

# Group Discussions

*The ability to take effective part in group discussions is one of the most important skills that contribute to professional success.*

As in a football game, where you play like a team, passing the ball to each team member and aim for a common goal, GD is also based on team work, incorporating views of different team members to reach a common goal. We often find people discussing various social, economic, and political issues. These discussions might be both informal and formal. Informal private discussions can take place at a restaurant, at a recreation club, at a college canteen, at a bus stop, at a coffee shop, or even at home. On the other hand, formal discussions may take place at a meeting place, at a conference hall, or at a recruitment centre. Why do people discuss? The most obvious answer is that we involve in discussion in order to develop a better perspective on key issues by bringing out various viewpoints. When we exchange differing views on an issue, we get a clear picture of the problem and are able to understand it. This understanding makes us better equipped to deal with the problem. This is precisely the main purpose of a discussion.

## **What is a Group Discussion?**

The literal meaning of the word 'discuss' is to 'talk about a subject in detail'. So group discussion may refer to a communicative situation that allows participants to express views and opinions to other participants. It is a systematic oral exchange of information, views and opinions about a topic, issue, problem or situation among members of a group who share certain common objectives.

Group discussion (GD) is basically an interactive oral process. Here, the exchange of ideas, thoughts and feelings takes place through oral communication. Each member of the group listens to other members as well as gives his or her views orally. He or she has to use clear language, persuasive style, and has to use voice and gesture effectively. This means that participants need to be proficient in oral communication in order to take effective part in a group discussion.

GD is a group process, i.e., it involves both person-to-person as well as person-to-group interactions. Every group member has to develop goal-oriented or group-oriented interaction. Effective interactions in discussion should lead to unification between the activities of individuals as a work team, and towards the achievement of common group goals. A participant should be concerned with the ego needs of other participants, unity of group, and the overall objectives of the discussion.

GD is systematic. Each participant knows the topic in advance and has the opportunity to use his/her experience and knowledge to understand and analyse the topic. The exchange of ideas in GD takes place in a systematic and structured way. The participants are seated face-to-face and each participant gets an opportunity to express his/her views and comments on the views expressed by other members of the group. A formal speech making or group procedure may follow in order to ensure optimal participation.

GD is a purposeful goal-oriented activity. The goals or objectives of a discussion are generally decided before the discussion takes place. This means that each participant is usually aware of the purpose or purposes of the discussion in advance. A GD may help achieve group goals as well as individual needs. Group goals are common and shared by each participant whereas individual needs may be the personal goals of the members of the group.

To conclude, we may define group discussion as a form of systematic and purposeful oral process characterised by the formal and structured exchange of views on a particular topic, issue, problem or situation for developing information and understanding essential for decision-making or problem.

## Importance of Group Discussion

The ability to take effective part in GD is one of the most important skills that contribute to professional success. Whether one is a student, a job seeker, a professional engineer, or a company executive, one needs effective GD skills. A student may have to take part in academic discussions student meetings, group deliberation, interactive classroom sessions, or selection GDs for admission to professional courses. A job seeker may be required to face selection GDs as part of the selection process. Professionals in different fields also have to take part in professional meetings and discussions. All these situations require the ability to make a significant contribution to group deliberation and help the group in the process of decision – making.

The importance of GD has increased in recent times due to its increasing role as an effective tool in (a) problem solving, (b) decision-making, and (c) personality assessment. In most of the organisations, companies and institutions, group discussion aids in problem solving and decision making. When a problem situation arises, the concerned people discuss. It. They exchange their perceptions about the problem and its possible solutions. The alternative solutions are discussed and analysed, and the best option is chosen by the group. Similarly, whenever there is a need to take a decision in a particular case, the matter is first discussed by a group of people and the different aspects are analysed, interpreted and evaluated. This leads to effective decisions.

