a line from "Act" to "rule or regulation". Write on it the three phrases the power can carry: "by notification", "with the previous approval of", "after previous publication".

Then explain what each changes. "After previous publication" means a draft will come, with a date. That date is when the comment must arrive. "With the previous approval of" names a second body that must agree. Where section 23 of the General Clauses Act applies, that body must consider objections too. "By notification" tells you the final text will appear in the Gazette. For a rule made after previous publication, section 23 of the General Clauses Act makes that publication conclusive proof it was duly made.

Show the contrast on the board: FSSAI regulations under section 92 need a draft; Central Government rules under section 91 do not say so. Finish with the 2018 packaging case: the clock ran from 2 April 2018, not from the draft's date of 19 March. Reading the Act first is how you find the door and the deadline.

8 · Schemes and budgets: policy without a statute

EXERCISE 1. Article 282 lets the Union or a State give money for any public purpose. That holds even where the purpose is outside what that government may make laws on.

Article 112 has the President put a statement before both Houses every year. It sets out what the Government of India expects to receive and to spend that year.

The four questions: Who approved it? For what period? With what money, from whose budget? Is there an Act under it?

EXERCISE 2. It decides that the mission exists, who approved it (the Union Cabinet), its period (2024-25 to 2030-31) and its total outlay (Rs 10,103 crore).

It does not say how much will be spent in any one year. Dividing by seven gives an average, not a budget line. It does not name an Act behind the mission; the release names none. It does not say which department runs it day to day, or what share, if any, the States pay. Nor does it say what the money will achieve.

EXERCISE 3. Public health is on the State List (Seventh Schedule, List II, entry 6). But Article 282 lets the Union make grants for any public purpose, even outside the subjects Parliament may make laws on. And a centrally sponsored scheme, such as Poshan 2.0, is carried out through the States, with the cost shared by a stated ratio.

So "no way to fund" is wrong. Whether a Union scheme for this purpose exists today is a separate question. The note should search for one and, if it finds one, give its approval, period, money and guidelines.

EXERCISE 4. Answer: a scheme, unless you need something that only a law can do, such as a duty on others.

A campaign tells people things. It needs approval and money, not powers. A scheme is approved by a government and run through a budget, sometimes two. One example already exists: the oilseeds mission, approved by the Union Cabinet, includes a campaign on dietary guidelines for edible oils. The Union can also pay into such work through a grant, under Article 282, even though public health is a State subject.

The cost of that speed: a scheme lasts as long as its approval and its budget line. Plan for the renewal date from the start.

What this does not tell you: whether the campaign would change what anyone eats. That needs evidence, which a later section takes up.

9 · When no single body decides

EXERCISE 1. The Union Finance Minister chairs it. The Union Minister of State in charge of Revenue or Finance sits on it. So does, from each State, its Finance or Taxation Minister or another minister its government nominates. A decision needs at least three-fourths of the weighted votes of those present and voting. The Centre's vote weighs one-third. All the States together weigh two-thirds.

Section 9(1) caps central tax at 20 per cent. The Government notifies the rate on the Council's recommendations.

EXERCISE 2. The 20% is the rate of central tax on these goods. The Central Government set it by this notification, "on the recommendations of the Council". Its power is section 9(1) of the Central Goods and Services Tax Act, which caps central tax at 20 per cent.

The table does not give the States' share, so it does not give the full rate a buyer pays. It does not show later changes: Notification 01/2026, in force 1 May 2026, changed the codes in rows 2 and 3. It also does not show which drinks are taxed at a lower rate under Schedule I; row 2 points there.

EXERCISE 3. First, the Union did not levy 40%. The GST Council recommended a 40% rate for these drinks. The Central Government notified central tax at 20%, the most section 9(1) of the CGST Act allows.

Second, the Union cannot raise it whenever it chooses. Central tax is notified "on the recommendations of the Council", and a Council decision needs three-fourths of the weighted votes. The Centre holds one-third. Central tax is also already at the 20 per cent ceiling in section 9(1). To go higher, Parliament would first have to amend that section.

Rewrite: "The GST Council made its recommendation on 3 September 2025. Since 22 September 2025, central tax on sugar-added and flavoured drinks has been 20% (Notification 9/2025-Central Tax (Rate), as amended). A change needs a fresh Council recommendation."

EXERCISE 4. Quotable: "The GST Council, where the Union and every State sit together, recommended it. The Central Government then put central tax into force by notification."

Then the detail. The Council recommended a 40% rate on 3 September 2025. The Central Government's notification set central tax at 20% from 22 September 2025. The Union's vote on the Council weighs one-third, so it could not have done this alone.

Calibrate: "I have read the central notification. I have not checked each State's, so I can't tell you how every State gave effect to it."

10 · The people around a decision

EXERCISE 1. An actor's interest is what it stands to gain or lose from the decision.

Inside lobbying takes an organisation's case directly to lawmakers and officials. Outside lobbying takes it to the public, through the media and campaigns, so that the public presses the lawmakers.

Disclosure states the interest, so that readers can weigh the advice. It does not remove the interest, or its pull on the work.

EXERCISE 2. The three errors:

1. "All agree" is a claim about other people's views, with no evidence. It is also unlikely, because their interests differ. A canteen contractor stands to lose sales on the items a rule would remove. Write instead what each actor stands to gain or lose, and leave their views to evidence: a meeting, a survey, a written objection. "Junk food" is also undefined; name the items, as a rule would have to.
2. The distributor has an interest, not a conflict of interest. A conflict of interest belongs to someone who advises or decides and gains from one answer. The distributor is an actor pushing openly for its own side, which it is entitled to do. Consult it, and weigh what it says knowing what it stands to lose.
3. Interests are not only industry money. The department may hold a position it has argued before. It may want the survey to show a problem worth acting on. Its name may be attached to the proposal. Say so in a short statement of interests, and declare any funder, whoever it is.

EXERCISE 3. Yes, they should be heard, and you should be clear about why their view needs checking.

Companies that make sugary drinks stand to lose sales and profit from a higher tax. That is their interest, and everyone knows it. Having an interest does not take away the right to speak. In India, when a rule must be published in draft, anyone may object before the date the draft names, and a company is one of them.

What changes is how their claims are read. If a company says a tax will cost jobs, ask for the numbers and check them, as you would check an advocacy group's numbers. The decision itself belongs to the bodies that set the tax, not to any of the people pushing.

Quotable sentence: "Drinks companies have every right to be heard on this tax, and their claims should be checked as hard as anyone's."

11 · Finding who decides: the tracing method

EXERCISE 1. The six steps, in order:

1. Name the instrument the proposal needs.
2. Find whose subject it is: Union, State or both.
3. Find the body that holds the power, and the provision that gives it.
4. Find the process the instrument must pass.
5. List who else must agree, and who carries it out.
6. Write one sentence.

