**GROUP DISCUSSION**

Group discussion (GD) is a comprehensive technique to judge the suitability of an individual and his appropriateness for admission, scholarship, job, etc. GD assesses the overall personality – thoughts, feelings and behaviour - of an individual in a group. A topic is presented to the group members for discussion. While the discussion is going on, a group of panellists observe them. Through this observation they judge intellectual, social, leadership, communicative skills of candidates taking part in the GD.

**Importance of GD**

For admission to some of the universities, B- Schools, campus placements after graduation or for recruitment to a multinational company, you need to have knowledge of the field and also have the capability to work in a group as a leader or as a member. The group discussion technique is a very effective way to judge the candidate’s ability to work in a group.

**What are the skills that are judged in a GD?**

• How good you are at communicating with other

• How easily you behave and interact with the other group members

• How open minded you are

• How flexible or rigid you are in accepting the view- points of others in the group

• Your leadership skills

• Your analytical abilities

• Problem solving & critical thinking skills

• Time management skills

• Your skills at putting forth your ideas in an unbiased manner • Social attitude and confidence

**Do’s of participating in a GD**

• Think before you speak.

• Pick up clues from the discussion and intelligently add points that come to your mind with regards to the topic, in case you don’t know much about the topic.

• Back up your points with facts and figures if needed.

• Be gentle and sure in your presentation of views.

• Speak to-the-point and make sure that you do not repeat the points.

• Be calm and composed while speaking.

• Listening to others is also an important aspect of participation in the group discussion, so listen to others.

• Have respectful attitude towards the viewpoints of others.

• Your body language should convey your ease of behaviour.

• Sometimes the discussion may take a hostile turn. In such a case it is a good idea to intervene to make the situation relaxed. This act of yours will show your leadership and problem solving skills.

**Don’ts of participating in a GD**

• Do not initiate the discussion if you do not know the topic well.

• Do not go overboard in exhibiting your knowledge even if you know the topic well.

• Do not interrupt other members when they are speaking.

• Do not change your opinion about the topic just because most of the other participants are having an opinion different from yours.

• Do not feel unconfident if a speaker prior to you has presented the points more effectively than you.

• Do not ask irrelevant questions.

• Do not let your personal biases about the topic enter the discussion

**Points to be kept in mind before the GD**

No one knows what the topic of GD is going to be. Hence, it will be a good idea to keep yourself abreast with topics like:

**1. Current Affairs**

Current Affairs is something that you have to be thorough with. For this, read newspapers regularly and watch news on the television. Understand the recent crises that the world is reeling under, the latest developmental initiatives, the ties between various countries and the like.

**2. Historical topics**

Have a fair knowledge about the country’s history and also the history of other countries. The topics may not be specifically from this area, but having historical information will help you cite examples and make references whenever needed.

**3. Sports, Arts & Literature**

**4. Data crunching**

Familiarize yourself with important data. Throwing in some data if required in your GD will definitely create an impression among the assessors. Read as much as possible. Have good and sound knowledge on numerous topics. Watching documentaries on various topics will help here. Improve your vocabulary. This does not mean that you use heavy and big words, but it means that you will be able to understand the topic better and contribute effectively.

Last but not the least; mentally visualize yourself as succeeding and you will succeed.

**Advantages of Group Discussions**

► **Better understanding of the subject :** GD offers a great opportunity to the discussants to take a deep dive into the subject, and understand it profoundly. It expands the horizon of knowledge and learning. In addition, it extends a chance to the participants to improve their abilities to think critically and develop their analytical skills.

► **Solve problems:** Since GD brings together a group of people holding diverse opinions, it also perceived as one of the sought after ways to arrive at solutions to problems. Because of the fact that people bring in a wide range of insights, GDs help in changing the thought process from a narrow to a wider view, thereby paving the way to solutions.

► **Improve listening skills and confidence:** Since GDs necessitate the contribution of ideas and thoughts, the participants are required to be listen keenly to others’ observations. In this sense, group discussions are a fantastic way to enhance listening skills, and also boost the confidence of speakers by engaging them and encouraging them to express their thoughts.

► **Enhance communication and interpersonal skills:** While one aspect of GDs is that it encourages people to share their knowledge, the other important aspect is that it gives an opportunity to people to build their communication skills. The participants, in the process, learn how to express their ideas while also respecting viewpoints of others. This in turn contributes to the development of interpersonal skills among the peer group.

► **Team building exercise:** GDs help in developing teamwork and leadership attributed in people, which are extremely important in the current context. Working in a group helps them increase tolerance and respect towards others, and also how to unanimously arrive at conclusions.

After learning various benefits which people may derive from participation in group discussions, it is important to highlight that this activity holds a special importance in academic and professional set ups. On one hand, GDs reflect the values of coexistence, motivation, tolerance and acceptance for others, on the other hand, they are a key tool for recruiters. During the selection process, they help the hiring team to identify if the job applicants possess the values which mirror the principles and the vision of the organisations. The organisations today not only stress on the knowledge pool of the candidates, but also give lot of importance to enthusiasm and adaptability in the workforce. This helps us explain why academic institutions, and especially management schools emphasise GDs.