GD is also used as a technique for personality assessment of candidates for job selection or admission to professional courses. Groups of six to eight members are formed and are given a topic to discuss within a limited time (generally 30 to 45 minutes). The given topic may be an opinion, a problem or a case. The members of the selection committee closely evaluate the different skills reflected by the candidates and those who reflect leadership qualities and emerge as natural group leaders are normally shortlisted for a personal interview.

Thus all of us need effective GD skills. IT can do wonders for us and may ensure academic success, popularity and power in an organisation, a job offer that we always waited for, or admission to a course that is going to change our life. Therefore, it is important to be able to take part in a GD effectively and confidently. Participants should know how to persuade other group members, how to reflect confidence while speaking, how to reflect leadership qualities, and how to make the group achieve its goals. They should have the ability to take initiative during a discussion, present their personal views in an effective way, develop their ideas logically, analysis and respond to the views expressed by other members, and emerge as the natural leader of the group.

## **Group Discussion as a Tool for Selection**

Group discussion has emerged as an effective and potentially powerful technique for evaluating personality traits of candidates for job selection or admission to professional courses. The GD test occupies a major position in the employment procedure of nearly all industrial concerns, public limited organisations, and multinational companies. More than any other selection method, GD tests are relied upon for making hiring decisions. These selections GD may vary from a brief discussion on a simple topic to an exhaustive interactive discussion of a controversial issue or an actual company problem. However, they all intend to evaluate the depth and range of the candidate's knowledge, his or her ability to orally present that knowledge in a convincing manner and his/her effective group communication, leadership, and team management skills.

## **Group Discussion Strategies**

As group discussion is a systematic and purposeful oral process characterised by the formal and structured exchange of views on a particular topic, issue, problem, or situation, it should be well planned and well conducted. Seven strategies have been described here for participating in group discussion.

Getting the GD Started

Contributing Systematically

Creating a Friendly Cooperative Atmosphere

Moving the Discussion Along

Promoting Optimal Participation

Handling Conflict  
Effecting Closure

## **Group Interaction Strategies**

Group discussion is a forum that provides opportunities for interaction. This interaction is possible only if every member of the group contributes and demonstrates his/her level of understanding on the given topic for discussion. However, there are several unpredictable factors involved in a GD. These include the setting, the examiners, other group discussion participants, the requirements of the selection procedure, etc. You hardly know anything about them. You need several skills and micro-skills in order to emerge successful in a GD test. In order to ensure an impressive performance in a GD test, you should know how to exchange opinions and suggestions in group discussions.

### **Exchange Opinions**

GD is a cooperative exercise where opinions and views of each member of the group are important for developing consensus and reaching to a conclusion. So you have to ask for opinion, give opinion, support opinions, balance points of view, or express agreements and disagreements.

### **Supporting your Opinions**

In order to make your views acceptable to the other group members, you need to support them with facts, example, illustrations, or arguments. Sometimes you may feel that giving one reason or consequence for your point of view is sufficient to convince the listeners. However, in many cases during a discussion, more than one reason may be needed to support your opinion.

### **Exchanging Suggestions and proposals**

During a group discussion, participants need to get the suggestions of other member of the group in order to conduct the discussion and to explore possible solution to actual problem situation. There is a difference between an opinion and a suggestion. An opinion is what seems to one to be probably true while a suggestion is a proposal to do something.

## **Types of Group Discussions**

Most Group Discussions can be divided into 3 kinds:

**A) Topical Group Discussions**, which are based on current affairs or ‘static’ matters – for example, a GD on the topic of the recent demonetisation of Rs 500 and Rs 1000 notes would be the former, whereas a GD on whether India should adopt a presidential model of democracy would be the latter, as it has no limitation of a time frame.

**B) Case-studies**, which present the group with a complex business situation that requires a decision to be made. Such cases usually have multiple problems embedded in the given situation, and both the individual participants and the group are required to analyse the situation, identify the problems, and suggest a wayout.