The sentence: X decides, under Y, by process Z, with W's agreement.

EXERCISE 2. No single body can do it alone.

The GST Council, where the Union Finance Minister and Minister of State sit with a minister from each State, recommends GST rates. The Union government then notifies its part of the tax. The States' part rests on State law, which you have not read. The Union's part cannot go above 20 per cent under the central GST Act.

The Health Ministry can argue for a higher tax, but it does not set the rate.

What you are not sure of: what State law says about the States' part, and whether the latest amendments changed the entries. Say so.

Quotable sentence: "The GST Council recommends the tax on sugary drinks, and the Union government notifies its part. The Health Ministry can argue for it, but cannot set it."

1. The provision, part by part:

Part	In the provision
body	the Board
instrument	regulations
must agree	the State Government, whose previous approval is needed
process	previous publication of a draft, then notification

Read the provision for its verb and its subject: "The Board may … make regulations". The words after "with" name the second decider. The words after "after" and "by" name the process.

2. Entry by entry:

Entry	List	Who can make laws on it
a	Union List	Parliament only (Article 246(1))
b	State List	the State Legislature, for its own State (Article 246(3))

Entry	List	Who can make laws on it
c	Concurrent List	both Parliament and the State Legislatures (Article 246(2))

Entry a has a condition built into it. It covers only industries that Parliament has declared, by law, to be under the Union's control. So before relying on it you look for the Act that makes the declaration, as the FSS Act's section 2 does for food.

3. The sentence: "The State Food Commission decides, by making regulations under section 12 of the State Food Act, with the State Government's previous approval."

Three are unanswered. The parts say who decides, under what and with whose agreement.

- Step 2, whose subject: the parts never say whether the State may legislate on the matter.
- Step 4, the process: they do not say whether a draft must be published for objections, how the regulations are notified, or whether they are laid before the State Legislature. Go back to section 12 and read the words after "after" and "by".
- The carry-out half of step 5: they do not say who enforces the regulations.

4. The trace, step by step:

Step	Answer
1 instrument	a regulation under the FSS Act
2 subject	the Union: the FSS Act already covers food, and its section 2 declares Union control of the food industry
3 body and provision	the Food Authority, under section 92(1)
4 process	a draft published for objections; the Central Government's approval; notification; laying before each House of Parliament (section 93)
5 who else must agree	the Central Government; inside it, the Department of Health and Family Welfare owns the Act

The sentence: "The Food Authority decides, by regulation under section 92(1) of the FSS Act. It needs the Central Government's previous approval and must publish a draft for objections first. The regulation is laid before Parliament under section 93."

What it does not settle: whether the Food Authority's duty reaches this label at all. Section 16(1) speaks of "safe and wholesome food", and the Act does not define "wholesome". So whether a warning on sugar, salt or fat is within that duty is an unsettled reading, and it decides steps 2 and 3. A regulation would have to say which provision it rests on. The trace also does not settle whether such a regulation already exists, or whether the Food Authority means to act.

5. Step 1. What instrument? Before naming a new one, check whether one exists. It does: section 6(b) of COTPA already forbids the sale within one hundred yards of an educational institution.

Step 2. Whose subject? The Union's: COTPA's section 2 declares Union control of the tobacco industry.

Steps 3 and 4. Body, provision and process: Parliament decided, in section 6(b), in 2003. The provision took effect through a notification about its date of effect, G.S.R. 687(E) of 18 September 2009. That notification's own text is not given here, so the exact date it set is not known from these facts.

Step 5. Who carries it out: officers such as those section 12(1) lets the Central or State Government authorise to enter and search.

So the trace turns the proposal round. Nobody needs to decide the rule; it was decided in 2003. The district's real request is about carrying the rule out, and it goes to the enforcing officers and to the government that authorises them. The sentence: "Parliament decided, in section 6(b) of COTPA. It took effect through G.S.R. 687(E) of 18 September 2009. Enforcement rests with officers the Central or State Government authorises, such as those in section 12(1)."

What it does not settle:

- whether the Amendment Act of 2007 changed section 6, which is not checked here;
- how the hundred yards are measured;
- whether the rule is being enforced near any school in the district.

6. The trace, step by step:

Step	What the preamble shows
1 instrument	regulations
2 whose subject	nothing
3 body and provision	the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India, under section 92(2)(k) read with section 23
4 process	a draft, objections considered, the final notification; not the approval or the laying
5 who else must agree, who carries out	nothing

What the preamble does not show: part of step 4 and all of step 5. It never mentions the Central Government's previous approval (section 92(1)) or laying before Parliament (section 93). It says nothing about whose subject this is; read section 2 of the FSS Act, which declares Union control of the food industry. It says nothing about who carries the regulations out; read section 30, under which each State Government appoints a Commissioner of Food Safety "for efficient implementation of food safety and standards".

A notification shows its own part of the trace. The rest is in the Act, so a backward trace always ends by reading the power-giving section itself.

7. Five lines broke, and they broke together.

The instrument is a regulation under the FSS Act, not an order. The power to make it is in section 92(1), and it belongs to the Food Authority, "with the previous approval of the Central Government". So the body is the Food Authority, and the Central Government's approval is a second decider.

The Allocation of Business Rules do not give anyone the power to make a food regulation. They distribute subjects among departments: they say which department deals with the FSS Act. That tells you whom to copy, not who decides.

The process is not an announcement. It is a draft published for objections, approval, notification, and laying before Parliament under section 93.

A corrected sentence: "The Food Authority decides, by regulation under section 92(1) of the FSS Act, with the Central Government's approval, after a draft for objections."

Why the wrong answer looks reasonable: ministers announce measures. The department really does own the Act, and the Central Government's approval really does run through it. Each of those facts is true. None of them makes the minister the holder of the power.

8. The instrument line broke, and everything after it followed.

The release names no Act. It says the Union Cabinet approved a mission. That reads as an executive decision with money attached, a scheme. If an Act stood behind it, the release would be the wrong place to look, and the mission's guidelines would say so. On the release alone, nothing needs Parliament's vote, and no Bill is involved.

The subject line went looking for a power to make a law. No law is being made. The question for a scheme is who made it, and who can change it. The release answers the first: the Union Cabinet. How schemes are made and funded is the section on schemes and budgets.

A corrected trace: "The Union Cabinet approved the mission, using the executive power of the Union (Article 73). A change to its campaign would go to whoever runs the mission, within what the Cabinet approved." The release does not name the department that runs the mission. The next document to read is the mission's own guidelines, which are not held here, so the trace stops there and says so.

Why the wrong answer looks reasonable: a national mission with a long name and a large budget sounds like a law. Many people assume anything national was passed by Parliament. The release says "Cabinet", and that one word was the place to stop.

