

IIT Madras

BSc Degree

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English – I (Basic English)
Ms Sruthi Ranjani
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences
Indian Institute of Technology, Chennai
Rules in GD

(Refer Slide Time: 00:14)

The slide has a header 'Rules in a GD'. At the top right is the IIT Madras logo with the text 'IIT Madras ONLINE DEGREE'. Below the title is a bulleted list of rules:

- 10 minutes, 8-9 members
- 3-member panel/judges that will read out the topic/case (1 min)
- 1 minute for the leader to set the direction/context
- 7 minutes for the members to take the discussion forward
- 1 minute for the leader to wrap up/summarize

Below the list is a video frame showing Ms. Sruthi Ranjani, a woman with dark hair, wearing a brown blouse, speaking. A large watermark of the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) logo is visible across the slide.

Having talked about the different kinds of GD topics firstly, general, argumentative, abstract, and case study base. Let us take a look at what the rules are in a typical GD in a typical management consulting recruitment process in India. Generally, GDs last for 10 minutes and have about 7 to 9 members, not more than 9 members generally.

And that is usually a 3-member panel of judges who will read out the topic or the case or the problem that needs to be discussed as part of the GD, and this takes about 1 minute, from the 10 minutes that have been allocated for one iteration of the group discussion. Then usually 1 minute is allocated for the leader to set the direction or the context for the topic. And the leader is also generally one of the candidates who has applied for the position or who is participating in the group discussion.

And then 7 minutes are allocated for the other members to take the discussion forward. That is about 1 minute per person, not more than 1 minute per person. So, that is an important thing to remind yourself, you will have only 1 minute in order to be able to make your contribution in the group discussion.

And then finally, the leader, the person who began the discussion, again, who was one of the candidates themselves, gets 1 extra minute to wrap up and summarize everything that the

members of the group discussion have talked about. So, this is the typical format of a GD. And this is the time breakup that you can keep in mind.

(Refer Slide Time: 02:15)

The slide has a header 'Leading a discussion' and a list of bullet points:

- Listen carefully to the topic and jot down notes
- Volunteer to start **only** if you have a meaningful point to say
 - You can start by saying, "May I start with the permission of the chair and the group?"
- Topic statement + general opinion + your views — direction for discussion
- Take notes throughout – use it for the summary
 - Don't add new points in the summary
- You don't have to know *everything* – but you should be able to facilitate

A video player in the bottom right corner shows a woman with long dark hair, wearing a maroon top, speaking. The IIT Madras Online Degree logo is in the top right corner of the slide.

So, how does one lead a discussion? Leading the discussion, again, is a voluntary thing. If you are one of the candidates, and you feel like you want to lead a discussion, because the topic is interesting to you, you can absolutely go ahead and lead the discussion. But there is a certain process to it, which is something that we will discuss right now. Listen carefully first to the topic and jot down notes as soon as the topic is read out.

Please be careful to note down every single important keyword and see whether you have understood the topic properly and correctly. And see if there are any potential misunderstandings that might happen. And try to avoid those misunderstandings by listening very, very carefully to the topic that has been read out. And volunteer to start only if you have a meaningful point to say, if you have not understood the topic or if you feel like you need a little bit more elaboration to be able to say something meaningful about the topic it would be better not to volunteer.

On the other hand, if you feel like you have understood the topic very well. And that it is very clear, you may volunteer to start and start by saying “May I start with the permission of the chair and the group?”. So, that is a very polite way of asking to leave the group discussion. Once you have been granted permission by the judges and the panel and the other members of the group to lead the discussion, summarize the topic, make a topic statement, which is a simple summary, one sentence summary of what the topic is about.

Give the general opinion on the topic, you know what the general opinion of the popular masses is about regarding the topic, then give your specific views on the topic, and then set the direction for discussion. And once the group discussion commences, please remember to take notes throughout, because you are the person who is going to be doing the summary and the wrap up at the end as well, which means all the different perspectives and the different points that your peers make will be very, very useful and absolutely necessary for you to make the summary.