**C) Abstract Group Discussions**, which are called so because they offer us no definite framework of the topic, and hence no definite direction to take in the discussion. Instead, the participants are required to interpret the topic in their own ways and demonstrate innovative thinking in doing so. Such topics could be single-worded, such as ‘Blue’, or a short cryptic sentence, or even an image. Contrary to popular perception, no one kind of GD is necessarily easier or more difficult than any other, as the quality of response in any case depends largely on the preparation of the individual and the way they generally think.

## **Recommended Background Preparation for a Group Discussion**

The most vital component of one’s performance in the GD is the content. As current affairs tend to dominate the GDs, a conscious effort to build the fact-bank of current affairs is necessary. Review the timelines of important national and international affairs and the subsequent developments therein. Follow at least 2 local, 2 national, and 2 international newspapers and news channels every day. Concentrate on information. In newspapers, it is found mostly in the first 4 pages, the finance page, and the sports pages. You may or may not read the editorials (which offer opinion, comment and perspective), but you must read the news. Because you need facts to support your standpoints. For if you have no facts, you only have opinions, which you may end up merely repeating throughout your contribution in a GD.

Please remember that the GD is not an elimination process, but only one of the several selection processes with certain weightage that contributes to the final score.

## Topics for Group Discussion

- Is competition necessary in learning process?
- Reservation in Indian Education system Evil or Boon.
- Freshers are better than laterals.
- Social Network Boon or Ban
- Brain Drain should be stopped.
- Technical and professional education should be completely privatised.
- Indian media needs to more accountable.
- The Structure and system of the civil services examination needs to be changed.
- Multinational companies should not be allowed to invest in key industries.
- Human cloning should be banned.
- Sick public sector units should be sold to private companies.
- All the banks in India should be privatised
- Terrorism should be controlled by force and not by negotiation.
- Digital India: Whom Does it Benefit?
- Merits and Demerits of Cashless Economy
- Is the Aadhaar database secured enough?
- Making Aadhaar Mandatory: Benefits and Drawbacks
- Impact of Technology on Jobs
- Whether Digital Education has taken over Traditional Education?
- Education industry is a business these days.
- Demonetisation has reduced the Corruption, Black Money and Terrorism?
- Is the World Ready for Cashless Currency?

- Are digital payments secure enough for the Indian economy to go cashless?
- Ban 500, 1000 notes - Corruption Uprooted or just changing clothes!
- Can we dream of hosting the Olympics?
- Chinese Goods vs Indian Goods
- Do we really need Smart Cities?
- Is the youth of India confident or confused?
- Problems unite us, Religion divides us
- Should Hindi be the official language of India?
- Should national anthem be played in cinema halls?
- Should we change the present system of education in our country?
- Solution of corruption is a mirage till we catch top public figure
- Will Reliance Jio be a sustainable business model in a country like India?
- Youth in Politics
- Privatization will lead to Less Corruption
- We Need More Entrepreneurs than Managers
- Can One Contribute to the Social Sector while Being Employed in the Corporate World?
- The Rush for MBA is really a Rush for Big Money
- Will Mumbai's Film Industry ever evolve into a Truly Modern Corporative One?
- Indians Perform Better as Individuals than in Groups/Teams
- Positive Attitude and not Knowledge is required for Business Success
- Are Ethics just Business Pretence?
- Ethics in Business are just a passing fashion



- Is an MBA necessary to succeed in life?
- Coalition government can never be strong.
- IITs should be privatised.
- Is India Shining
- Mobile phones / Internet – a boon or nuisance
- Students focusing on software industry-good or bad
- Child marriage
- India 2020
- Daughters are more caring than sons
- Influence of western culture in Indian Universities
- Influence of computers in medical sciences
- Death penalties for perpetrators of crime against women.  
Is it Justified?
- Knowledge is the biggest asset you can accumulate.
- Does Travelling help in generating ideas and experiential learning?
- Corruption is the root cause for Indian Economy slowdown
- "Make in India" - will the idea make India a manufacturing hub?
- War, not dialogue, will end Kashmir crisis
- Making Aadhar mandatory is not a good idea.
- Cricket: Overpowering other sports in India.
- News channels - breaking rules to give breaking news.