

Group Discussions

Broadly speaking, Group Discussion means a Group of people or even different groups of people discussing the various aspects of a given topic. However, over the years in professional circles, particularly in today's professional world, Group Discussion (GD) has assumed a specific meaning. A GD is a part of a job selection process or of an admission process for professional courses such as MBA where a group of people or candidates are asked to speak on a given topic, to assess their communicative ability and other qualities that an organization is looking for. Group Discussion therefore forms an important part of the selection process in multinational corporations (MNC's) and big Indian companies and also for admissions into professional courses. Candidates are generally short listed for interviews based on their performance in the discussions. Group Discussion is a simple yet reliable test for evaluating the potential capabilities, power of persuasion, argumentative powers and qualities of leadership of a participant. More importantly, it tests a candidate's ability to get along with a team.

What do the Selector's try to test through Group Discussions?

ACTIVITY 1. Think as to why GD is important for you. Jot down the points below and then tally your answers with the points given in this manual.

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Chapter 4: Group Discussions

IMPORTANCE OF GROUP DISCUSSIONS

1. First of all, in today's world, it is not enough to know about your subject. Through GD, your would-be employers would like to test your awareness of the current affairs of the world around you. This is important because business flourishes not in a vacuum, but takes place against the backdrop of socio-economic and political conditions of the national and international markets.
 2. Secondly, the GD tests your leadership qualities, team spirit and interpersonal skills. All these are very important in the professional world because projects are carried out in teams and the ability to take decisions and the ability to get along with people are very important. By using the GD as a tool, the selectors will see how you fit into the team, whether you will be an asset or a liability for the team. Again, through the give and take between the members and through the body language displayed by the candidates, selectors are able to weed out the unsuitable candidates and seize upon the more balanced and amicable personalities.
 3. Thirdly, communication skills are very important and through the GD, the powers of articulation of the speakers and their confidence level in communicating effectively is brought out.
 4. Finally, GD tests not only the ability to solve problems, but also the ability to remain calm in a stressful situation and work with other people, even in the most difficult of situations.
- For all the above reasons, though one candidate may have higher grades than another, the latter might be shortlisted if he or she performs better in the GD.

TEACHING STRATEGIES FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

Q. How does one go about a Group Discussions?

- While you are performing in a group, see that you contribute something worthwhile to the discussion. Merely repeating what others have said or, worse still, just nodding your head silently, merely agreeing with what everyone has said will not fetch you the job.
- It is important to say interesting and thought-provoking things. If you can embellish your thoughts with facts and figures, you will emerge as the intellectual leader of the team.
- At the same time, it is important to stay focused on the given topic and delve deep into it. It would show intense powers of concentration and intellectual acumen.
- But all this does not mean that you would be staying within the confines of your own personality and not heed to the others. It is a good team leader who can draw the quieter members of the team into the discussion. It would show your sensitive awareness of others.
- At the same time, you should quickly turn off the more aggressive members and try to bring them in to its given topic in such a manner that everyone can participate.

- Remember that a conversation can take place between any group of people and at any point of time. A Group Discussion, however, is a part of the selection procedure and it is formal, focused and the candidates are selected on the basis of it.
- In a conversation, however, there is no such purpose behind it and the language can be informal and it can centre round any topic and it can move from one topic to another. In a GD, it can range from a few minutes to hours on end (as in the case of the Coffee House) and there is also no timeframe. It can range from a few minutes to hours on end (as in the case of the Coffee House) and there is also no timeframe.

Q. How is Group Discussion similar to or different from a debate?

This is often a point of confusion for students.

1. In a debate you have to argue for or against a topic. In a Group Discussion, however, you can speak for or against the topic or, better still, it is preferable that you look at a topic from a balanced point of view. Or, you have to look at the pros and the cons of the situation. Remember that one of the most important functions of GD is to enable the selectors to select a person who has a matured and balanced personality. This is important because in the everyday professional world, problems will crop up, and situations will arise which will call for balanced judgements. Decisions would have to be made regarding the course of action where top-level executives will have to take a decision after looking at a problem from all possible angles, and only then a course of action will be decided upon. A GD is a test where the participant should display the ability to understand a given situation, and then be able to decide on a balanced course of action.
2. Again, in a debate you complete your entire speech, and then only the other person can begin his speech. But in a GD, there is a to and fro exchange of speech.
3. Again, in a debate a topic is thrashed out between two teams. In a GD, however, the topic is discussed within a team itself and a person can take both sides.
4. At the end of a debate, there is a vote, and the motion either stands or falls. In a GD, you can conclude in favour of the topic, speak against it, or simply say that the matter lies in between. Again, a group discussion, though like a debate, is a formal affair and both can test the analytical skills of a person or can reveal that person's communication skills; its purpose is different.
5. In a GD not merely the best speaker is selected, but selectors also try to judge a person who is a very good team player and can get along with others, and whether he or she has excellent leadership qualities.

