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The Ultimate NCERT Revision Guide for Class 12 Geography

Fundamentals of Human Geography (Part 2) · 2026-27 / New NCERT

Chapter 5: Secondary Activities

Secondary Activities Class 12 Notes · NCERT Class 12 Geography
Chapter 5

Also see for this chapter: [NCERT Solutions](#)

What this chapter is about: Secondary activities add value to natural resources by turning raw materials into useful products. Cotton in the boll has little use, but as yarn it becomes valuable cloth. Iron ore from the mine is useless until it is made into steel. This chapter covers **manufacturing**, the features of modern large-scale industry, why industries choose their locations, how industries are classified, and the rise of high-technology industry. It maps neatly onto the CBSE Class 12 Unit 3 syllabus and is a steady source of CUET and UPSC questions.

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1 Introduction: What Are Secondary Activities?

All economic activities, namely primary, secondary, tertiary and quaternary, revolve around obtaining and using resources needed for survival. Secondary activities sit one step beyond primary activities. Primary activities (farming, mining, fishing) take resources straight from nature. Secondary activities then **transform** those raw materials into finished goods of higher value. So secondary activities are concerned with **manufacturing, processing and construction (infrastructure) industries**.

1.1 The Idea of Adding Value

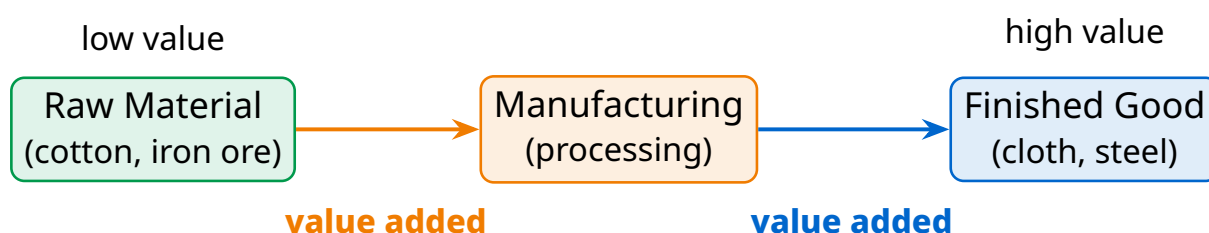
The whole point of a secondary activity is **value addition**. A raw material on its own may sell for very little. Once it is processed, its price and usefulness jump. Cotton becomes yarn and then cloth. Iron ore becomes steel and then machines and tools. The same is true of most things from the farm, forest, mine and the sea.

Value Addition: The Core Idea

A secondary activity takes a low-value raw material and converts it into a high-value finished product through processing or manufacturing.

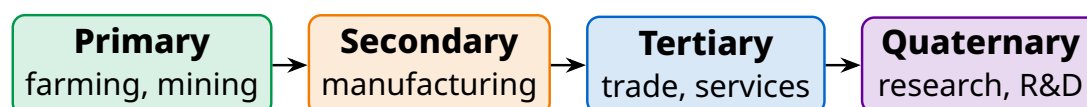
Raw material → Finished good of higher value

Cotton boll → yarn → cloth. Iron ore → steel → machines.



1.2 Place in the Four-Fold Economy

Economists split all jobs into four sectors. Each sector feeds the next. Primary supplies the raw stuff, secondary makes goods from it, tertiary moves and sells them, and quaternary handles knowledge and research.



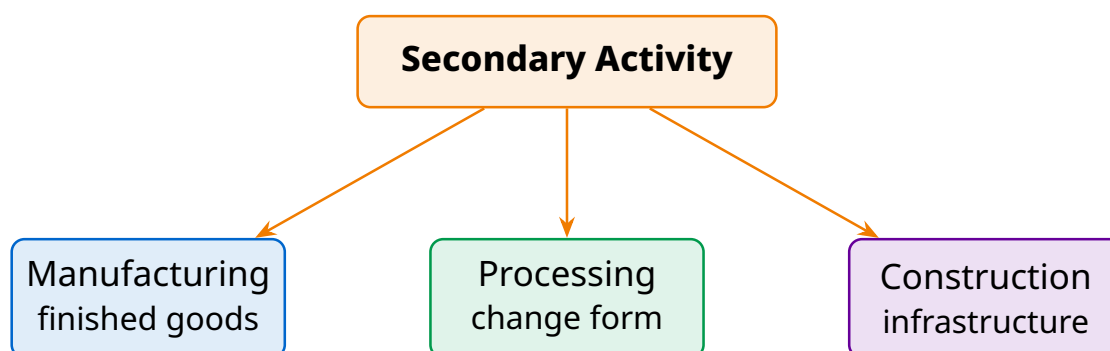
Exam Anchor

For CBSE and CUET, the single most tested line is the definition: secondary activities **add value** to natural resources by transforming raw materials into valuable products. Learn one good example (cotton or iron ore) to support it.