Do not add new points in the summary, no matter how many new and interesting things you have come up with during the course of the discussion. If they have not been touched on by somebody who is already talked about it during the discussion, then it does not make sense for you to hold space with your own views at the end of it. So, a summary should be just that a summary of what you have said in the past and what everyone else has said in the past, no new point should be added here.

One important point to remember before you think about leading a discussion, or even if you feel like you might not be the right fit for leading a discussion, in many cases, you do not have to know everything about the topic. It is not necessary that you know everything about the topic, it just is necessary that you understand what the topic is about, and that you are able to facilitate a discussion on the topic.

You do not need to be making all the important points right away in the first 1 minute, you just need to be able to set a direction for discussion. And that does not require a lot of background knowledge or in-depth knowledge about the topic. It just requires the ability to tease out what a potential direction for discussion can be. And how fruitful can that be for the next 10 minutes. So, these are questions that you can ask yourself, before you decide to volunteer to lead the discussion.

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The slide has a header 'Example of an effective opening in a GD' and a logo for 'IIT Madras ONLINE DEGREE'. Below the header is a list of bullet points:

- Small businesses are an important lifeline of India's cities, and need to be supported more.
- *I would like to take the lead in this discussion, with the permission of the chair.*
- COVID-19 pandemic + small businesses (tea and tiffin stalls, tailors, craftsmen, daycare services, beauty parlors)
- Remote work is only for the middle and upper-middle class
- How can we ensure that small businesses can be disaster resilient? What kinds of support systems can we conceive and install?
- *I am looking forward to hearing everyone's views on this.*

A video frame shows a woman with long dark hair, wearing a maroon top, speaking. A large watermark of the IIT Madras crest is visible across the slide.

So, example of an effective opening in a GD. Suppose you are leading a GD and you want to open it, you want to be the first person talking, how can you go about it? So, let us look at an example here.

“Small businesses are an important lifeline of Indian cities and need to be supported more.” So, this is the topic of discussion, you might immediately have noticed that this is a general topic of discussion, it is not an argumentative topic, and it does not really have two different controversial sides to it contradicting sides to it.

It is just a general topic that needs to be talked about. So, how can you go about the opening as a leader, “I would like to take lead in this discussion with the permission of the chair.” First thing you do is to ask for the permission of the chair and make your request known to the chair and everyone else in the team. And the second thing, you go straight to the topic statement, you try to summarize what exactly the topic is about.

The COVID-19 pandemic has wrecked a lot of small businesses such as tea and tiffin stalls owners, tailors, craftsmen, daycare services, and beauty parlors because they do not really have the customers or the space, or the workspace to be able to continue their work when the world has shut down and when the lockdowns have begun. Remote work, of course, is only for the middle and the upper middle class.

For small businesses, remote work is not an option, which is detrimental to their livelihood and the livelihood of the owners of these businesses. So, how can we ensure that small

businesses can be disaster resilient? And what kinds of support systems can we conceive and install? These are the questions that you asked to set the direction of the discussion. And finally, you can end by saying I am looking forward to hearing everyone's perspectives and views on this. So, this would be a good well-rounded opening in a GD that does not take longer than a minute.

(Refer Slide Time: 08:32)

The slide has a light beige background with a faint watermark of the Indian Institute of Technology Madras logo in the center. At the top right is the IIT Madras Online Degree logo. The title 'Participating in a GD' is centered above a bulleted list of pointers. To the right of the list is a circular video thumbnail showing a woman with dark hair, wearing a brown top, speaking. The video player interface shows a play button and a progress bar.