9. Step 1. What instrument? The text is a radio address. It asks each listener to decide for themselves: "Decide that you will use 10% less oil every month." It names no Act, rule, regulation, notification or scheme.

Steps 2 to 5 have nothing to attach to. There is no subject to place, because no law is made. There is no provision and no process, because nothing binds anyone.

The result: no body has decided anything binding. The text is a request to the public, made in a speech. The headline's word "sets" is wrong. A correct line would be: "Prime Minister urges people to cut cooking oil by 10%."

What the trace does not establish:

- That no programme on oil exists. The trace read one text. A scheme or campaign could exist elsewhere, and would need its own trace.
- That the call has no effect. A speech can put a subject on the agenda and change what people do. The trace says only that it is not an instrument.
- Whether using less oil would change anyone's weight. That is a question for evidence, not for a trace.

10. Step 1. Instrument: a notification setting the GST rate.

Step 2. Subject: Article 246A(1) gives both Parliament and every State Legislature power over GST.

Step 3. Body and provision: the GST Council recommends rates (Article 279A(4)(e)). The Central Government notifies the central tax under section 9(1) of the CGST Act, up to 20 per cent. The State share rests on State law under Article 246A, not traced here. The Allocation of Business Rules give the GST Council and the CGST Act to the Department of Revenue, not to the Ministry of Health.

Step 4. Process: Council recommendation, then notifications. And here the trace finds something else. The Council's 56th meeting already recommended moving sugar-added and flavoured drinks, including aerated waters, to 40%. Notification 9/2025-Central Tax (Rate) puts them in Schedule III, at a central rate of 20 per cent, from 22 September 2025. So the line asks for a rate that has already been recommended, and its central half notified.

Step 5. Who else: every State, through its minister on the Council (Article 279A(2)(c)).

A rewrite that informs rather than misdirects: "The GST Council has recommended a 40% de-merit rate for sugar-added drinks, and the central 20 per cent is in force under Notification 9/2025. Any change would be recommended by the GST Council, which moves first; the Central Government would notify the central rate. The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare can put the health case to them."

What the trace does not establish:

- Whether a higher rate would reduce what people drink, or obesity. That needs evidence.

- That the Ministry of Health has no role. It is an actor that can advise and argue. It does not set the rate.
- That the rate stands today. The trace read the notifications up to 01/2026, in force 1 May 2026, and not the amendment 19/2025 it names.

12 · What a frame is

EXERCISE 1. The four functions: it defines a problem, diagnoses a cause, passes a moral judgement and suggests a remedy.

An episodic frame tells an issue through one case or event and its details. A thematic frame takes the broad view: the trend over time and what led to it. Agenda setting starts with choosing which issues get attention at all. Priming is predisposing a reader to think a particular way, so that what they meet first colours a later judgement.

EXERCISE 2. Problem: what children eat has shifted towards packaged snacks near schools. Cause: two are named, the shops' stock and families' lack of time to cook. Judgement: the district has a duty, so the fault lies with public inaction rather than with children. Remedy: not stated. "Act" is a call without a measure, so this label is blank.

Left out: activity, sleep, prices and income, who supplies the shops, and any number. It is thematic: it describes a change over a decade and its causes, with no single child or shop.

One more thing to notice: "grows up on this food" passes a judgement on the food in a phrase. Judgements often sit in a single phrase like this rather than in a sentence of their own.

EXERCISE 3. Draw a box for the whole issue and a smaller box inside it for what one report can hold. Any report selects, because it is finite. Selection is the first move of a frame: some aspects made prominent, others left out. So a report without a frame is not available to anyone.

Then separate framing from spin. Spin hides the choice and presents a frame as the only way to see the issue. A researcher can do the opposite. Name the frame you chose and say what it leaves out. Where it matters, say how the same data would read in another frame.

Use the review by Koon and colleagues as an example. The three authors write that they "make no claims to objectivity" and that their training shaped their reading. They still aimed for "a fair and balanced account". That is the standard: not frameless, but open about the frame.

13 · The frames obesity is argued in

EXERCISE 1. Most personal blame: sinful behaviour. In the middle, mixing personal and outside causes, in no fixed order: time crunch, food addiction, eating disorder, disability. Least personal blame: manipulation by commercial interests, and a toxic food environment.

United States; late 2006 to early 2007; 1,009 adults in a national web panel.

EXERCISE 2. Lay it out as premises and a conclusion (Book 0, F4). Premise: 78 per cent of people blame obesity on the food environment. Conclusion: the public in Chhattisgarh will support the tax.

The premise is misreported in two ways. The figure is 77.5 per cent, rounded to 78 in the paper's text. It is the share of United States adults in 2006-07 who called the food environment an important explanation. "Important" meant explaining a lot for at least 10 in every 100 people with weight problems. It is not "blame", and most respondents called several accounts important.

The inference fails on its own. A belief about cause is not support for a measure, and a United States sample tells you nothing about Chhattisgarh. Even inside that survey, support for a tax on junk food is a separate question with its own answer.

Instead: "In one United States survey (2006-07, 1,009 adults), 77.5 per cent called the food environment an important explanation of obesity, alongside other accounts. No comparable Indian survey is known to us. Public support in Chhattisgarh for a tax on sugary drinks has not, to our knowledge, been measured."

EXERCISE 3. Honestly: we do not know. No survey I know of has asked Indians to weigh these explanations.

What we do know comes from elsewhere. In one American survey, in 2006 and 2007, most people saw several causes at once, both personal habits and what is sold around them. The one Indian study I know of interviewed 18 people close to food-tax decisions in 2024. It found the tax being argued as a way to raise money, as a health measure, and as unfair to poorer buyers.

Confidence: low for India, because nobody has measured it. Moderate that people hold several views at once, because the American survey found that clearly.

Quotable: "Nobody has yet asked Indians this properly; where people have been asked, they see more than one cause."

14 · The frame sets the menu

EXERCISE 1. (a) The toxic food environment and industry manipulation accounts; not the sinful-behaviour account. (b) The sinful-behaviour account (and the disability account went with opposing it). (c) The food-addiction account.

United States; late 2006 to early 2007; 1,009 adults.

EXERCISE 2. The first two sentences use a personal-choice frame. Cause: young people's discipline and parents' supervision. Judgement: young people and parents have fallen short. That frame's menu is advice, campaigns and family effort.

The request is a tax on a product. A tax makes sense in a frame where the product or its supply is part of the cause. Inside the memo's own frame, the tax reads as punishing young people for a failing. In the one survey held, support for a junk-food tax went with the environment and industry accounts, not with personal blame. So the memo argues against its own request.