Q. Is any time given for the preparation of the topic?

In the language laboratory, sometimes you may be given a bit of preparation time. Topics may have been given out beforehand, but it is best to give the topic just a few minutes before the presentation. However, in real life, almost no time is given to you to prepare the topic. A group of shortlisted candidates of about 8 to 10 might be made to sit in a semicircle or a circle. A topic would be given to you for discussion and someone has to initiate the discussion and the other participants join in. Each group might get to speak for 20 minutes to half an hour.

Q. Who are the role players at the time of GD?

At the time of GD, there is an Initiator, other performers and an Examiner or Examiner. Again, the performers in the GD take on the role of listeners, speakers as well as negotiators.

4. What is it that would-be employers look for from a candidate like you in the GD?

An employer looks for number of qualities from a would-be employee like you in the GD. They are:

1. The evaluators look for leadership qualities.
2. They look for abilities to perform within the group.
3. They expect you to have good communication skills. Under such skills comes the use of proper vocabulary, the use of right accent and intonation. You should have fluency of language and should use appropriate vocal variations.
4. They expect you to be smart, yet be friendly. You should use the appropriate language.
5. You should also be someone who is logical and rational. You should have the ability to put forward sound arguments.
6. You must possess a deep understanding of the subject matter, and have a wide range of knowledge.
7. The examiners also look for commitment and integrity from you.
8. You will also be appreciated if you have personality traits such as flexibility, initiative, assertiveness, along with the power to influence others during brainstorming sessions and the ability to reach a consensus.
9. In fact, you must project such a personality that would convince the employer that you have a definite competitive edge over others.
10. The employer would also look for creativity in the sense of an ability to look at a problem from fresh perspectives and capability to offer innovative ideas.
5. What are the main parts of a GD i.e. Structure of a GD:

There are three main parts of a GD:

- Initiation
- Continuation
- Conclusion

Initiation or Opening phase

In the GD, during the initiation you can start with a proverb or an adage or a question or saying. You can also start with a brief anecdote or use rhetorical questions. However, you should tackle the topic head on by first defining the key terms.

The expressions used in this section could be like:

- Let us begin by defining...
- Dear friends, Good morning/Good afternoon to all of you. Let us discuss...
- The burning issue of this hour is...
- Well, good morning to all of you. I am...
- Now let us begin our discussion by asking, what exactly do we mean by...
- Dear fellow participants, let me begin by quoting.....

Continuation or Middle Phase

After the initiation, in the middle portion of the GD, the discussion has to continue with different members taking turns. Each member has to listen to others carefully, and respond appropriately to what has been said. In your speech, refer back to what you

SUGGESTED BODY LANGUAGE FOR THE STUDENTS AT THE TIME OF GD

It is essential that during the GD you carry yourself in a confident manner. The body and hand must be erect. Your behaviour must be pleasant. You must have a friendly look on your face and there must be proper eye contact with the team members. Look at others with warmth instead of disdain or indifference. You must sit down at the GD table without slouching. It also helps you to be the centre of attention if you are seated right in the middle of the group. Speak with confidence and in such a manner that everyone can listen to you clearly. Go in for empathetic listening. Also, remember that when you communicate, do communicate with all the members of the team instead of just remaining isolated or speaking with one particular person.

CHECKLIST FOR GD

Do's

1. Try and seat yourself at the central position. Psychologically, it will keep you at the focal point of the group.
2. Be clear about the topic, if necessary, ask for clarifications.
3. Also seize the opportunity to initiate the discussion.
4. Allow others to speak, but you too should contribute fruitfully to the team.

- 4

Toribé (one) Jalat family, Veracruz, Mexico. 1980-81 and Ayaal Hatterjee

(Thaidan: Yes, of course the joint family system, for the simple reason that in the village, do not more than those of a nuclear family system).

Sudipta: I agree with both of you. It is true that in nuclear families the common ancestor

Chandan: I agree that a child always needs to share everything with same aged kids family.

Ayan: I completely agree with you in this matter, but too much of emotional attachment creates great hindrance in our lives.

Ayari: In addition, there are other restraints. For instance, even if one married man or wife is not allowed to have a stand of life of their own.