1.3 The Three Branches of Secondary Activity

Secondary activity is wider than just factory work. NCERT places three things under it: **manufacturing, processing** and **construction (infrastructure)**. Manufacturing makes finished goods. Processing changes the form of a material without fully

finishing it, like milling grain or refining oil. Construction builds the roads, dams, bridges, ports and buildings that an economy needs.



Three Branches: "M-P-C"

Manufacturing, **P**rocessing, **C**onstruction. "MPC" is the full scope of secondary activity, not just factories.

1.4 Primary vs Secondary at a Glance

A common 3-mark question asks you to tell the two apart. Keep this comparison ready.

Primary Activities	Secondary Activities
Extract resources directly from nature.	Transform raw materials into new products.
Examples: farming, mining, fishing, lumbering.	Examples: textile mills, steel plants, food processing.
Output is a raw material.	Output is a finished or semi-finished good.
Little or no value addition.	Large value addition.
Depend mainly on land and nature.	Depend on capital, power, labour and technology.

2 Manufacturing

Manufacturing involves a full array of production, from handicrafts to moulding iron and steel, from stamping out plastic toys to assembling delicate computer components or space vehicles. In every one of these, the common features are the same: the application of power, mass production of identical products, and specialised labour working in factory settings to make standardised goods. Manufacturing may use modern power and machinery, or it may still be very primitive, as it often is in many developing countries.

2.1 The Meaning of Manufacturing

The word *manufacturing* literally means “to make by hand.” Today it also includes goods made by machines. At its core it is a process that transforms raw materials into finished goods of higher value for sale in local or distant markets.

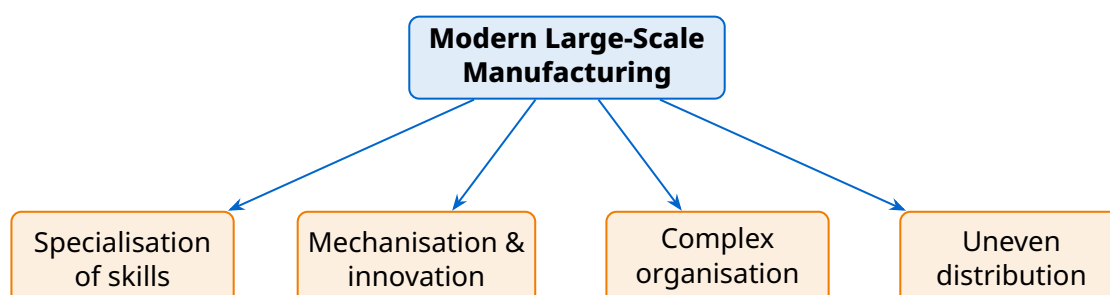
“Manufacturing Industry” vs “Industry”

An **industry** is a geographically located manufacturing unit that keeps books of accounts and records under a management system. Because the word “industry” is so broad, it is also used for activities that are not done in factories, like the “entertainment industry” or the “tourism industry.” To be clear, the longer phrase **manufacturing industry** is used when we mean factory-based production.

2.2 Characteristics of Modern Large-Scale Manufacturing

Modern large-scale manufacturing has a set of features that set it apart from older craft production. These four features come up again and again in exams.

1. **Specialisation of skills / methods of production.** Under the craft method, a factory makes only a few made-to-order pieces, so costs are high. Mass production instead makes large quantities of standardised parts, with each worker performing only one task, over and over.
2. **Mechanisation and technological innovation.** Mechanisation means using gadgets to do tasks. **Automation**, where machines work without human thinking during the process, is the advanced stage. Automatic factories with feedback and closed-loop computer control, where machines are built to “think,” have sprung up worldwide. Constant research and development improves quality, cuts waste and inefficiency, and combats pollution.
3. **Organisational structure and stratification.** Modern manufacturing uses complex machine technology, extreme specialisation and a deep division of labour. This needs vast capital, large organisations and an executive bureaucracy to run a big industry.
4. **Uneven geographic distribution.** A few places hold the major concentrations of modern manufacturing. They cover less than **10 per cent** of the world’s land area, yet these nations have become the centres of economic and political power.



Why Factories Cluster So Tightly

Manufacturing sites are far smaller and more concentrated than farmland because the processes are so intense. About 2.5 sq km of the American corn belt holds around four large farms with 10 to 20 workers, supporting 50 to 100 people. The same patch could instead hold several large integrated factories employing thousands of workers. That is the power of concentration in industry.

