

UNIT 14:

Group Discussions (GDs)

Explore how to engage like a “Contributor” in any group discussion.

Here, you will learn (i) how to participate in a group discussion from the Contributor’s view-point (i.e. how to speak) (ii) how to contribute to the development of the topic (i.e. what to speak) and (iii) to develop the Contributor’s view-point on various GD topics (i.e. how to interpret a topic of discussion from the point of view of a Contributor).

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Part 1: The GD Process

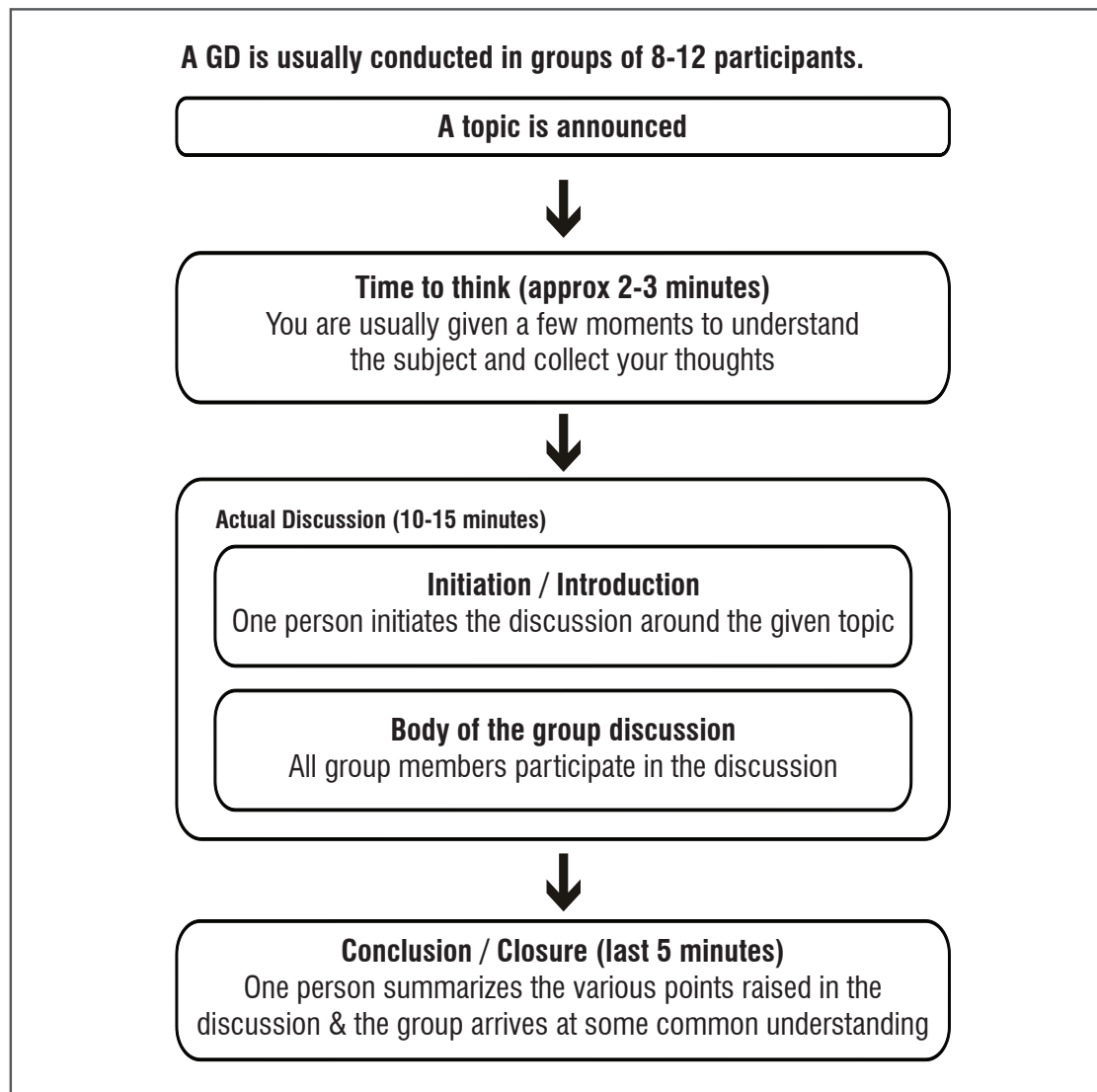
What is the process followed when GDs are conducted

14.1 How a GD is conducted

PART 1 THE GD PROCESS

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF A GROUP DISCUSSION (GD)?