Sodigala: I think because of these different reasons that a joint family breaks up less² families. These who are earning always think of their own life-style or status only.

they neglect the well-being of the oldest and youngest of the family members. However, if there is a sudden financial crisis in a joint family, one usually finds that the entire family is there to help him or her out.

Ayan: I completely agree with you, but in a joint family, unfortunately enough, there are always a few people at home to interfere in your personal matters and create misunderstandings which lead to an unhealthy atmosphere to live in.

Chandani: Ayan is right. And, of course, a joint family also brings responsibilities on your shoulders. Along with your professional hazards, all those responsibilities and corresponding problems can make your life miserable.

Sudipta: This reluctance to take up responsibilities is the main cause behind the existence of old homes. Most of the children hesitate in taking up the responsibilities of looking after their old parents. And thus the old and deserted parents find shelter in some old age home.

If you are responsible and loving as a human being, the story however is different. So, while talking off your discussion, you can say that the common thought we all share is that if there is love, care, adjustment and, most importantly, the will to stay together under a single roof, then surely one can be a big, happy, joint family. Otherwise, there is always the option of nuclear families, co-ops and old age homes, as life must go on.

Follow up activity:

1. Write your comments on the performances of Sudipta, Chandani and Ayan.
2. Who do you think has the most balanced personality?

Topic Number Two: Will the IT Bubble Burst Soon?

The participants are Anindita Das, Tammy Banerjee and Anshu Saha.

Anindita: Good afternoon, everybody. Today, the topic of our discussion, Will the IT bubble burst soon? concerns our professional lives very much. The participants are I myself, Anshu and Tammy. I would like to start the discussion by saying that the hype surrounding the IT industry is declining day by day. In the last decade the IT sector used to be a major contributor to the Indian economy, but due to major setbacks in this sector and also due to some external factors, its growth has been somewhat stifled. So just as a bubble is very attractive but ephemeral, is it the same with the IT industry?

Tammy: Well, it's a good analogy. Let us take a look at the IT industry. One can't forget those days when, in the 80s, the Texas Instruments, followed by Software Technology Park, the exclusive Satellite International Gateway for export industry made the export market grow up by leaps and bounds. Leading software and services exporters such as Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), Infosys Technologies, Wipro Technologies, Satyam Computer Services, and ITC contributed largely to the national income due to increase in exports. PC and hardware vendors like Digital Compag, Hewlett Packard, Microsoft, IBM set up their offices. IT industry had carved out a niche for itself in the corporate sector.

I would also like to add another point to this discussion. During the IT boom, there was a great craze amongst the students to study engineering and computers, especially Electronics and Computer Science and IT (B.Tech., MCA, M.Sc. (IT), etc.). However, during the recession, in the IT sector in India, as well as in the rest of the world, there was a decline in the number of jobs, and salaries were slashed. Today, the recession is almost over, at least in India, and the industry is looking up, with more jobs (as can be seen from advertisements in newspapers and elsewhere) and better pay packages.



Linguistic Society of America
Advancing the Scientific Study of Language

Search

Home	Contact	Member Login
Join Now/Renew/Member Benefits		
Donate	About LSA	Jobs Center
		News Room
		My Cart
Meetings & Institutes	What is Linguistics?	LSA Publications
		LSA Members
		Issues in Linguistics
		Resource Hub

What's the Difference between Speech and Writing?

William Bright

When we talk about 'language', sometimes we mean speech (spoken language), sometimes writing (written language). How are they different? Of course, speech is spoken and heard, while writing is written and read. But there are many other differences.

Age. Speech goes back to human beginnings, perhaps a million years ago. Writing is relatively recent, however, it was first invented by the Sumerians in Mesopotamia, around 3200 B.C. Since then, the idea of writing has spread around the world and different writing systems have evolved in different parts of the world.

Universality. Humans everywhere can speak. But before the Sumerian invention, people were nonliterate. Even now there are many nonliterate groups (e.g. in New Guinea), and many nonliterate people in officially literate societies.

Acquisition. People everywhere start speaking during the first two years of life; many of the abilities involved are probably inborn rather than learned. Learning to write typically builds on learning to speak.

Levels of Structure. Speech consists of two types of basic units, 'phonemes' or units of sound which are themselves meaningless, are combined into 'morphemes' which are meaningful units, so the phonemes /b/, /l/, /n/ form the word 'bun'. Alphabetic scripts work the same way. In a different type of script, the syllabary, the basic unit, corresponds to a spoken syllable. Japanese and Cherokee use this system. In logographic script, e.g. Chinese, each character corresponds to an entire morpheme (usually a word). (For further information on scripts, see Daniels and Bright, 1996.)