A rewrite that matches: "Sugar-sweetened drinks are cheap, sold widely near schools and heavily advertised. Their price can be changed through the tax on them. We therefore ask the Department to support a higher tax on these drinks." The facts in the first sentence would each need a source before the memo goes out.

The rewrite still does not establish two things. It does not show that the tax would reduce what young people drink. It does not show that the person deciding will accept a health frame for a tax. The first needs evidence on effects. The second needs you to find out which frame the decider holds; a revenue frame would need a different opening again.

The first two sentences also put the cause in young people's character. This book does not write notes that turn on anyone's willpower, whatever the request.

EXERCISE 3. Answer: the way obesity is described decides which measures look sensible, before any data are weighed.

Three descriptions, three lists. If obesity is each person's choice, the list is advice and campaigns, and taxes look like punishing the buyer. If it is the food around us, the list includes school food rules, labels and taxes on products. If it is a disability or a disease, the list is treatment and protection from discrimination; the survey below tested the disability account only.

The evidence that this matters to people: one large United States survey, 2006-07, 1,009 adults. What people believed caused obesity went with which measures they backed. Support for a junk-food tax went with blaming the food en-

vironment and industry, not with blaming individuals. It is one survey, and it shows a link, not that changing the description changes minds.

What it means for us. When the department brings you a measure, ask which description it rests on. Then ask whether the people who must agree, in Finance for instance, see the problem the same way.

15 · Reading the frame in a public argument

EXERCISE 1. Read each passage for its remedy and who carries it out, because that slot decides whether a frame is about personal choice.

Passage	Remedy in its words	Supports or goes against
Mann Ki Baat	"while buying oil for cooking, you will buy 10% less oil"	supports: the remedy is a household's purchase, though the problem is set for "a fit and healthy nation"
Eat Right India	a "'whole of the government' approach" joining the "food-related mandates of the agriculture, health, environment, and other ministries"	goes against: the remedy sits with ministries
National Health Policy	action on "the environment for health"	goes against: diet is listed under the environment, not under personal choice

So the classmate's sentence is wrong as written. One text puts the remedy in the household. Two put it with ministries or in the environment for health.

A rewrite that says only what the passages show:

"Government of India texts frame obesity in more than one way. The Prime Minister's address of February 2025 places the remedy in each household's purchase of cooking oil. FSSAI's Eat Right India page places it with several ministries, and the National Health Policy 2017 lists diet under the environment for health."

Notice that the rewrite names its texts. A claim about how a government frames something is a claim about documents, and the reader should be able to open them.

EXERCISE 2. Start with her own report. Ask which facts she put in, and which she left out. Perhaps she gave the new rate and quoted a drinks company and a doctor. Perhaps she did not say who pays the tax or what the money is used for. Every report makes those choices, because there is not room for everything.

Then say what the choices do. The facts at the top tell the reader what the story is about. The person quoted last often gets the last word on what should happen. A single word, such as "burden" or "relief", tells the reader how to feel about it.

So a report can be accurate in every line and still lead the reader somewhere. That is not a charge of bias. It is how writing works. The fix is to know which way you are leading, and to give room to the strongest view on the other side.

One sentence she could quote: "Every report on a tax chooses which facts come first and whose voice comes last. Those choices tell readers what the tax is about before anyone argues."

EXERCISE 3. The five lines are problem, cause, judgement, remedy, and what the passage leaves out. Each carries words copied from the passage.

When the passage gives no words for a line, you write "not stated". You do not fill it from what you already believe.

The first further step is the counter-frame: the problem, cause, judgement and remedy an opponent would give. The second is running the five lines on your own draft.

1. The five lines:

Slot	Words in the passage
problem	"children buy them every day" (children eating fried snacks daily)
cause	"sold at the gate of every school" (the stalls and where they stand)
judgement	"It is wrong that parents cannot protect their children"
remedy	"The municipality should license the stalls at school gates"

The passage fills all four slots, and names who is to act: the municipality. The cause is placed in the place of sale, not in the children or their parents. The judgement is about fairness and a duty to protect children.

2. Sentence by sentence:

Sentence	Problem	Cause	Judgement	Remedy
a	"Obesity is rising among young adults"	not stated	not stated	not stated
b	not stated	not stated	"must" (a duty placed on each person)	"take charge of what is on our own plate"
c	not stated	"spend crores advertising to children"	"the regulator does nothing" (blame on the regulator)	not stated

Implied, but not stated:

1. Nothing beyond the problem. A bare statement of a problem is the start of many frames, and you cannot yet tell which.
2. The cause is implied to be what each person eats. The sentence never says so.
3. The problem is implied to be what children eat. The remedy is implied to be that the regulator should act on advertising.

Keep the implied column separate. If you put an implied cause in the cause line, you can no longer tell your reading from the text.

3. Phrase by phrase:

Phrase	Slot it mainly fills	What it suggests about cause
a	cause	outside the person: the surroundings are full of cheap options
b	judgement	inside the person: it is the individual's matter
c	problem	defines the problem as cost to public money, not as health
d	judgement	a duty owed to children, so someone other than the children must act
e	problem and remedy	makes sugar an enemy to be fought; names no one who fights or how

Two of these are metaphors: "sea" and "war". A metaphor carries a cause and a duty in one word, which is why it is a strong cue.

Each answer is a clue, not a verdict. "A personal choice" can appear in a sentence that goes on to say "not just a personal choice". Read the whole passage before you name its frame.

4. The five lines:

Slot	Words in the policy
problem	"the environment for health" needs "improving"
cause	"social determinants of health" (the passage does not define the phrase)
judgement	"priority", "empowered", "effectively"
remedy	"coordinated action", "enforcing regulatory provisions", by "an empowered public health cadre"
left out	which regulations; which bodies act on food; how diets would change; who sells the food

The diet item, read alone, sounds personal: "regular exercises" is something a person does. The passage puts it somewhere else. It is listed under "improving the environment for health", and the means named is "enforcing regulatory provisions". So the frame of this passage is the environment, with a goal stated in personal words.

You do not need to define "social determinants of health" to place it. The passage puts it as the thing the cadre is to "address", which is the cause slot.

The item states a goal, not a means. The passage does not say how diets would become balanced. That gap goes in the "left out" line.

5. The five lines:

Slot	Words in the message
problem	"obesity"
cause	"many times we eat a lot of fried food items which have a huge impact on obesity"
judgement	"a very important issue for our country"; "should" (a duty placed on parents)
remedy	parents "play some outdoor sport" and "take their children along"; "eat well"; "an hour" a day "for exercise"; "avoid these things"
left out	who makes, sells or prices fried food; any body that could act; why people eat it so often

The cause is what "we eat", and the remedy is what parents and each person do. The judgement makes obesity the country's issue, but the remedy stays at home. That pairing, a national problem with a household remedy, is the frame.