Participating in a GD

- Grasp the central point of the issue and stick to it
- Jot down 2-3 main points (if it is a case, note down the major problems in the case)
- Structure your argument in your mind
 - Start with a clear and emphatic topic statement
 - Make only one – or at max two – main point(s) in the body
 - Conclude by summarising your stance
 - If possible, open new questions that will help continue the discussion

Now, let us move on to the actual part of the GD the crux of the GD where different people chip in with their thoughts and participate in it. What are some of the pointers that we need to know when it comes to participating in a GD? Grasp the central point of the issue and stick to it. As a participant as somebody who is giving responses, it will be very evident if you give responses that are irrelevant that have gone astray that are not central to the topic at hand but are only peripheral that are not immediate concerns.

So, it is important for you to grasp the central point of the issue and stick to that central point. Jot down two to three main points that you think are very, very important. If it is a case, if it is a case-based group discussion, note down the major problems that you can find out that you can diagnosis as the case is read out, 2 to 3 main points in the case of general topics or argumentative topics. In the case of cases, diagnose exactly what the main problems are in the case that has been presented to you.

Structure your argument in your mind, you will have about 1 minute to make your point. So, start with a clear and emphatic topic statement which should immediately in the span of 5 to 10 seconds show exactly what you are trying to get at. And then make only one or at max two

main points in the body. Conclude by summarizing your stance, whatever you have talked about in the beginning, making the point really drive home, making the topic statement really drive home.

And if possible, and if you think it is necessary, you can open up new questions that will help continue that discussion. So, this is not dissimilar to the prep method that we discussed in the presentation session. Whenever there is a very short amount of time and you need to make a point, using the prep method always works quite well.

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Participating in a GD – Sample Response

- *The two major problems that the streaming service is facing are:*
 - Lack of local content
 - Affordability
- *To improve affordability while still breaking even, the company could explore a mobile-only plan for a much cheaper price, given that most Indians get their entertainment from mobile devices.*
- *To improve lack of local content, the streaming service can collaborate with budding content creators on social media to come up with original content with low production cost.*
- *These steps could improve the rate of adoption among Indian consumers.*

So, here is a sample response. And this response is responding to the case on the streaming service that has been facing some problems of adaption in the Indian market. So, as somebody who is responding to what the leader has already said, you might say, and here you are driving home what the main problem is, like you have found out what the main problem is, and you are really summarizing it in the shortest manner possible.

You would say, the two major problems that the streaming service is facing are lack of local content and their lack of affordability, their affordability is too low. To improve affordability while still breaking even, the company could explore a mobile-only plan for a much cheaper price, given that most Indians get their entertainments from mobile devices. This is your point number one, your topic statement is done, your topic statement has described the problem.

Point number one has given an immediate first solution, a solution that is to explore a mobile-only plan for a much cheaper price. Especially given that most Indians get their entertainment

from mobile devices. The third point is your second solution to the second problem that has been described, which is to improve lack of local content, the streaming service can collaborate with budding content creators on social media to come up with original content, but with low production cost.

So, that is another solution that you are suggesting, as somebody who is responding to the problems that have been described. And then finally, you can end with a sentence on how this could help improve the rate of adoption among Indian consumers. And if you like, you can conclude with another question about what other people think on the solutions, what other people think about the solutions you have suggested, and whether they have any contradictions and challenges and suggestions to improve these solutions. So, that is a sample GD response. Again, another response that is shorter than a minute and makes the point in the most concise and succinct manner possible.

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Participating in a GD – Useful Phrases

- Making a point
 - I'd like to note here that...
 - One point that I want to make is that...
- Agreeing, with reservation
 - I see where you're coming and I agree, but...
 - That may be valid, but only in certain circumstances...
- Disagreeing
 - I beg to differ, but...
 - I'm sorry, but I must disagree with this because...
- Interrupting
 - Can I add something here?
 - I'd like to add on to this with...

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Participating in a GD, here are some useful phrases that you can implement whenever you are participating in a GD. Suppose you want to make a point, you can use the phrases such as I would like to note here that one point that I want to make is that. Making a point where you are just trying to drive home the main point that you are trying to, that you have come up with, which is not necessarily contradicting something, or which is not undermining something else, or which is not comparing two different stances, it is just a point in itself.