Group Discussions are used by employers / evaluators to short-list suitable candidates. Through GDs they test for how well a person will be able to contribute in a team environment and think through issues in a group.



CHECKLIST: Participating in a GD

Initiation / Introduction

- ☒ Initiating a GD is a high-profit / high-loss strategy. It is a chance to make a good first impression, however, if you are unsure of the topic and what to say, it is best to let someone else begin.
- ☒ When initiating, try and set a "perspective" or framework for the discussion.
- ☒ Don't worry if you are not the first to speak. The evaluator will notice a good perspective even if you are not the first to speak.

Body of the Discussion

- ☒ In your initial thinking time, quickly put down a few talking points.
- ☒ Clarify and be focused on the goals of the GD and steer the arguments towards those goals.
- ☒ Keep your arguments short and simple. Make your point without preventing others from expressing their views.
- ☒ Listen carefully to others' view points - Don't overlook and don't repeat things without building on / adding value.

Conclusion / Closure

- ☒ Keep it concise and brief.
- ☒ Don't raise new points. Instead ensure all the points that have come up already are integrated.
- ☒ Talk to the goal, drawing a common understanding from the group.
- ☒ In case there is no consensus, present the different stand-points that are in conflict.
- ☒ Though usually one person concludes the GD, it is not uncommon for others to add to the concluding remarks, if he/she has not covered all the perspectives clearly.

PRACTICE EXERCISE 1: Conduct a Group Discussion (GD) in the class

STEP 1: 8-12 participants volunteer to come in front of the class and do a group discussion. Rest of the class observes the discussion.

STEP 2: The class chooses any one of the following topics to be discussed by this group for 10-15 minutes.

- *The role of technology in business*
- *India's case for a permanent seat on the Security Council of UN*
- *Advertising – fairness, company responsibility, unbiased information*
- *Brain drain in India*

STEP 3: Discussion group sits in a circle / around a table in front of the class. Others are observers, who observe the GD participants and answer the questions on page 4-6.

The discussion follows the process given on page 2.

Do the group discussion.

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QUESTIONS TO BE USED BY OBSERVERS

[A] While observing the GD in action, observers answer the following:

Q1. Who initiated the discussion in the group? How did he/she initiate it? What was the point made by him/her?

Q2. Were there any conflicts that came up in the discussion? Were they resolved? Who stepped in and resolved them? How?

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Q3. Did the discussion go off-track / deviate from the topic? If yes, how? How could this have been avoided? Was it brought back on track? By whom? How?

Q4. Who concluded the discussion? How did he/she conclude? Were all points that came up in the course of the discussion taken into consideration in the conclusion?

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[B] After the GD is over, (in an open class discussion) discuss and write down:

Q1. Looking back, how could the discussion have been initiated differently?

Q2. Looking back, how could the discussion have been concluded differently?

Q3. Did everyone get a chance to express his/her views? Did a few people dominate the discussion? How could others (who didn't get a chance to speak) have been drawn into the discussion?

Part 2: GD Topics

Learning to think in various GD topics

14.2 Exploring a GD Topic – 1

PART 2 GD TOPICS

PRACTICE EXERCISE 2: Discuss to answer

SAMPLE TOPIC:

“Primary education is a pre-requisite for any meaningful development program in India.”

APPROACH: Exploring the meaning of the terms used

Q1. What do we mean by “primary education”? What is the scope of primary education?

Q2. What is a “development program”?

Q3. By “development” do we mean “economic development”, “social development”, “development of all strata of society”, or something else?

Q4. When are the benefits of development rendered “meaningless” or “value-less”?

Q5. Why is “primary education” a pre-requisite for development?