Do Not Mix Up the Two Words

Students often write that “manufacturing” and “manufacturing industry” mean exactly the same thing. They do not. Manufacturing is the *process* of making goods; a manufacturing industry is a *factory-based unit* with accounts and management. Tourism is an “industry” but it does no manufacturing.

3 Industrial Location: Why Industries Choose Their Sites

Industries exist to make profit, and profit rises when costs fall. So industries should sit where total production costs are lowest. No single factor decides a location. Several factors pull and push together, and the best site is a balance between them. The major locational factors are access to market, raw material, labour, energy, transport, and a few more.

3.1 The Six Core Locational Factors

Each factor lowers cost in a different way. A weight-losing raw material draws the factory to the mine; a perishable product draws it to the market.

1. **Access to market.** A market means people who both *demand* the goods and have the *purchasing power* to buy them. This is the single most important factor. Developed regions, Europe, North America, Japan and Australia, are huge markets because purchasing power is high. The dense populations of South and South-east Asia also form big markets. Some goods, like aircraft and arms, have a global market.
2. **Access to raw material.** Raw material should be cheap and easy to move. Industries using **bulky, weight-losing** ores (steel, sugar, cement) sit close to the raw material. **Perishable** inputs also pull the factory near the source, so agro-processing and dairy plants are placed near farms or milk supply.
3. **Access to labour supply.** Some manufacturing still needs skilled labour. But rising mechanisation, automation and flexible processes have reduced how much industry depends on labour.
4. **Access to sources of energy.** Power-hungry industries, like aluminium, sit

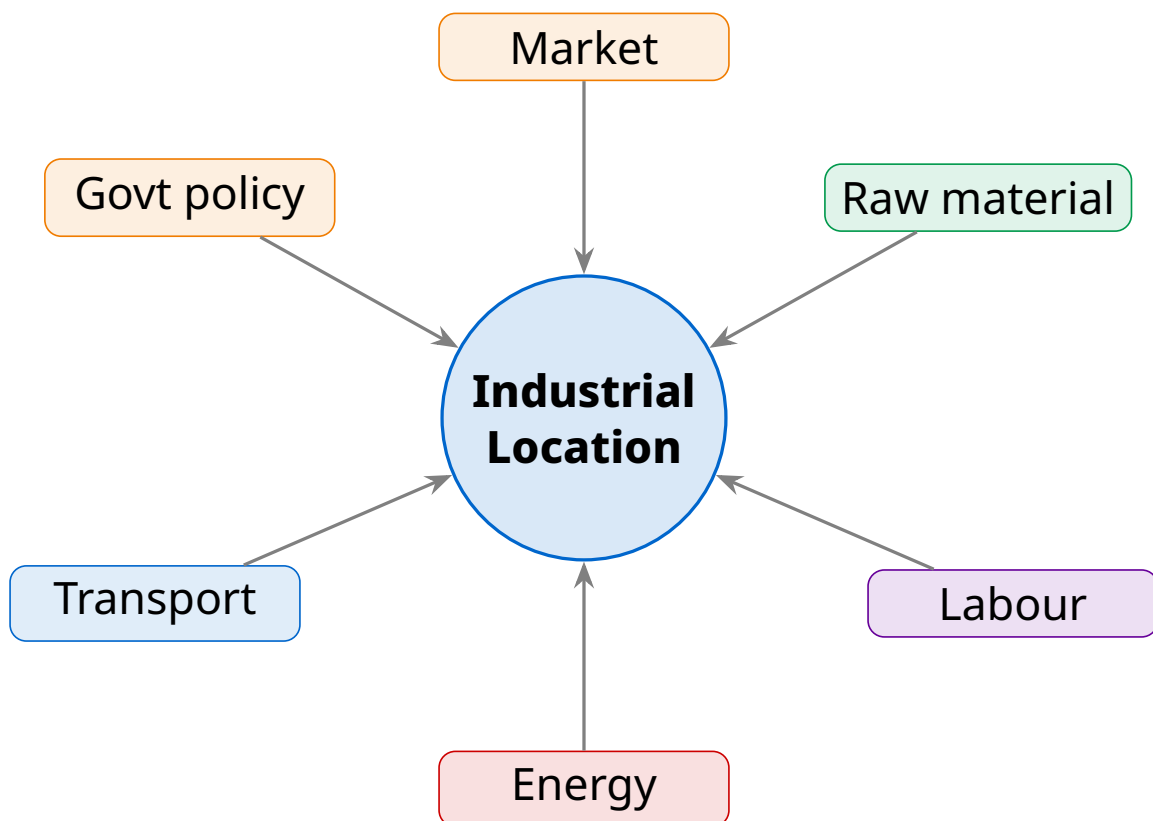
near the energy supply. Coal was once the main source; today hydroelectricity and petroleum are also important for many industries.