So, you can use phrases such as ‘I would like to note here that’ one point that I want to make is that’ and so on. However, on the other hand, if you are disagreeing with somebody on a

particular point, you can use phrases such as ‘I beg to differ, but I disagree with you on that point’. ‘I am sorry, but I must disagree with this because’, so these are phrases that you can use when you want to disagree with somebody else on a particular point they have made.

Agreeing with somebody, in some cases, you might even agree very well with what somebody else has said. And you want to show your agreement and your acknowledgement of the point that they have made. So, you can say things like ‘I second, your opinion, and would also like to add that’ or you can say things like ‘I am glad you mentioned that’. In some cases, you might want to agree with somebody but have problems with one specific point that they made within the larger point that they have made.

Maybe you have some reservations about the argument although you broadly and generally agree with the argument that they have made. So, in such cases, you can use phrases such as ‘I see where you are coming from, and I agree, but there is an error’. So, you can say things like ‘I see where you are coming from and I agree, but I have the reservation’, and then you elaborate on the problems that you have with their argument.

Or you can say things like ‘that may be valid, but only in certain circumstances’. And then you go on to describe what circumstances in which that does not work. And the last category is interrupting. Interrupting is something that is generally not done generally avoided in group discussions. However, if there are situations where the conversation is going off track, or if you really feel like you need to make a point, just that moment unless you should forget it or the conversation goes completely in a different direction, you may definitely take the choice of interrupting somebody else.

But it can be done in a very polite and respectful manner by using phrases such as, ‘can I add something here?’, ‘I would like to add on to this with’, or ‘can I say something here?’. All of these are good ways of interrupting without sounding like, without disrupting the entire conversation.

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Participating in a GD – some Don'ts

- Do not repeat something that has already been said.
- Do not look indifferent or uninterested.
 - If you're not speaking or have finished speaking, listen. If you're speaking, pay attention to how others are receiving you.
- Do not just agree with someone; have something of your own to add.
- Do not try to dominate the group – this is a discussion, not a debate.
- Don't make personal, sexist, or casteist attacks or remarks.

Some Don'ts when participating in a GD. Do not repeat something that has already been said. If somebody said something, please do not repeat the same point again, there are only 10 minutes and you have only 1 minute to talk about the unique point that you want to make. So, try to ensure that whatever you see is unique and comes from your own specific perspective.

Do not look indifferent or uninterested. In a group discussion, it is very easy to zone out and feel like you are not really interested in what everyone else has to say. But that is a hallmark of bad listening skills. And that would likely not reflect very well on how you are received by your employer or potential employer. So, even if you are not speaking, or even if you are finished speaking, please try to listen actively and attentively.

If you are speaking, even then still pay attention to how others are receiving you and see whether you are being received well or not, you are being listened to or not. Do not just agree with somebody have something of your own to add, whenever you have something to say, or when you think that somebody else has made a point already. Do not just say yes, I agree. You can qualify that agreement by talking a little bit about what you feel about that agreement, what makes you agree with them.

And if there is any extra point that you need to add to what they have already said, maybe an example or an anecdote. So, do not just say I agree, say I agree, but also add a little bit of your own experience anecdotes and your own knowledge to make the conversation richer. Do not try to dominate the group. This is a discussion not to debate. A group discussion works very differently from a debate.

And again, I am not trying to imply that debates are an okay space for one to be dominating. No. Trying to dominate the group or the debate is generally not good discussion practice or debate practice, so please refrain from doing that. And this point should be fairly self-explanatory. Do not make personal, sexist, casteist attacks or remarks, there is no place for them in a group discussion.