Interdependence. Most literate people can convey the same messages in either speech or writing, but speech typically conveys more explicit information than writing. Hebrew and Arabic scripts indicate consonants but often omit symbols for vowels. In Chinese, the symbols that correspond to words may give no indication of pronunciation, or only partial cues. The spoken

The Difference Between Hearing and Listening

Updated on June 16, 2015



Listening | Source

Communication is a two-way process. Many people neither listen to nor understand what another person says or feels because they do not know the difference between hearing and listening. When someone is speaking to them, they say, "I hear what you are saying." Later, they say, "I am listening to what you are saying." In reality, there is a huge difference between hearing and listening. Communication is a two-way process. Many people do not listen and do not understand what the other person says or feels because they do not know the difference between hearing and listening.

Note: This article can be used as a reference for people who are working towards any qualifications in customer service, especially the NVO Level 2 or Level 3 Diploma or Certificate in Customer Services. The article can be used as reference for the unit below:

Unit A3: Communicate effectively with customers

Hearing Vs. Listening: A Summary

Hearing	Listening
1. A physical ability and not a conscious act (Physiological)	A skill and conscious act (Psychological)
2. Is hearing random?	Is listening rationally and analyzing?
3. Everyone who is physically able to hear	Not everyone listens
4. Perceiving sound by the ear	Making an effort to understand/interpret/analyze the words
5. Involuntary	Voluntary
6. You just hear sound and noise but do not understand much	You understand what is being said or meant
7. Does not need focus	Needs focus and care
8. Hearing uses only one of the five senses.	Listening uses hearing, seeing and sometimes the sense of touch
9. Receiving sound vibrations	Observing behaviour and adding meaning to what the speaker says
10. Passive	Active

What is Hearing?

Hearing is an action in which a sound is perceived by the ear. Very little or no effort is required as your mind may be occupied with other thoughts or perhaps you are engaged in a different task while the other person is sharing his or her thoughts with you. This is a passive process.

Hearing in Daily Life

We hear something around us all the time.

While you are at home, you might hear the sound of other people talking, the sound of cooking in the kitchen, the sound of the television, and the sound of anything that is happening around you. When you are at work, depending on where you work, you hear the sound of various things around you. While on the road you hear the sound of traffic and any events in the public, the people laughing, talking, shouting etc.

At the end of the day, after you go to bed and fall asleep, you hear sounds even while you sleep. All these happen around you, and you do not necessarily notice it. It is just sounds waves reaching your ears. Hearing is an alarm system which operates even outside your immediate awareness.

This also applies to music. Nowadays music is played everywhere, in shopping malls, in restaurants, in supermarkets, in offices. Not all of us listen to that music and acquire anything from it. In a way, this devalues music. Most people use music to just fill the silence while they are doing other tasks.



Listening Process | Source

What is Listening?

Listening is an action in which you choose to actively concentrate on what you hear. You need to put in a lot more effort in terms of attention, processing, thinking, and analyzing. You do not think about anything else, or get engaged in any other tasks, but instead sit down and listen to what the speaker is saying. You notice the feeling and meaning of what is being said. This is an active process.

How to Listen

When you listen, you need to pay attention in order to interpret and respond. Listening is a skill that can be improved with a little bit of hard work, dedication and determination. In every relationship, we come across this complaining phrase: "You never listen" or "You do not want to listen." Do you want that to be said about you?

Mistaking is a big culprit when it comes to people's inability to listen. For example, "I often encounter people reading something on the Internet while someone is talking to them. I also encounter people trying to listen to someone while **How good is this article?** indicating at their phones. These are common scenarios that occur in offices and personal lives almost every day. These behaviours clearly indicate a lack of respect on the part of the listener. This tells the speaker that they are not important. **How good is this article?** putting the speaker in an awful situation.

“When people talk, listen completely. Most people never listen.”
— Ernest Hemingway

Your Rating: ?
submit

Please rate this article using the scale below. The scale is from 1 to 10, where 10 is the best and 1 is the worst.