5. **Access to transport and communication.** Speedy, efficient transport to carry raw materials in and finished goods out is essential. Western Europe and eastern North America grew their industry on highly developed transport. Communication is also needed to exchange and manage information.
6. **Government policy.** Governments use “regional policies” to spread balanced development, so they set up industries in chosen areas.

The Location Principle

Best location = site of MINIMUM total production cost

Total cost = raw-material cost + transport cost + labour cost + energy cost + other costs. The factory settles where this sum is smallest, balancing all the pulls.

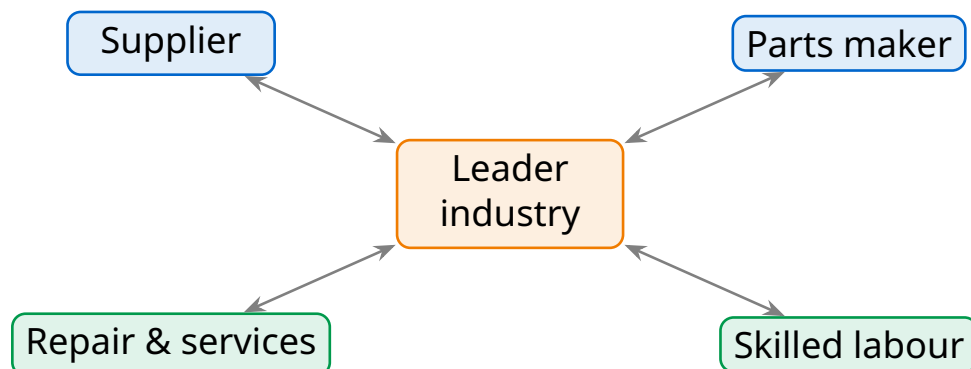


3.2 Agglomeration Economies and Footloose Industries

Many industries gain from sitting near a leading industry and other related industries. These savings are called **agglomeration economies**, and they come from the linkages between different industries. Sharing suppliers, services, skilled labour and infrastructure cuts everyone's costs.

Footloose Industries

Footloose industries can be set up in a wide variety of places. They do not depend on any specific or weight-losing raw material. They rely on component parts, which can be sourced from anywhere. They produce in small quantity, employ a small labour force, and are generally non-polluting. The key factor in their location is **accessibility by road network**.



Linkages = agglomeration economies (shared savings)

Spot the Locational Pull

If a question gives you a raw material, ask two things: Is it **weight-losing** (steel, sugar, cement)? Then the factory goes near the source. Is it **perishable** (milk, fruit)? Then again near the source. If neither, the market pull usually wins.

Sugar and Steel Stay Near Their Raw Material

Sugarcane loses weight and sucrose fast after cutting, so sugar mills sit right inside the cane belt. Iron and steel plants sit near coal and iron-ore fields because both inputs are heavy and weight-losing. Moving the finished steel is cheaper than hauling raw ore and coal long distances.

Remember the Location Factors: "MR. LET-G"

Market, Raw material, Labour, Energy, Transport, Government policy. Say "Mr. LET-G" to recall all six locational factors in order.

3.3 Reading a Location: Worked Examples

The best way to master location is to reason it out for real industries. For each one, ask which pull is strongest. The table fixes the logic in your mind.

Industry	Strongest pull	Why
Iron and steel	Raw material (coal, ore)	Both inputs are heavy and weight-losing.
Sugar	Raw material (cane)	Cane is perishable and loses weight fast.
Aluminium	Energy	Smelting needs huge, cheap power.
Dairy and food processing	Raw material (perishable)	Milk and fruit spoil, so plants sit near farms.
Aircraft and arms	Market (global)	High value, sold worldwide; transport cost is small.
Software / high-tech	Skilled labour, road access	Footloose; light components, talent matters most.

The map below shows the two classic pulls in one picture: a weight-losing industry hugging its raw-material source, and a market-oriented industry sitting in the consuming city.



