

Earthquake Preparedness in India: A Guide for Students

Know the Disaster: An **earthquake** is when the ground shakes because stress builds up in the Earth's crust and is suddenly released as the giant tectonic plates move[1]. India sits on a moving plate boundary, so almost 59% of our land is at risk from moderate to severe earthquakes[2]. In fact, India ranks among the top 10 most earthquake-prone countries[3]. The Himalayan region is in the highest-risk Zone V (most active), while central and southern India are lower-risk (Zones II–IV)[2].

Over history, India has seen many big quakes: for example, the 1905 Kangra quake (magnitude 8.0) killed ~19,800 people, and the 2001 Bhuj quake (magnitude 7.9) killed ~12,900[4]. More recently, on 17 Feb 2025 a mild 4.0-magnitude quake shook Delhi (showing even cities can feel tremors)[4]. Because we cannot predict when an earthquake will come, it's important to understand **why** they happen (plate movements) and **where** they are most likely (like the Himalayas) so we can stay ready[5][3].

Plan and Prepare

Students and schools should **plan ahead** for earthquakes. For example, every school ought to have a **Disaster Management Plan** and a safety committee (teachers and students) to carry it out[6][7]. This plan must include evacuation routes and assembly areas (marked on a map), ways to contact help, and a schedule for **mock drills**[6][8].

- **Mock drills:** Practice dropping under desks and then evacuating calmly at least twice a year[8]. The goal is to exit each classroom in under a minute and the whole school in a few minutes without pushing or panic[9].
- **Classroom safety:** Keep aisles clear and heavy shelves or cabinets bolted or tied to walls. Don't keep heavy objects or flower pots on high shelves[10][11]. Identify safe spots: under a strong table or against an inside wall away from windows or bookcases[12].
- **Equipment and supplies:** Maintain emergency kits in school – such as a first-aid box, emergency torches, fire extinguishers, sand buckets, stretchers, ropes, etc.[13][11]. Check these regularly. Also post school rules on what to do, share emergency numbers, and ensure teachers know how to switch off gas or electricity if needed[14][13].
- **Awareness and training:** All students should learn “Drop, Cover, and Hold On” drills. Teachers and student leaders (NCC, Scouts, etc.) can teach peers and practice first aid. Schools often link with local fire/police (NDRF) for training.

Following India's NDMA (National Disaster Management Authority) school-safety guidelines helps a lot. For example, NDMA suggests designating a **focal point teacher** for safety and stocking emergency supplies[7][6]. By planning with your community (meet with parents, local officials, etc.), you can make your school stronger against quakes[6][15].

Dos and Don'ts

Earthquake safety boils down to **simple “Do’s and Don’ts”** before, during, and after a quake. Below are easy checklists:

Do:

- **Before:** Keep heavy objects and glassware in low shelves[10]. Learn how and when to switch off gas, electricity, and water at home/school[14]. Stock emergency water, snacks and a first-aid kit in an accessible place[16]. - **During (if shaking starts):** Immediately **Drop** to the ground, **Cover** your head and body under a sturdy desk or table, and **Hold On** until the shaking stops[17]. If you’re outside, move quickly to an open space away from buildings, trees, and power lines[18]. If in a vehicle, pull over safely (away from bridges or signs) and stay inside until the shaking stops[19]. - **After:** Check yourself and friends for injuries and apply first aid if needed. Once safe, **help others** – comfort classmates and assist injured people[20]. Listen to teachers or authorities (radio/TV) for instructions and be prepared for **aftershocks**[20][21].

Don't:

- **Before:** Never prop heavy items (like potted plants) on high ledges or cupboards[10]. Don't block exits or corridors.
- **During:** Do **not** run outside while shaking – you could fall or block others[22]. Stay away from windows, mirrors or bookcases that could fall[17]. Do **not** use elevators. If outdoors, don't stand under buildings, trees or wires[18].
- **After:** Do **not** go back inside damaged buildings. Do **not** light matches or switches if you smell gas[23]. Avoid spreading rumors; they cause panic[16]. Instead, calmly follow official advice.

Each Do/Don't is intended to be easy to remember. For instance, “*Drop, Cover, Hold On*” is a universal quake drill for students[17]. Rehearsing these steps as a quiz or game in class can help everyone remember what to do!

