

Group Discussion :: Tips and Tricks

Various firms conduct GDs to short-list people for Summer Internships as well as Placements.

What do they look for in the Group Discussion ?

I. Coherence of Thoughts:

What is most critically looked for in a GD, is the ability to apply oneself in a coherent and consistent manner. The logical thought process that a person lends to the group is vital. In GDs with case studies, prior knowledge is largely superseded by the ability to have balanced thoughts, within the timeframe of the GD.

II. Communication skills

Communication is a two-way process, and the role of the listener is critical.

- * The listener has his own interpretation of what you say. Unless you listen to him, you cannot figure out whether he or she has understood you.

- * Unless you listen, the points you make may not fit in with points made by others. It is easy for an experienced evaluator (moderator) to realise you aren't listening.

Besides listening, you also need the ability to:

- * Express your ideas in a clear and concise manner.
- * Build on others' points.
- * Sum up the discussion made by the entire group.

III. Leadership

One of the most common misconceptions about leadership is that it is all about controlling the group. However, for the GDs we are talking about, leadership is all about giving direction to the group in terms of content.

It is about initiating the discussion and suggesting a path on which the group can continue the discussion.

A good leader is one who allows others to express their views and channels the discussion to a probable decision or conclusion on the given topic.

IV. Group dynamics

As mentioned before, a GD is a formal peer group situation and tests your behaviour as well as your influence on the group. Formal language and mutual respect are obvious requirements. In addition, you need to have:

- * Willingness to listen and discuss various points of view. Do not take strong views in the beginning itself; try and analyse the pros and cons of a situation.

- * Learn to disagree politely, if required. In fact, it is far better to put forward your point of view without specifically saying 'I disagree' or 'You're wrong'.

- * Show appreciation for good points made by others. You can make a positive contribution by agreeing to and expanding an argument made by someone else.

- * Seize the opportunity to make a summary near the end or, even better, a part summary. Partial agreement or part consensus is a sign of the group's progress. Complete agreement is impossible in the timeframe allotted.

How to prepare?

I. Content

- ~ Develop subject knowledge on current affairs, general awareness and business trends.
- ~ Structure arguments on selected topics, considering both sides to the argument.
- ~ Plan for short and lucid points.

II. Practice

- ~ GD skills cannot be learned from books. Get into practice groups.
- ~ Get skilled people to observe and give feedback.
- ~ Spend a lot of time analyzing each GD performance. Plan specific improvements in your performance.