4 Classification of Manufacturing Industries

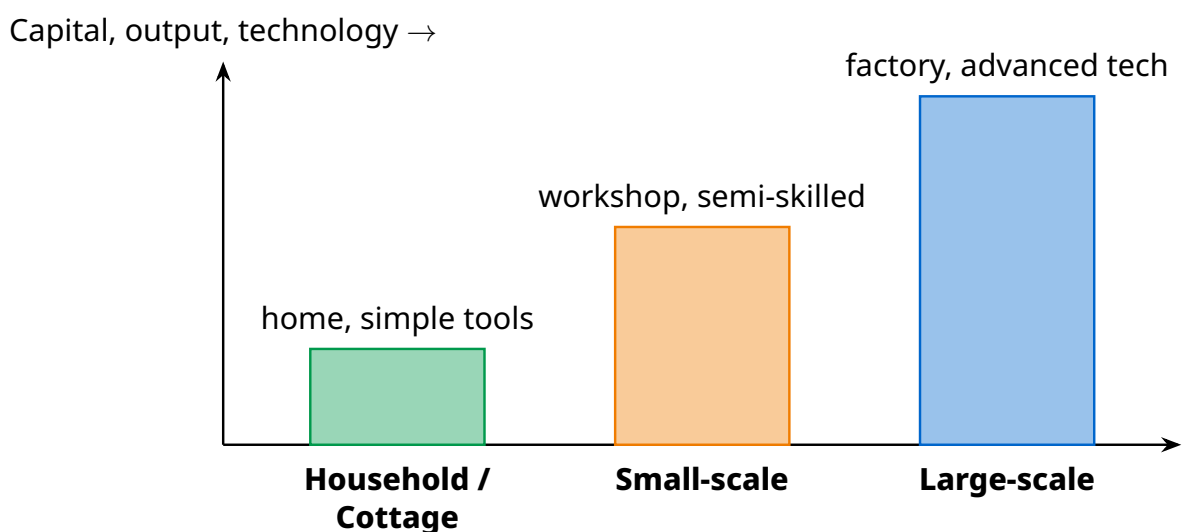
Manufacturing industries are classified on the basis of their **size, inputs / raw materials, output / products** and **ownership**. Each basis gives a different, useful way to group industries, and CBSE often asks you to classify a given industry under one or more of these heads.

4.1 By Size: Household, Small-Scale and Large-Scale

The amount of capital invested, the number of workers employed and the volume of production decide the size of an industry. On this basis there are three groups.

- **Household or cottage industry.** The smallest unit. Artisans use local raw materials and simple tools to make everyday goods at home, helped by family members or part-time labour. Output is for the same household, the local village market, or barter. Capital and transport matter little. Examples: food-stuffs, fabrics, mats, baskets, pottery and bricks, leather articles, and jewellery made by goldsmiths.

- **Small-scale manufacturing.** Differs from cottage industry by its techniques and its place of work, a workshop outside the home. It uses local raw material, simple power-driven machines and semi-skilled labour. It creates jobs and raises local purchasing power. Countries like India, China, Indonesia and Brazil have grown labour-intensive small-scale manufacturing to employ their large populations.
- **Large-scale manufacturing.** Needs a large market, varied raw materials, enormous energy, specialised workers, advanced technology, assembly-line mass production and large capital. It developed over the last 200 years in the United Kingdom, north-eastern U.S.A. and Europe, and has now spread almost worldwide.



Cottage Industry in North-East India

In Nagaland a potter shapes pots in his own courtyard, and in Arunachal Pradesh a craftsman weaves bamboo baskets by the roadside. Products of cottage industry are sold openly in Assam markets. These are textbook examples of household manufacturing, where the home is the factory.

4.2 By Inputs / Raw Materials

On the basis of the raw material used, industries are agro-based, mineral-based, chemical-based, forest-based and animal-based.

Type	Raw material and examples
Agro-based	Processing farm produce into goods: food processing, sugar, pickles, fruit juices, beverages (tea, coffee, cocoa), spices, edible oils and fats, textiles (cotton, jute, silk), rubber.
Mineral-based	Use minerals. Ferrous (contain iron): iron and steel. Non-ferrous: aluminium, copper, jewellery. Non-metallic: cement, pottery.
Chemical-based	Use natural chemical minerals: petroleum (petrochemicals), salts, sulphur, potash; also synthetic fibre and plastic.
Forest-based	Use forest products: timber for furniture, wood / bamboo / grass for paper, lac for lac industry.
Animal-based	Leather for leather industry, wool for woollen textiles, ivory from elephant tusks.

Food Processing: An Ancient Agro Industry

Agro-processing includes canning, making cream, fruit processing and confectionery. Preserving methods like **drying, fermenting and pickling** have been known since ancient times, but they had limited use before the Industrial Revolution. Modern food processing has scaled these methods up massively.

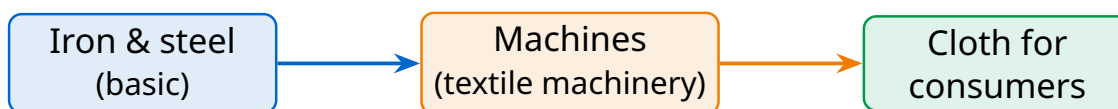
When agro-based industry is run at an industrial scale, it becomes **agri-business**. Agri-business is commercial farming on an industrial scale, often financed by businesses whose main interests lie outside agriculture, such as large corporations in the tea-plantation trade. Agri-business farms are mechanised, large in size, highly structured and reliant on chemicals, and may be described as “agro-factories.” A tea garden with its own tea factory in the Nilgiri Hills of Tamil Nadu is a good example: the leaf is grown, plucked and processed in one industrial chain.