Recover and Build

After the shaking stops, it's time to **recover safely and rebuild confidence**. It is normal to feel scared or upset, so talk to teachers, friends or family about how you feel. Help each other stay calm.

- **Check for safety:** First, make sure you and others are physically okay. Give first aid to anyone who is hurt. Move students to an open area if the building might be damaged. Expect aftershocks and be ready to Drop–Cover–Hold again if needed[21].
- **Support your community:** NDMA/NCS advises students to **provide help and encouragement** after a quake[20]. Assist younger children or neighbors if you can (for example, help carry water or find missing people) once it is safe. Older students might volunteer in relief activities like distributing food or setting up shelters with

adults. Simple acts like sharing food, giving water, or helping clean debris can make a big difference.

- **Communicate and learn:** Use the event as a learning experience. Help update your school's emergency plan based on what happened. Students can prepare posters or presentations on earthquake safety to spread awareness.

In the long term, community recovery involves fixing and strengthening buildings (retrofitting), replanting trees, and rebuilding trust. Many Government agencies (NDRF, SDMA) and NGOs may hold “**community drills**” or workshops – students can participate in those to learn how to stay safe and to help spread the word. Remember, after a disaster, looking out for each other and staying informed (radio or official apps) helps everyone rebuild stronger[20][21].

Build a Kit

Every student should keep a **compact emergency kit** (in a backpack or box) with basic survival items. NDMA recommends including: a **torch (flashlight)** with spare batteries, a **battery/hand-crank radio**, a basic **first-aid kit**, sealed **bottles of water** and **dry snacks** (like energy bars)[24]. Other good items are a **whistle** (to signal rescuers), some **cash** (small notes) and copies of important documents (ID card, emergency phone numbers) in a waterproof pouch[25]. Also pack essential **medicines**, a warm **blanket or extra clothing**, and **sturdy shoes**[25].

For a student-friendly (budget and portable) kit, prioritize lightweight and multi-use items. Store everything in a small backpack so you can grab it quickly if you have to evacuate. Keep it at home and consider a smaller version at school. Check your kit every 6–12 months: replace expired medicines and batteries. A well-packed kit helps you stay safe on your own for at least 48 hours after a quake[25].

Additional Resources

- **NDMA: Earthquake – Are You Ready? (English)** – Official 4:19-min video on quake safety steps.
- **NDMA: Earthquake (Dost Appu – Hindi)** – NDMA's Hindi animation (2:39) teaching children how to stay safe.
- **NDMA: Earthquake (Dost Appu – English)** – The same NDMA cartoon in English.
- **Dr. Binocs Show – “How to Survive an Earthquake” (English)** – Kid-friendly cartoon (science channel) with simple safety tips.
- **Prepare with Pedro: Earthquake** – Animated story for younger students on emergency drills.

These videos (in Hindi and English) are tailored for students and explain earthquake safety in a fun, easy-to-understand way.

Sources: Indian disaster management authorities provide the guidelines above (NDMA, NCS)[5][26][8][27]. Historical facts and statistics come from official reports[4][3]. The safety checklists combine government advice with school safety plans[16][17].

[1] [2] [4] [5] Press Note Details: Press Information Bureau

<https://www.pib.gov.in/PressNoteDetails.aspx?NotelId=154005&ModuleId=3>

[3] List of most earthquake-prone countries: Know India's global ranking

<https://indianexpress.com/article/trending/top-10-listing/countries-hit-by-the-most-major-earthquakes-is-india-among-them-9764379/>

[6] [7] [8] [9] [13] ipsgirlspatna.com

<https://www.ipsgirlspatna.com/uploads/School-Safety-policy-final.pdf>

[10] [14] [16] [18] [20] [21] [22] [23] [27] Environment Day 2020: Steps you should take before, during and after earthquake to avoid any mishap | Check list

<https://www.thedailyjagran.com/india/environment-day-2020-steps-you-should-take-before-during-and-after-earthquake-to-avoid-any-mishap-see-list-10012632>

[11] [12] [15] [17] [19] [24] [25] [26] Earthquakes: Do's & Don'ts | NDMA, GoI

<https://ndma.gov.in/Natural-Hazards/Earthquakes/Dos-Donts>