

GROUP DISCUSSION: Types, Topics, Skills, Roles

Group discussions occur in many different formats, ranging from very informal ones which is a common event between friends, to a highly structured and challenging one which is included as part of a selection or recruitment process. In both of the above mentioned scenarios, there are a number of skills that students need to garner and develop in order to excel at contributing effectively to a GD.

Many companies and institutes admitting students for higher education resort to group discussion, as one of their criteria for screening and selection of candidates. There are few types of topics which uses in a group discussion. The panelists also looks for the candidates who can play some roles in a GD. There are two main reasons cited by recruiters and educationists forgiving huge importance for GD. Firstly, a GD is used for mass elimination. And secondly, the selection criteria in a GD are based on the employer's, or the company's requirements.

Types of Groups

Formal – A group is formal when it is purposely designed to accomplish an organizational objective or task. It is created via formal authority for some specific purpose.

Informal – Whereas formal groups are established by organizations to achieve some specific objectives, informal groups are formed by the members of such groups by themselves. They emerge naturally, in response to the common interests of organizational members. They are formed spontaneously, without any formal designation, and with common interests.

Topics

Factual Topics - Factual topics are about practical things, which an ordinary person is aware in his day-to-day life. Typically these are about socio-economic topics.

E.g. The education policy of India, Tourism in India

Controversial Topics - Controversial topics are the ones that are argumentative in nature. They are meant to generate controversy.

E.g. Reservations should be removed, Women make better managers

Abstract Topics - Abstract topics are about intangible things. These topics are not given often for discussion, but their possibility cannot be ruled out. These topics test your lateral thinking and creativity.

E.g. A is an alphabet, the number 10

Skills

Reasoning - Try to find the GD topic category that you are comfortable with. Also, follow the news regularly to stay updated about Current Affairs. If you are good at debating, factual or social topics are your forte. Bookworms (or avid readers) may have an edge over the rest in abstract and situation based topics.

Speaking - If the given topic is familiar, you must start the GD. Collect your ideas systematically (preferably in points) and start speaking. If not, try to jump in as a second or 3rd speaker.

Time Management - In the time given before the start of GD, define the topic, write 2-3 pros and cons and give a 3 point structure to the discussion. The structure is relevant typically for current affairs and social/factual topics. So frame just 3-4 points for a turn and try to finish those points in time.

Presentation - If you are able to start then use a line or two to define the topic and spell out the structure.

Listening - Once you are done with your point, listen passionately to what others are speaking. Nod if you agree. Keep looking at others and understand their facial expression.

Public Speaking - Once you get your chance to speak, speak slowly and with authority. Focus more on ensuring that your points are understood by people rather than becoming self-conscious or self-analyzing your speaking skills or relevance of points.

Recalling - Bringing an international perspective with statistics or an anecdote creates a good impression.

Summarizing - If you manage to go second or third then paraphrase the explanation of the topic, propose a structure if missed by the first speaker and give a few a few pros and cons.

Role play in a GD



Initiator – You start the group discussion only when you are sure of starting it sensibly. Do not forget to greet everyone when you start the GD.

Contributor – You give valuable points time to time and make it point to speak.

Channelizer – you bring the discussion back on track if there is a deviation from the main topic.

Loan Taker – If you are not familiar with the topic then you can borrow points from others and present it sensibly in your own language.

Moderator – You try to give others a chance to speak. You request the group for one discussion etc.

Concluder – You conclude only when invited by the group to conclude. While concluding you presents the team's point of view and not yours.

As the number of vacancy gets low day by day the recruitment process have become tougher. In this process the group discussion is an extremely important part. Recruiters use this medium to mass elimination of candidates by analyzing their performance in the GD. To do that various types of topics have given to the candidates to understand the in depth knowledge of a candidate. Also they look for the roles play by the candidates to make the discussion more fruitful.