The message repeats the Prime Minister's call on oil. In your grid it belongs in the remedy line, quoted as his call, not as the athlete's own.

6. The two frames, line by line:

Slot	Problem 5 (Neeraj Chopra)	Counter-frame from the Eat Right India page
problem	"obesity"	"foodborne illnesses and various diet-related diseases", across "all age groups and all sections of society"
cause	what "we eat": "fried food items"	the food system
judgement	"a very important issue for our country", with the duty on parents	a shared task: "the collective action of all stakeholders"
remedy	parents "play some outdoor sport" and "take their children along"; "eat well"	a "'whole of society' approach, bringing all stakeholders together on a common platform"

The frames differ most in the remedy, and in who carries it out. In one, parents and each person change how they eat and move. In the other, the government, food businesses, civil society and citizens act together.

Both name food as the cause. The athlete means the food people eat. The page means the system that supplies it. The same word sits in the cause slot of two frames, with different owners.

Notice where the counter-frame came from. Both texts reached the public through the Government of India. A counter-frame need not come from an opponent. It is a different answer to the same four questions.

7. The problem line, the cause line, the remedy line and the verdict broke. The judgement line holds.

The problem line kept one item from a list. The page names "food borne diseases, under-nutrition, micronutrient deficiencies and growing incidence of obesity and non-communicable diseases", and then "the environment and the future of our planet".

The cause line moved a cause from one problem to another. The page says production and consumption practices "are threatening the environment and the future of our planet". It does not say they cause obesity. For obesity, the cause line is "not stated".

The remedy line stopped too early and added clinics and screening, which the page does not name. The sentence goes on: "through ensuring safe, healthy food for all people in an environmentally sustainable way". The means is the food supplied.

A corrected verdict: a safe-and-healthy-food frame with several problems, the planet among them. It states a cause only for the harm to the environment.

Why the wrong reading looks reasonable: the production sentence comes right after the list that names obesity. A reader who expects a food-system cause from FSSAI joins the two. That is reading in the frame you expected.

8. Every line broke, and the verdict with them.

Slot	Words in the paragraph
problem	"Children in our district are flooded with these drinks"
cause	"at every school gate" (where the drinks are sold)
judgement	"flooded" (a metaphor of something overwhelming)
remedy	"The rate should go higher still"
left out	which body would act (the paragraph names none); who pays; what a higher rate would change

The first sentence is a checkable fact. The release of 3 September 2025 recommended the 40% rate for these drinks, the highest it lists. The second sentence is a claim about the district with no source given. The third is a remedy.

Why the wrong reading looks reasonable: the paragraph opens with a fact, and a fact at the top makes the rest read like a report. The frame sits in one metaphor and one "should". The paragraph is not wrong to have a frame. It is wrong to be called neutral.

9. Left out: the health effects of what is taxed; who is harmed by the drinks; what the revenue is spent on.

Each item is something a frame in which a tax changes what people buy would put in. The quotation keeps them out by a rule: tax policy is "supposed to raise revenue and that's it".

What your reading does not establish:

- Whether the official is right. The quotation states a view about what a tax is for. That is a value premise, not a finding, and evidence alone cannot settle it.
- How widely the view is held. It is one interviewee in one article. The same article reports that other interviewees thought directing the revenue to health could win public support.

- That it is the Ministry of Finance's position. An official speaking in an interview is not the Ministry deciding.

10. The five lines:

Slot	Words in the headline
problem	"sugar"
cause	not stated; sugar itself is cast as the enemy
judgement	"war" (an enemy, and urgency)
remedy	the "Centre" fights; no instrument named
left out	which body acted; under what power; what the measure is; whom it affects

The war metaphor does two things at once. It makes the problem an enemy, and it makes the government the side that fights. It leaves out what was actually done. A war can be a tax, a label rule, a speech or nothing.

What to check before you repeat it:

- Find the text behind the headline: a press release, a notification, a speech.
- Trace what it is, with the tracing method: which instrument, which body, under which provision. "The Centre" is everyday usage for the Union government; it names no particular body. Find which one acted.
- If no instrument exists, your note says a speech or a statement was made, not that a policy was.

What the frame reading cannot tell you: whether any policy exists, or whether it would change what people eat. It cannot even tell you whether the words are the government's or the newspaper's.

16 · What evidence can settle in a policy choice, and what it cannot

EXERCISE 1. Premise (evidence): a survey found that most college canteens in the district sell sugary drinks. The abstract and its finding are made up for this exercise.

Conclusion: the State must ban the sale of sugary drinks in college canteens.

Grant the premise. The conclusion still needs these, and the survey supplies none of them.

Missing premise	Could evidence supply it?
sugary drinks sold in canteens add to the problem the ban is meant to solve	partly: studies of what students drink, and where they buy it
a ban would change what students drink, rather than where they buy it	partly: studies of similar bans, judged for whether they apply here
the change is worth the limit on choice and the canteens' lost sales	no: a value premise
the State holds the power to ban sales in these canteens	no: a question of law, answered by tracing the power, not by a survey
the ban can be enforced in every canteen	partly: evidence on enforcement, plus a judgement of feasibility

The survey describes how big one part of the problem is in one district. That is useful. It is the first of the three things evidence can do, and only the first.

A version the survey supports: “Most college canteens in the district sold sugary drinks. This tells us how widely they are sold. It does not tell us whether a ban would change what students drink, or whether the State should impose one.”

EXERCISE 2. Start by splitting her word “works”. It could mean that people buy fewer sugary drinks. It could mean that fewer people develop obesity. It could mean that the tax is worth what it costs. These are three different questions.

Then give each its answer. On buying, there is modelling evidence. Summan and colleagues report a study projecting that an extra tax of 10% to 30% could cut demand by 7% to 30%. That is a projection, with a wide range, and it is about buying, not about weight. On obesity, a demand model says nothing directly. On whether it is worth it, no study can answer. That depends on how much weight you give to health, to prices for poorer families and to jobs. The people deciding should argue that out in the open.

End by saying what would change the picture: studies that follow what happens to buying and to weight after a real tax.

One sentence she could quote: “The evidence suggests a higher tax would cut how much sugary drink people buy. Whether it is worth doing is a choice no study can make for us.”

EXERCISE 3. Evidence can answer how big a problem is and for whom, what an option does compared with something else, and what it costs.

It cannot settle four things on its own. Which outcomes matter most. Whether the spread of gains and losses is fair. Whether the option can be carried out. Whether now is the time.

A sentence containing “should” needs a value premise: a premise saying what matters, or what ought to be done.

17 · Informing policy and campaigning for it

EXERCISE 1. The two jobs:

- Informing: setting out the options, what the evidence says about each, and how sure it is, without choosing.
- Campaigning, or advocacy: arguing for one option, from a view of what ought to be done.