From Plantation to Factory: Tea

A tea estate is farming, but the tea factory beside it is a secondary activity. Fresh leaf is perishable, so the factory must sit right next to the garden. This is why tea processing units cluster inside plantation belts like the Nilgiris, Assam and Darjeeling, a textbook case of a perishable raw material pulling the industry to its source.

4.3 By Output / Product: Basic vs Consumer Goods

The product itself gives another split. **Basic industries** make goods used as raw materials by other industries. **Consumer-goods (non-basic) industries** make goods used directly by people.



a basic industry feeds the next industry, which finally serves the consumer

Consumer-goods industries make goods consumed directly, like breads and biscuits, tea, soaps and toiletries, paper for writing, and televisions.

4.4 By Ownership

The last basis is who owns and runs the industry.

- **Public sector industries** are owned and managed by governments. In India there were many Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs). Socialist countries have many state-owned industries.
- **Private sector industries** are owned by individual investors and managed by private organisations. In capitalist countries, industries are generally privately owned.
- **Joint sector industries** are managed by joint-stock companies, or set up and run by the private and public sectors together.

The Four Bases, One Line Each

Size: household, small, large. **Inputs:** agro, mineral, chemical, forest, animal. **Output:** basic, consumer. **Ownership:** public, private, joint. If you can list these four lines, you can answer any classification question.

Five Raw-Material Types: "A-M-C-F-A"

Agro, **M**ineral, **C**hemical, **F**orest, **A**nimal. "A MCF A" keeps the five input-based industries in order.

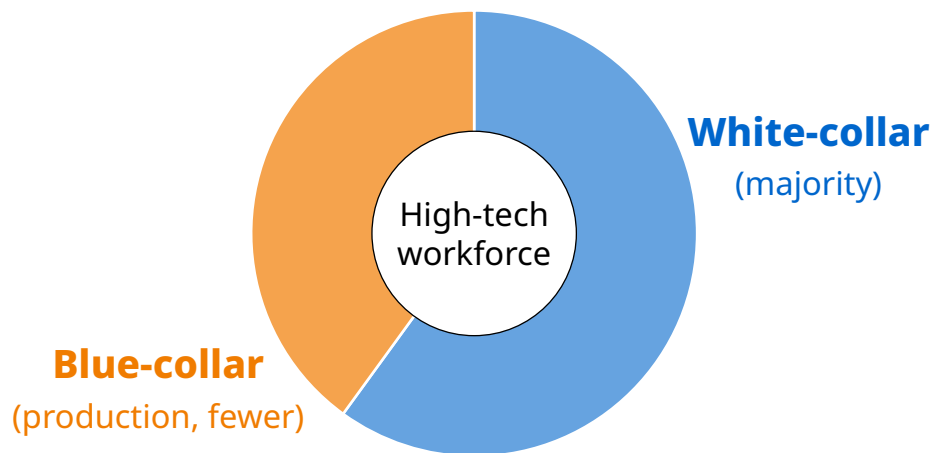
5 Concept of High-Technology Industry

High technology, or simply high-tech, is the latest generation of manufacturing. It is best understood as the application of intensive research and development (R&D) to make products of an advanced scientific and engineering character. High-tech is where secondary activity starts to blend into the knowledge-driven quaternary world.

5.1 What Makes an Industry "High-Tech"

In high-tech industry, professional **white-collar** workers form a large share of the workforce. These highly skilled specialists greatly **outnumber** the actual produc-

tion (blue-collar) workers. Notable examples include robotics on the assembly line, computer-aided design (CAD) and manufacturing, electronic control of smelting and refining, and the constant development of new chemical and pharmaceutical products.