14.3 Exploring a GD Topic – 2

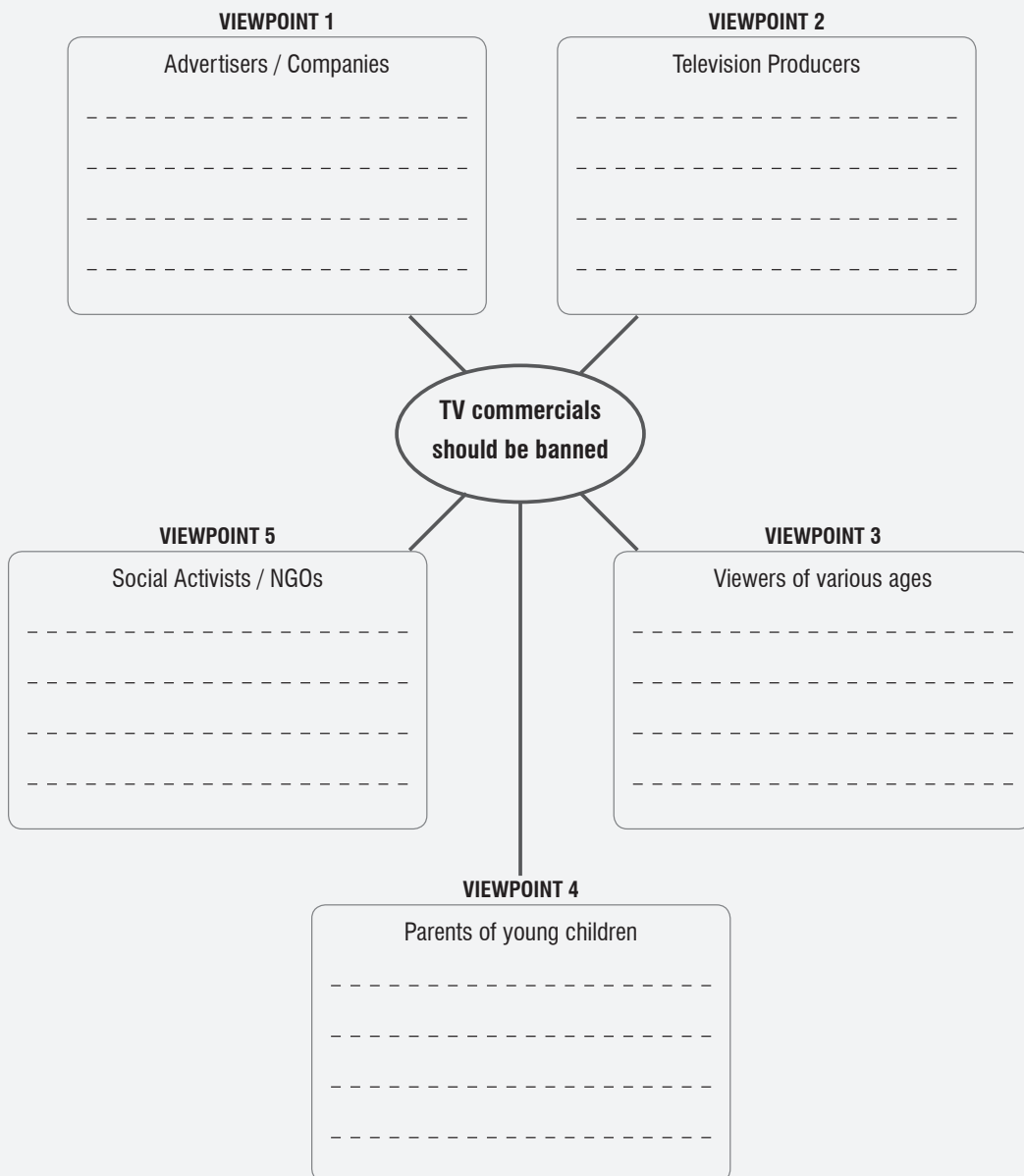
PART 2
GD TOPICS

PRACTICE EXERCISE 3: Discuss to answer

SAMPLE TOPIC:

“TV commercials should be banned.”

APPROACH: Exploring multiple viewpoints



14.4 Exploring a GD Topic – 3

PART 2 GD TOPICS

PRACTICE EXERCISE 4: Discuss to answer

SAMPLE TOPIC:

“To survive in the world, one is forced to compromise.”

APPROACH: Exploring different aspects of the topic

HINT 1

Do we know of individuals who can
“survive” without compromise?