**Group Discussion is conducted to evaluate your following skills:**

* Confidence.
* Effective Communication.
* Quality of Language.
* Listening Skills.
* Assertive Attitude.
* Paraphrasing Skills.
* Leadership.

**Types of Group Discussion**

Generally, group discussion categorized into two categories i.e. Topic-based group discussion and Case-based group discussion as discussed below.

* **Topic-Based Group Discussion:** In this discussion, a topic is provided to the candidates about what they have to perform the discussion. This logic has been drawn from the actual work scenarios. In this discussion, the given topics are of three kinds i.e. Factual topics, Controversial topics and Abstract topics (related to intangible things).
* **Case-Based Group Discussion:** Instead of the topics, small cases are handover to the candidates which leads to the questions and they have to discuss those questions. This will help in finding out the problem-solving abilities of the candidates.

**Purpose of Group Discussion**

There are several purposes for group discussions. Some of them are listed below:

* To reach a solution on an issue of concern.
* To generate new ideas for solving a problem.
* For choosing the applicants after the written test for a job or for admission to educational institutes.
* To train ourselves in various interpersonal skills.

**Importance of Group Discussion in Education and Learning**

Group discussion plays a vital role in a student’s life. Group discussions in the classroom are not only beneficial for a student’s social skills only but also enhance their educational development and learning too. Some of the benefits of GD in a student’s life are discussed below.

* **Enhance Critical Thinking:** Group discussion is used in a classroom to improve learning, asking open-ended questions will encourage critical thinking and help students think for themselves
* **Help with Understanding:** Group discussion use to help students to understand a topic or concept deeply which will stay for a long time in their minds.
* **Improve Communication Skills:** It is also used to improve communication skills as it can encourage students to become more confident in speaking up and asking questions. This will help them improve their communication in the long run because it should make them more confident to ask if they’re stuck and need help.
* **Improve Interest in Lessons:** It improves learning, as group discussion invites the students to be the speakers. This helps students as it can maintain their focus and concentration to hear another voice instead of listening to the same teacher, which holds their attention.
* **Provide the Feedback:** When learners discuss and explain the concepts to each other aloud in a group, it helps the teacher to hear if they have learnt a concept or not. This is a perfect feedback on teaching. It means that, if the teacher sees that they don’t understand something clearly, they can help them by stepping in and adding some more context or information in their discussion.

**Importance of Group Discussion in Business**

Group discussion also has a significant role in the business. As group discussions are organized in the companies to talk over the new strategies about the growth of the business and to find out the valid solution to the problems related to the company’s business. Some of the advantages of the GD are mentioned below in terms of the business.

* **Suggestions:** It is through group discussions that a meaningful and practically implementable solution can be reached. The Collaboration of these suggestions gives rise to a new one, creating a space for the best possible output.
* **Wide Approach:** Group discussion helps to provide a wide approach to any concern under consideration, as it includes employees from different sections of a particular business organization.
* **Decision Making:** Group discussion helps in evaluation of a problem and reaches to a suitable decision, based on suggestions presented by the members. It also makes it easier for the boss or chairperson to able to take even the toughest of decision with an ease because by group discussion he/she can know that the decision to be taken will be supported by other members of the company also.
* **Exchange of Ideas:** With the help of group discussion the exchange of ideas is taken place. As every member participated in the discussion put his/her thoughts on the table and this makes the diversity in the ideas.
* **Productive Activity:** Group discussion is always supposed to be a productive way in terms of business concern. It is the proven method which always helps to procure the best possible decision for a concern.

**Importance of Group Discussion in Selection Process**

Nowadays group discussion is being used along with personal interviews and written exams for the final selection of applicants. It plays a key role in selecting the best among the best. It is one of the best tools to study the behavioural and attitudinal responses of the applicants or the candidates. With the help of group discussion, many things for a particular candidate can be assessed, such as his/her mental capacity to think, creative mind, analytical abilities, comprehending a subject and then speaking on it, awareness, attitude, and energy levels. Some of them are detailed below:

* **Assertiveness:** Confidence level of a candidate shows up in a group discussion. It is assessed that how confident candidates are, while putting up their opinion in front of others.
* **Team Work:** While working for a company, it is very important to work as a part of the team in an assigned project. This quality is really important and this will be evaluated through group discussion. You not only put your own points but also listen to others and then come to a concluding point.
* **Leadership Qualities:** Group discussion clearly indicates who amongst all the participants is taking the lead and who is a passive contestant. As a good leader gives the entire discussion a good direction and takes it forward whenever it is moving from the main topic. This quality is also evaluated through this process only.
* **Communication Skills:** As communication skills are must in every field of work. These are evaluated through a structured group discussion.

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