The four marks:

1. Evidence used selectively.
2. Uncertainty dropped, or doubt made up.
3. A value written as if it were a finding.
4. An interest not declared.

EXERCISE 2. It campaigns. Its last sentence argues for one option, waiting, and the document calls itself an evidence summary.

- Mark 4: an association of drinks makers stands to lose from a higher tax, and the summary does not say so in these lines. Its standing to comment is real. Its interest has to be on the page.

- Mark 2, run backwards: "mixed and uncertain" is a claim about the evidence. Ask for the studies, how they were found, and where they disagree.
- Mark 1: "taxes in some countries have not reduced obesity" names the countries where the result went one way. Ask which countries, and what was found in the others.
- Mark 3: "should therefore wait" is a judgement about what to do under uncertainty. Waiting is an option with its own costs, and choosing it is a value, not a finding.

Ask for: the list of studies and how they were chosen, the effect sizes with their ranges, and a statement of who funded the summary.

One fair point to keep. The burden on poorer families is a real argument. A 2026 study of food taxes in India by Summan and colleagues reports that taxes on junk foods are "perceived as regressive". That means they take a larger share of a poorer buyer's income. It belongs in the committee's options, labelled as an argument about who pays.

EXERCISE 3. Say which hat you are wearing, then answer the question you were asked.

"Our note doesn't take a side. It sets out what the GST Council recommended, what one modelling study estimated about demand, and who gains and loses. Our head of department has said publicly that the rate should rise, and the note says so too, so readers can weigh it."

If pressed for your own view, give it as yours: "My own view is that it should rise. That's a judgement about whose interests count most. The evidence doesn't settle it."

Quotable sentence: "The evidence can tell you what a tax might do; whether to raise it is a choice, and we've said where we stand."

What not to do: say "the evidence shows the tax must rise". That is mark 3, said to a journalist, and it will be printed.

1. Sentence by sentence:

Sentence	Job	Because
a	informing	it compares the options on cost and reach and picks neither
b	campaigning	"the only responsible choice" is a judgement that argues for B
c	campaigning	it argues for A, openly; that is honest campaigning, not a fault
d	informing	it states a limit of the evidence
e	campaigning	it argues for A by questioning the motives of anyone who disagrees

2. Sentence by sentence:

Sentence	Mark	Because
a	1	two studies that went the other way were left out, and the reader is not told
b	2	a range became its top end
c	3	"a duty to act" is a value; no study contains a duty
d	4	the writer gains from one outcome and does not declare it
e	2	doubt is added that the evidence does not carry: mark 2 run backwards

3. The sentence holds two claims. One is about what evidence shows. The other is a value: "must stop". Split them.

- The finding, written so it can be checked: "A study of [whom, where, when] found that [what was measured], with [how sure]." If no such study is named, there is no finding to keep, and the sentence should say "we found no study that measured this".
- The value, marked as a choice: "Whether canteens should stop selling sugary drinks is a judgement. It weighs that evidence against other things, such as what children would buy instead and what the canteens earn. The evidence does not make the choice."

A third question hides in "every school canteen": who could make such a rule at all. That is the second running proposal of this book. Run the trace from the section on finding who decides before you write any sentence about it.

4. Sentence by sentence:

Sentence	Job	Because
1	campaigning	"strategic, principled, and citizen-centric" are judgements, and "will enhance the quality of life of every last citizen" is a forecast with no measure behind it
2	informing	who met, where, and who chaired: facts you can check
3	informing	it states what the release itself is not: the recommendations have force only when notified

A government release reports decisions and also presents them well. Neither is a fault in a press release, which no reader takes for a neutral review. Your job is to separate the two when you use it.

Carry sentences 2 and 3 into the note. Sentence 3 matters most: it tells you to go on to the notification before you write that any rate is in force. Leave sentence 1 out, or quote it only as how the government described its reform.

5. Sentence by sentence:

Sentence	Job	Because
1	informing	a finding of the study, about who holds the decision, drawn from its review and interviews
2	leans to campaigning	it puts forward one option, earmarking, and says what it might achieve
3	informing	it states the main obstacle to the paper's own suggestion

Yes, the paper marks it. Sentence 2 says "may", not "will". It sits in the discussion, where a reader expects the authors' judgement. And sentence 3 gives the case against at once. That is what an honest suggestion looks like inside a research paper: the option, how sure, and its main obstacle, side by side.

What would have made it mark 3: "The evidence shows that India must earmark the revenue."

6. Both campaign. The first asks each listener to act. The second argues that the matter is a duty to the family, not only a personal choice. That is a value.

Neither is a fault under this section's rule. It is a public appeal by a political leader, made openly as an appeal. No listener takes a radio address for a neutral summary of evidence. The rule is about documents that say they inform and then campaign.

In your note, quote them as what was said, by whom, where and when. For example: "In Mann Ki Baat on 23 February 2025, the Prime Minister asked listeners to use 10% less oil every month." That sentence informs: it reports an appeal. It is not evidence that using 10% less oil changes anyone's weight, and your note should not use it as such.

7. The last line broke. The first two lines are true, and they are about the first half of the sentence. The second half, "proves that the district needs a tax", is a value written as a finding: mark 3. A survey can say what students at one college drink. It cannot say what the district ought to do, and it cannot prove a need for one measure rather than another.

The fix keeps the survey and moves the value out. "Section 2 of this note reports what our survey of students at one college found about sugary drinks. Whether the district should seek a tax is a separate judgement; the survey does not make it."

Why the wrong answer looks reasonable: the sentence carries the signs of evidence, a survey and a pointer to its methods. Those signs belong to the first half. The job of a sentence is decided by what it concludes.

8. The last line broke, because the first three lines look only at the words, not at what was chosen or concluded.

- Mark 1: "the studies we reviewed all found" says nothing about how the studies were chosen. A review that only kept studies with one result would read exactly like this.
- Mark 3 (and mark 1 again): "not supported by the evidence" dismisses the other side's argument in one line, with no evidence shown. Who pays a tax is partly a question of values, and no review settles it.
- Mark 2: "can be confident that a higher rate will reduce obesity in the district" makes a jump. It goes from demand falling in other countries to weight falling here. The limits are dropped: other countries, a different outcome, a different rate.
- The last sentence is a recommendation in disguise. "Can be confident" does the work of "should".

So the paragraph campaigns, and it says it is background.

Why the wrong answer looks reasonable: people check for campaigning by looking for "should" and "must". A paragraph can campaign without either, through what it leaves out and how far it stretches its evidence.

9. Decide what the sentence would be doing in your note. In the address, it supports an appeal. In an informing note, it would be a figure about the world. A figure about the world needs its source opened, as Book 0's section on checking a reference taught. Find it, confirm it, locate the passage, read it.