ACTIVE LISTENING SKILLS

3. OBSERVE

Non-Verbal Behavior

4. FOCUS

Don't do anything else while listening

5. ACKNOWLEDGE

Acknowledge the message, even if you don't agree with it

6. RESPECT

Let the speaker finish

14
© 2008 (www. Active Skills)
Source

How to Be an Active Listener

- Focus on the speaker and not yourself. Keep your eyes and ears focused on the speaker without making them feel uncomfortable.
- If speaking on the phone, concentrate by focusing at a particular spot and do not look around.
- Provide feedback on what the speaker has said.
- Use paraphrasing (repeating what the other person has said, but not verbatim) skills to understand the speaker's needs.
- When there are people who talk a lot, they can politely be informed about the limited time and be requested to talk about their important concerns (This applies when you have limited appointment times).
- Listen patiently to all concerns without interrupting and to the end and do not forget to ask a customer if they have any questions for you.
- Be patient when you wait for responses by maintaining silence.
- Always keep an eye on the speaker's body language and the tone of their voice because these two behaviours speak a lot.
- Write down important information in the form of keywords on a piece of paper.
- Keep your emotions away from the situation.
- Do not jump to conclusions before completely listening.
- Ask the speaker to repeat if you have not understood something.

Why Do People Find it Hard to Listen?

Very few people have refined the ability to hear into the art of listening. People fail to listen for many reasons, including:

- Only hearing what they expect or want to hear
- Not being open to new ideas
- Lacking understanding of another's situation
- Lack of empathy about how the other person feels
- Lacking patience to sit down and listen
- Self-centredness and egoism
- Tending to be defensive
- Spending a conversation planning what to say next instead of listening
- Rushing through everything and not wanting to sit down for a few minutes to listen to others
- Feeling awkward or uncomfortable with something the speaker said

How good is this article?

Please rate this article using the scale below. The scale is from 1 to 10, where 10 is the best and 1 is the worst.

Your Rating: ?

submit

“Most people do not listen with the intent to understand, they listen with the intent to reply.”
— Stephen R. Covey

Why is Listening More Important than Hearing?

Source

If you need to understand the importance of listening, just think for a moment. When we speak to someone, what do we expect them to do? How do we expect them to react? Treat others the same way you wish to be treated. Give your best!

“Seek first to understand, then to be understood.”
— Stephen R. Covey

Listening is important because it helps you socialise and get along in a professional environment. You know what is expected of you, and you are able to resolve issues by arriving at good decisions. Listening shows people that you are interacting with them and that you appreciate and give importance to their thoughts and feelings. It helps you cooperate with other people and make decisions easily without any errors. It also shows that you are polite. Listeners understand better and are more productive. People, in general, avoid bad listeners.

“Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to turn a life around.”
— Leo Buscaglia

How good is this article?

Please rate this article using the scale below. The scale is from 1 to 10, where 10 is the best and 1 is the worst.

Your Rating: ?

submit

Benefits of listening:

- You are appreciated if you listen with full concentration
- Accomplish better results quicker
- Helps to build a better relationship, be it professional or personal
- You gain more customers or clients as you are genuinely interested to serve them
- Improves the quality of the company / organisation
- You make a difference in people's life and mind
- You get to know customers / clients better and understand their needs
- It helps you get into the very heart of their problems / issues
- It helps to provide better service and produce better results
- Customer / client expectations are met
- Shows that we respect acknowledge and care for them
- It delights customers / clients and shows that we are empathetic
- You learn new information
- You can deal with people easily
- Everyone likes people who listen
- Helps you develop leadership and management skills
- Helps one to be successful in life / career by performing up to their expectations
- Avoids misunderstandings and conflicts

Source

How good is this article?

Please rate this article using the scale below. The scale is from 1 to 10, where 10 is the best and 1 is the worst.

Your Rating: ?

submit

The only similarity between hearing and listening is that you're both with the aid of ears.

Listening is very important when it comes to customer service and other professions where you have to listen to people at all times. For example, doctors, nurses, negotiators and lawyers, construction professionals, teachers, sales, advisors etc. Almost all professions require listening skills at some point or the other. In an office and most environments, we are around people who want to be listened. It is always good to improve your listening skills and be a better listener and a better human.

More by this Author



00 2

TOUCHANCEL.COM

Deal With Customers In Writing or Electronically - Part 1

Communication plays a very important role in everyone's day-to-day life, both personal and professional.



00 3

TOUCHANCEL.COM

Communicate Effectively With Customers - Part 3

Communicating using simple plain English is vital to customer service, as the customer service advisor will be dealing with clients from different parts of the world who speak different dialects.



00 4

TOUCHANCEL.COM

What Are Different Types of Questioning Techniques?

Questioning technique or questioning skills is an important aspect in customer services and in other fields. [Effective questioning techniques](#) is the best and it is the worst.

How good is this article?

Please rate this article using the scale. [How good is this article?](#) is the best and 1 is the worst.

Your Rating: ?

submit