HINT 2

What does “survive” mean? Is the
definition of “survive” set by others
or by ourselves?

HINT 3

What does “compromise” mean? Is
there a limit to “compromise”?

HINT 4

What is the connection between
“compromise” and “self-esteem”?

HINT 5

Does one need to do
what everyone does?

14.5 Exploring a GD Topic – 4

PART 2 GD TOPICS

PRACTICE EXERCISE 5: First discuss and answer level 1 points; then move to level 2 points; then move to level 3 points.

SAMPLE TOPIC:

“Computers will destroy human’s capacity to think.”

APPROACH: Debating opposite views by following discussion threads

DISCUSSION THREAD 1 [FOR]

LEVEL 1

Computers reduce thought because they do the thinking for you

LEVEL 2

Computers save time, cost, and effort. They are useful devices that make humans free

LEVEL 3

Machines can dominate humans in the future

DISCUSSION THREAD 2 [AGAINST]

LEVEL 1

Computers increase thought because they do all the routine work at the data level

LEVEL 2

Computers are devices that will control humankind because they have entered every part of our life, without us even realizing it

LEVEL 3

Humans will always dominate machines at present or in the future



14.6 Exploring a GD Topic – 5

PART 2
GD TOPICS

PRACTICE EXERCISE 6: [A] Study this issue

Capital Punishment for terrorists?



...As a special court in Mumbai held the prime terror accused guilty for waging war against the country and murdering civilians as well as police officials, the debate is still on in the country whether capital punishment should be given or not...

Citizen A: “He was acting at the behest of his handlers across the border. These are young boys who have been brain-washed. By killing him, I do not think anything will be achieved. I think he should be given life imprisonment and detained in India for what he has done”.

Citizen B: “He has destroyed lives of several families, including ours. No one can understand our pain. I think he should be hanged”.

Citizen C: “There is no use of hanging such a person. Such terrorists are anyway ready to die. He should not be given a “quick and easy” death. He should be taken to some undisclosed place and subjected to the most severe kind of torture, and this should be publicized. Only then will this serve as a deterrent for terrorists targeting India”.

Citizen D: “This is a democracy with a fair judicial system. Even the worst of criminals deserve a fair trial and have the right to appeal”.

Citizen E: “We are keeping such high-security prisoners alive at a huge cost. It is an unnecessary drain on our resources. We as tax payers are bearing the cost to feed this person who has murdered so many. He should be hanged”.

Citizen F: “If we don’t take strong action at this point in time, it will show other countries that we are weak as a nation”.

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[B] Build your own point of view

Q1. Briefly summarize the viewpoint of each person, clarifying that person's driving concern.

Citizen A: -----

Citizen B: -----

Citizen C: -----

Citizen D: -----

Citizen E: -----

Citizen F: -----

Q2. What is your opinion in this matter? Explain why.

14.7 Exploring a GD Topic – 6

PART 2
GD TOPICS

PRACTICE EXERCISE 7: [A] Study this Issue

Which Lokpal Bill for us?

The Jan Lokpal Bill, also referred to as the Citizens' Ombudsman Bill, is a proposed independent anti-corruption legislation in India. The Jan Lokpal Bill aims to effectively deter corruption, redress grievances of citizens, and protect whistle-blowers. If made into law, the bill would create an independent ombudsman body called the Lokpal. It would be empowered to register and investigate complaints of corruption against politicians and bureaucrats without prior government approval. The first version of the Lokpal Bill drafted by the Government of India was considered ineffective by anti-corruption activists from the civil society. These activists, under the banner of India Against Corruption, came together to draft a citizen's version of the Lokpal Bill, later called the Jan Lokpal. Public awareness drives and protest marches were carried out to campaign for the bill.



Civil society activist's view: "The government's Lokpal Bill is dangerous as it virtually covers nobody. Besides 1.25 crore government 'babus', the Prime Minister, Ministers, MPs, MLAs and even Chief Ministers do not fall under the ambit of the Lokpal Bill. It is a farce".

Government's view: "...A serious concern is that the Jan Lokpal Bill lets civil society gain the upper hand over Parliament in lawmaking. The bill will lack accountability, be oppressive and undemocratic".