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The image consists of two vertically stacked screenshots from a video conference. Both screenshots show a woman with long dark hair, wearing a maroon blouse, speaking. She is positioned in front of a large watermark logo for 'IIT Madras ONLINE DEGREE' which features a stylized orange flower and the text 'IIT MADRAS' around it. In the top screenshot, the slide title 'Sample topics' is visible at the top left, and a bulleted list of seven topics follows:

- *Too much thinking leads to the death of doing*
- *The youth of India needs to focus on gaining skills more than knowledge*
- *Companies should make working from office optional*
- *Divestment of public sector companies is a good step for India*
- *The brain drain has caused more harm than good for India*
- *The battle against climate change depends on the youth of the world*

In the bottom screenshot, the slide title 'Sample Topics – Caselets' is visible at the top left, and a bulleted list of five caselets follows:

- You are the senior manager of a software firm. Last year, your company had initiated a Fast-Track Plan – a plan to speed up the company's development efforts and rapidly increase market lines by introducing one product into the market per month. While your R & D lab has been able to meet this monthly goal over the past 11 months, the quality of the products has suffered unmistakably.
- You are also unable to train employees fast enough to work efficiently, and almost all departments are overwhelmed. Moreover, since the sales and technical specialists haven't had time to develop the expertise needed to help buyers before the sale or support them after the sale, too many customers either buy the wrong product or buy the right product but then can't get knowledgeable help when they need it.
- Discuss this situation with your team members and plan the next course of action.

Sample Topics – Caselets

- You are the senior manager of a software firm. Last year, your company had initiated a Fast-Track Plan – a plan to speed up the company's development efforts and rapidly increase market lines by introducing one product into the market per month. While your R & D lab has been able to meet this monthly goal over the past 11 months, the quality of the products has suffered unmistakably.
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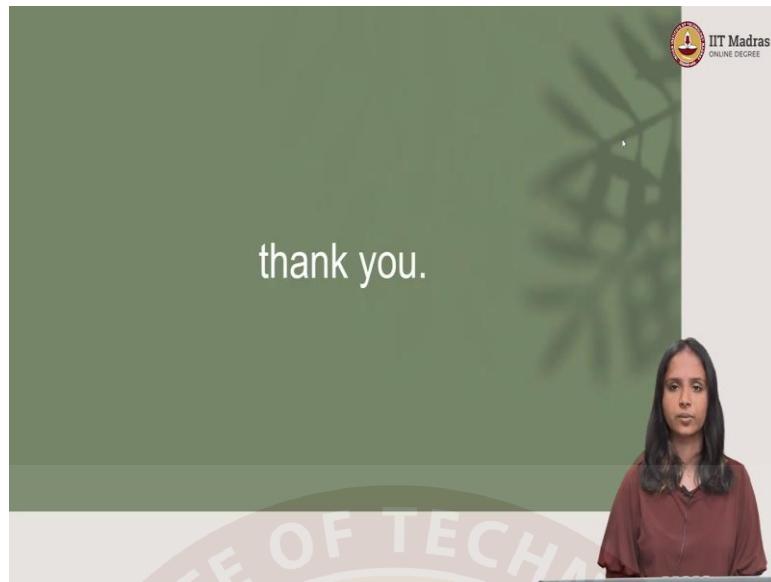
Sample Topics – Caselets

- You are a team of five who have been working at a prominent ed-tech company for over five years. Some of you climbed the professional ladder at this company from scratch, first arriving as a student volunteer teacher, moving on to intern with the R&D vertical of the company (where you generated educational content after extensive research), then taking up a formal research position upon graduation, and finally entering the position of a junior manager for the R&D team.
- In recent months, you have noticed that the company has been spending five times the amount of money on marketing and sales than it is on R&D.
- In a context where circumstances of education during the pandemic are changing, and there is a general need for fast-track innovation in educational strategies, discuss the next course of action with your team mates regarding striking a balance between R&D and marketing/sales.



Here are some sample topics that I want to show that you can take a screenshot of and practice at your home or with your peers. Ultimately, getting good at good group discussions is all about practice. So, please use the sample topics to practice well. So, I hope that was helpful. You may use these topics to work on your group discussion skills.

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And thank you very much for attending the session. See you soon.