High-Tech Landscape

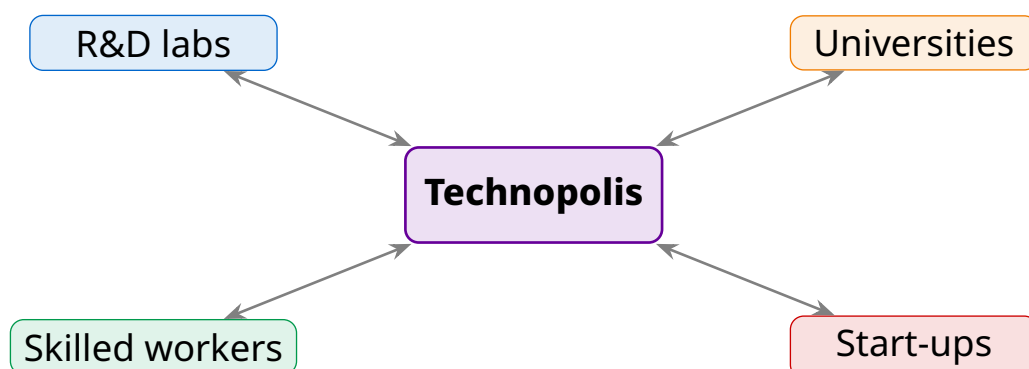
High-tech sites are marked by neatly spaced, low, modern, dispersed office-plant-lab buildings, not massive assembly structures, factories and storage yards. Planned **business parks** for high-tech start-ups are now built into regional and local development schemes.

5.2 Technopolies

High-tech industries that are regionally concentrated, self-sustained and highly specialised are called **technopolies**.

Famous Technopolies

Silicon Valley near San Francisco and the **Silicon Forest** near Seattle are leading examples of technopolies. They cluster research, skilled people and start-ups in one self-feeding region.



High-Tech on the City Edge

High-tech industries are drawn to the peripheral, edge-of-city areas of major metropolitan centres. There land is cheaper, the campus-style environment is cleaner and greener, and the workforce can still reach the city's universities, airports and services. This is why business parks ring big cities rather than sit in their crowded cores.

High-Tech Keywords for Full Marks

When defining high-tech, hit these words: **R&D-intensive, white-collar majority, CAD / robotics, business parks** and **technopolies (Silicon Valley)**. Each keyword is a half-mark in a CBSE answer.

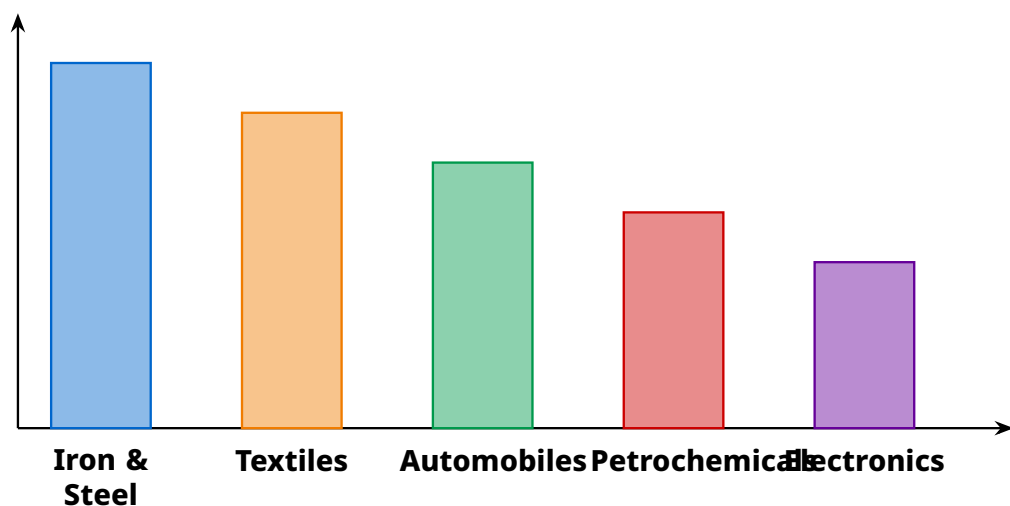
6 Major Manufacturing Industries and World Trends

Manufacturing contributes a great deal to the world economy. A handful of industries dominate world production, and modern industry shows a few clear global trends. This section gathers the named industries and trends that exams expect you to know.

6.1 The World's Most Important Industries

Iron and steel, textiles, automobiles, petrochemicals and electronics are among the world's most important manufacturing industries. They are big employers, big earners and the backbone of industrial economies.

Relative global importance →



6.2 Major Trends in Modern Industry

A frequently asked 150-word question deals with the trends of modern industrial activity, especially in developed countries. Keep these points ready.

- **Rising automation and high-tech.** Robotics, CAD and computer control replace manual work, raising output and quality.
- **Shift to footloose and high-tech industries** that are clean, small in workforce and tied to road links rather than raw material.
- **Growth of agglomeration** around leader industries to capture shared savings.
- **Move to city peripheries** where business parks and technopolies grow.
- **Diffusion to developing countries**, as both traditional and high-tech large-scale regions spread beyond the old industrial heartlands.

Two Broad Types of Large-Scale Industrial Region

(i) **Traditional** large-scale industrial regions, thickly clustered in a few more-developed countries. (ii) **High-technology** large-scale industrial regions, which have diffused even to less-developed countries.