The sentence names no study. So before it goes in as a fact, find four things. Which study. Which population: all ages or adults only, and which country. Which year. And how obesity was defined and measured.

Until you have found it, you can still use the sentence, but only as a report of what was said. For example: "In Mann Ki Baat on 23 February 2025, the Prime Minister cited a study finding that one in eight people is troubled by obesity." That informs about the speech. It does not inform about how common obesity is.

What the sentence does not establish:

- How common obesity is in Chhattisgarh, in the district, or among school children, which is what your proposal is about.
- What "troubled by the problem" means as a measure. It is not a term a survey would use.
- That the figure is up to date or measured rather than self-reported.

10. Classify: campaigning, in a report that presents findings. It carries mark 3: "should raise" is a value, and "our findings show" claims the findings contain it.

Rewrite in two sentences, with the value moved out:

"Our findings show [what was measured, in whom, with how much certainty]. Whether the rate should rise further is a judgement. It also weighs government revenue and the cost to poorer buyers. Our findings do not settle it."

If the department wants a higher rate, it can say so in a separate letter that opens by saying it argues for one.

What the rewrite does not establish:

- That the findings are right. The rewrite fixes the job the sentence does, not the evidence under it.
- That a higher rate would protect children. Findings about what children drink are not findings about their weight or health. And an effect of a tax measured elsewhere is not an effect measured here.
- Who would act on it. The Council recommends; a rate has force only when it is notified. The report's readers still need the trace from the section on finding who decides.

18 · A one-page note on one Indian proposal

EXERCISE 1. The nine lines:

1. The proposal, in one sentence.
2. The instrument it needs.
3. Whose subject it is.
4. The deciding body and its provision.
5. The process and how far it has got, with a date.
6. Who else must agree.
7. The frame and the counter-frame.
8. What evidence can and cannot settle.
9. Which job the note does.

The two rules: check every factual line against the passage it rests on. Name in the note whatever you did not check.

EXERCISE 2. There is no single right note. Check yours against this list.

1. Line 1 is one sentence that says what someone wants, with no claim about its effects.
2. Line 2 names a kind of instrument: an Act, a rule or regulation, a rate or order notified under an Act, or a scheme.
3. Lines 3 and 4 name a body, not "the government", and a numbered provision. If you could not find one, the note says where the trace stopped and which document would settle it. For the canteen rule, this book's sources do not settle whose subject it is. A note that says so, and names the candidates, passes. A note that guesses fails.
4. Line 5 names the instrument now in force, if there is one, with its number and date, and the newest amendment you opened.
5. Line 6 names every other body whose agreement the process needs.
6. Line 7 quotes the words that carry the frame, from a real text, and gives a counter-frame.

7. Line 8 separates what evidence can say from the judgement it cannot make. Every figure has its population, year and source, and a modelled figure is called a model.
8. Line 9 says which job the note does, and nothing in it does the other job.
9. Every row of your table says "yes", or the note names that line as unchecked.

Did you mean to inform, and does a line still say "should"? Then move it into a sentence that says it is a judgement.

EXERCISE 3. Line by line:

- Line 1: "The government should ban" is a demand, not a proposal sentence. Write what is wanted: "A rule that school canteens may not sell sugary drinks."
- Line 2: no instrument or scheme is named. An Act, a rule under an existing Act, an order, or a scheme condition? Each goes to a different body.
- Lines 3 and 4: "the Ministry of Education will make this rule" names a ministry with no provision, and "will" claims it is decided. Whose subject a canteen rule is has not been traced. This book's sources do not settle it, so the note should say where the trace stops.
- Lines 5 and 6: no process, no date, no one else who must agree.
- Line 7: no frame is named. The note's own frame (children's protection, "the only responsible choice") is not marked as a frame, and no counter-frame is given.
- Line 8: "studies prove" names no study, no population and no year. A study can show what happened to what children bought or weighed. It cannot prove a policy is right.
- Line 9: the note campaigns ("should", "the only responsible choice") without saying it does.
- Rule 1: not one line can be checked, because no source is named.
- Rule 2: nothing is marked as unchecked, so the reader cannot tell which claims rest on anything.

EXERCISE 4. The five lines:

Line	The note's words
Problem	not stated as a problem; the note is about who decides on "a higher tax on sugar-sweetened drinks"
Cause	not stated
Judgement	avoided on purpose: "It does not recommend"
Remedy	the proposal itself: "Raise the GST on the drinks in the 'added sugar or other sweetening matter or flavoured' entry"
Left out	every other measure, such as a school-canteen rule or a label; other foods and drinks; what the State Government itself wants

The note never names a cause. But it takes a tax as its proposal, so it already sits inside one frame. In that frame the problem is what is sold and at what price, not only what each person chooses. A reader who thinks in the personal-choice frame would ask why a note on obesity begins with a tax at all.

That is not a fault, because every account leaves something out. It becomes one only if the note hides it. A line such as "this note covers one measure; others, such as a canteen rule or a label, are not discussed" tells the committee what the note chose.

EXERCISE 5. **Answer.** The GST Council would have to recommend it first, and then the Central Government would notify the central rate. Your route in is the State's minister on the Council.

- The Council recommends GST rates to the Union and the States (Constitution, Article 279A).
- The central tax on these drinks is now 20 per cent, the most section 9(1) of the CGST Act allows. A higher central rate would need section 9(1) of the CGST Act to be amended. How the rest of the 40% is set was not checked.
- A Council decision needs three-fourths of the weighted votes. The Union's vote counts for one-third and the States' together for two-thirds. So no decision passes without the Union's yes, and none passes on the Union's yes alone.
- The Ministry of Health is not a member (Article 279A(2)). Summan and colleagues describe health ministries as playing "a largely advisory role".

What it would not tell you: whether the change would reduce obesity among children. The only estimate this note holds is a model of demand, not a measure of weight.

Checked on 2 October 2026 against Notification 9/2025 as amended by 01/2026; the December 2025 amendment was not read.

Glossary

Every term of art this book teaches, in the plain words it gets where it is first used, and the section that teaches it.