Why Africa Stays Industrially Backward

Africa has immense natural resources yet is the least industrialised continent. The reasons are weak capital, poor transport and power infrastructure, small local markets with low purchasing power, shortage of skilled labour and technology, and a long colonial history that exported raw materials instead of building factories. Resources alone do not industrialise a region; the other locational factors must also be present.

Footloose Does Not Mean "Anything Goes"

A common slip is to call sugar or cotton textiles "footloose." They are not. Sugar is weight-losing and tied to the cane belt; cotton textiles depend on raw cotton and a market. Footloose industries depend on light, anywhere-available component parts and on road access.

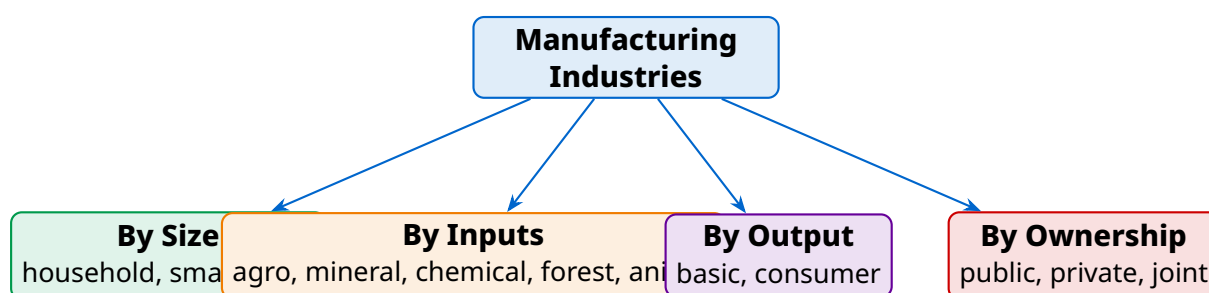
7 Quick Reference Summary

This section gathers everything for last-minute revision: the key definitions, the four bases of classification, the locational factors, and the related Collegedunia resources for this chapter.

7.1 Key Terms in One Place

Term	Meaning
Secondary activity	Adds value by transforming raw materials into finished goods.
Manufacturing	Making goods by hand or machine; transforms raw material to higher-value product.
Mechanisation	Using gadgets to do tasks; automation is its advanced, “thinking” stage.
Agglomeration economies	Savings from linkages between nearby industries.
Footloose industry	Not tied to specific raw material; depends on parts and road access; non-polluting.
Basic industry	Makes goods used as raw materials by other industries (iron and steel).
Consumer-goods industry	Makes goods used directly by people (biscuits, soap, TVs).
High-tech industry	R&D-intensive; white-collar majority; CAD and robotics.
Technopolis	Regionally concentrated, self-sustained, specialised high-tech region (Silicon Valley).
Agri-business	Commercial farming on an industrial scale, mechanised “agro-factories.”

7.2 Classification Map



7.3 Exam-Ready Recap

- Secondary activities = manufacturing, processing and construction; they **add value**.
- Modern large-scale manufacturing = specialisation, mechanisation, complex organisation, uneven distribution; covers <10% of land.
- Location factors = market, raw material, labour, energy, transport, government policy, plus agglomeration economies (“Mr. LET-G”).
- Footloose = component parts + road access, non-polluting, small workforce.
- High-tech = R&D, white-collar majority, CAD / robotics, business parks; concentrated as technopolies (Silicon Valley, Silicon Forest).

7.4 Common Mistakes and Exam Strategy

A few slips cost easy marks in this chapter. Learn to dodge them, and know the kind of questions CBSE and CUET set.

Public, Private, Joint: Match Them Right

Students often swap the ownership types. **Public sector** = government-owned (PSUs). **Private sector** = owned by individual investors. **Joint sector** = private and public together (joint-stock companies). A mixed economy has both public and private enterprises side by side.

The table below shows how the chapter is usually examined, so you can target your revision.

Topic	Usual marks	Question style
Definition and value addition	1 to 2	Define / one-word / assertion-reason.
Primary vs secondary	3	Differentiate in points.
Locational factors	3 to 5	List and explain; weight-losing vs market pull.
Footloose industries	1 to 3	Short note / true-or-false.
Classification (four bases)	3 to 5	Classify a given industry.
High-tech and technopolies	3 to 5	Short note; why on city edge.
Trends and Africa case	5	150-word descriptive answer.

How to Score the 5-Markers

The long answers (modern industrial trends, why high-tech moves to city peripheries, why Africa lags) reward **point-wise structure**. Write 4 to 5 labelled points, one line each, instead of a single paragraph. Examiners tick points, not prose.

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