Term	Plain words	Section
actor (around a policy decision)	a person or organisation that tries to shape a decision, or is affected by it, without holding the power to take it	10
agenda setting	the first stage of the policy process, made up of naming a problem and putting forward options; it starts with choosing which issues get attention at all, before any frame is chosen	1, 12
Allocation of Business Rules	the Union government's rules (1961, amended), made by the President under Article 77(3), saying which department owns which subject: departments in the First Schedule, subjects in the Second	5
annual financial statement	the statement of the Government of India's estimated receipts and expenditure for a financial year, which the President lays before both Houses of Parliament (Article 112(1))	8
assent	the President's agreement that turns a passed Bill into an Act; the President may assent or withhold it (Article 111)	6
Bill	a statute in draft	6
Cabinet	the senior ministers of the Council of Ministers, which the Prime Minister leads	5
campaigning (for policy)	starting from a position about what ought to be done and arguing for one option; also called advocacy	17
centrally sponsored scheme	a scheme carried out through the State Governments and Union Territory administrations, its cost shared between the Central Government and the State by a stated ratio	8
cess	an extra tax charged alongside the main one	18
chain of authority	the ladder from the Constitution down to Acts, then rules or regulations, then notifications and orders; each lower instrument rests on, and must stay within, the one above	3
commencement	the date a provision of an Act comes into force, often left to a later notification and different for different provisions	3
Concurrent List	List III of the Seventh Schedule: subjects that belong to both Parliament and the State Legislatures (Article 246)	4
counter-frame	the problem, cause, judgement and remedy an opponent would give the same facts	15
cue word	a word or short phrase that carries a frame in a few letters; a metaphor is one kind	15
disclosure (of an interest)	stating the interest so that others can weigh the advice; it does not remove the interest	10

Term	Plain words	Section
entry (of a Seventh Schedule list)	one numbered subject in a list, in a few words, such as State List entry 6, public health and sanitation	4
episodic frame	telling an issue through one case or event, with its details: one child, one shop, one day	12
evidence	facts, actual or asserted, known through experience or observation, offered in support of a conclusion; it is not the conclusion	16
evidence-informed policymaking	policymaking in which the evidence used, and the judgements made about it, are found and stated systematically and openly; the rest of the process need not be	16
executive decision	a decision of the government itself, with no new Act behind it	3
executive power	the power of a government to act by its own decision, reaching the matters its legislature has power to make laws on, not only those it has made laws on (Articles 73, 162)	3
feasibility (of a policy option)	whether it can be done: evidence can inform it (costs, capacity, what the law allows), but whether the bodies with the power will commit to it is a judgement; not the same as "feasible (question)" (Book 7)	16
four jobs (around a decision)	propose, advise, decide, carry out: four jobs that can be told apart around any public decision; an adviser has no power to decide	2
frame (of an account)	what an account keeps in and what it drops; it usually names a problem, a cause, a judgement and a remedy	12
Government Bill	a Bill introduced by a Minister	6
honest broker	in Oliver and Cairney, a researcher who passes on research honestly, clearly and in time, and seeks to stay neutral	17
informing (policy)	setting out the options open to the body that decides, what the evidence says about each and how uncertain it is, without choosing	17
inside lobbying	taking the case straight to lawmakers and officials: a meeting, a letter, a comment on a draft	10
interest (of an actor)	what an actor stands to gain or lose from a decision	10
issue advocate	in Oliver and Cairney, a researcher who recommends specific policy options	17
key informant interview	an interview with someone chosen because they know the policy area	13
lobbying	representing an organisation's case before government to influence policy; this book counts putting your department's case to an official too	10
menu (of a frame)	the measures a frame makes easy to say	14
Money Bill	a Bill containing only provisions on the matters in Article 110(1), the first of them any tax; it cannot be introduced in the Rajya Sabha, which may only recommend amendments within fourteen days, and the Speaker decides whether a Bill is one	6
outside lobbying	taking the case to the public, through the press or a campaign, so that the public presses the government	10

Term	Plain words	Section
policy advocate	the OpenStax textbook's word for someone who campaigns for policy: starts from what ought to be done and argues for one option	17
policy analyst	the OpenStax textbook's word for someone who informs policy: sets out the options, the evidence on each and how uncertain it is, without choosing	17
Pre-legislative Consultation Policy	the Union's 2014 policy, a decision of the Committee of Secretaries and not a law, asking departments to put draft laws in public for at least thirty days; a department may skip it if it records why	6
preamble	an Act's opening statement of why it was made	11
previous publication	publishing a draft first, with a date, so that the public can object before the final rule or regulation is made	2, 7
priming	when what a reader meets first tilts how they judge what comes next	12
Private Member's Bill	a Bill introduced by a member of Parliament who is not a Minister	6
programme	the work a public body does to carry a policy out: the staff, the money, the forms, the visits	1
proposal	a course of action someone wants a public body to take; it is only a proposal until a body with the power to decide has decided it	1
public interest group	a group that seeks a good reaching everyone; it still stands to gain when the decision goes its way	10
public policy	what public bodies do about matters of concern to some part of society, including the outcomes their action creates and a choice not to act	1
ratify (a treaty)	the step by which a country becomes a Party, bound by the treaty	11
regressive tax	a tax applied at a lower overall rate as income rises, so it takes a bigger share of a poorer household's income	13, 16
repugnant (of a State law)	clashing with a law Parliament made on a Concurrent subject; Parliament's law prevails and the State law is void where the two clash (Article 254(1))	4
scheme	a programme the executive runs, with a name, a period, an amount of money and guidelines saying how it works; some rest on no Act of their own	8
scoping review	a map of what has been studied on a question, not a pooled analysis	13
State List	List II of the Seventh Schedule: subjects that belong to each State's Legislature (Article 246)	4
thematic frame	telling an issue through the broad view: the trend over time and what led to it	12
trace (who decides)	a fixed sequence of six steps that takes a proposal to the body that can turn it into policy, and to the power that body would use	11
Transaction of Business Rules	the Union government's rules (1961, amended), made by the President under Article 77(3), saying who decides a case and which cases must go to the Cabinet	5

Term	Plain words	Section
Union List	List I of the Seventh Schedule: subjects that belong to Parliament (Article 246)	4
value premise	a premise that says what matters, or what ought to be done	16
weighted votes (GST Council)	votes counted by weight, not by head: the Centre's weighs one-third of the votes cast and all the States' together two-thirds; a decision needs three-fourths of the weighted votes of the members present and voting	9

The series: all 196 books

In build order: Book 0 first, then every Introductory rung, then every Intermediate rung, and so on; within a level, a subject comes after the subjects it depends on. "done" means that book's version 1 is finished. This is Book 5.

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4	Food systems, value chains and Indian food policy · Rung 1	done
5	**Policy process, framing and advocacy craft · Rung 1 ◀ you are here**	done
6	R, reproducibility engineering and data management · Rung 1	
7	Question selection and research strategy · Rung 1	done
8	Teaching, mentorship and coalition building · Rung 1	done
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OBESITY EXPERTISE · BOOK 5

Policy process, framing and advocacy craft · Rung 1

A short book on how health policy is actually made in India: the bodies that decide, the laws that give them power, the procedures they follow, and the frames that decide which instruments get discussed at all. It closes with the line between informing policy and campaigning for it, and a one-page note on one Indian proposal naming the body that would have to act.

Book 5 of the series' 196 books, free to read at drharshmaheshwari.com.



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