Policy research expert's view: "The bill has been criticized as being naïve in its approach to combating corruption. The bill is premised on an institutional imagination that is at best naïve; at worst subversive of representative democracy".

Member of activist team: "I strongly criticize this insistence of this team on "having his way". I feel I am no longer part of this Team, given the way things are going. These actions (telling Parliament what to do) are not democratic things."

Other critics: "The exact judicial powers of Lokpal are rather unclear in comparison with its investigative powers. Although some supporters have denied any judicial powers of Lokpal, the government and some critics have recognised Lokpal to have quasi-judicial powers. If a bill has to be accepted, far more clarity has to be brought in."

Activist from an opposing camp: "Vesting jurisdiction over the length and breadth of the government machinery in one institution will concentrate too much power in the institution, while the volume of work will make it difficult to carry out its tasks. We have proposed an alternative mechanism consisting of five institutions."

Noted author and social activist: "You could say that the Maoists and the Jan Lokpal Bill have one thing in common – they both seek the overthrow of the Indian State... while the means may be Gandhian, the demands are certainly not. Contrary to Gandhiji's ideas about the decentralisation of power, the Jan Lokpal Bill is a draconian anti-corruption law, in which a panel of carefully chosen people will administer a giant bureaucracy..."

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[B] Build your own point of view

Briefly summarize each of the 7 viewpoints given here, clarifying their driving concern.

Civil society activist's view:

Government's view:

Policy research expert's view :

Member of activist team:

Other critics:

Activist from an opposing camp:

Noted author and social activist

continued...

UNIT 14: GROUP DISCUSSIONS (GDs)

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Q2. What is your opinion in this matter? Explain why.

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Part 3: Contributing to a GD

Learning to engage as a Contributor in any GD

14.8 : How to contribute to a GD?**PART 3**
CONTRIBUTING
TO A GD

During the course of any group discussion, there are several “contribution points” that will come up, where you will have the opportunity to contribute meaningfully to the overall discussion. Look out for these “contribution points” and act there.

PRACTICE EXERCISE 8: Conduct a Group Discussion (GD) in the class

STEP 1: A different set of 8-12 participants volunteer to come in front of the class and do a group discussion. Rest of the class observes the discussion.

STEP 2: The class chooses any one of the following topics to be discussed by this group for 10-15 minutes.

- *Is coalition politics here to stay?*
- *What ails Indian sports?*
- *Success is all about human relations.*
- *We have exchanged our golden heritage for a pair of blue jeans.*
- *All nationalized banks in India should be privatized.*
- *What is wrong with child labor?*
- *Educated Indians lack national commitment.*
- *Communism has lost its relevance.*
- *Examinations have killed education.*
- *If Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel were our first Prime Minister, then...*

STEP 3: Discussion group sits in a circle / around a table in front of the class.

Others are observers. They look out for the “contribution points” (given in the “Checklist of contribution points in a GD” on page 19-21) that come up in the discussion. Observers watch the GD participants and answer these questions during the GD.

STEP 4: Do the group discussion. The discussion follows the process given in 14.1 (on page 2)

CHECKLIST of “contribution points” in a GD

At the beginning of the discussion...

☒ **CONTRIBUTION POINT 1:**

*Did someone help in developing a basic shared understanding of the topic? If yes, how was this done?
If not, how could this have been done?*

☒ **CONTRIBUTION POINT 2:**

*Did someone generate an approach to the topic that not only lets himself / herself speak, but also gives
an approach for all the others in the group to speak? If yes, how was this done?
If not, how could this have been done?*

As the discussion developed...

☒ **CONTRIBUTION POINT 3:**

*Did someone help include more people into the discussion?
If yes, how was this done? If not, how could this have been done?*

☒ **CONTRIBUTION POINT 4:**

*Did someone help the group stay focused on some key arguments / points of view?
If yes, how was this done? If not, how could this have been done?*

☒ **CONTRIBUTION POINT 5:**

*Did someone help some of the other participants who were “unclear”, to communicate more clearly?
If yes, how was this done? If not, how could this have been done?*

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After some time, when the discussion starts slowing down, where people begin repeating themselves, and no new points are emerging. At this stage...

☒ **CONTRIBUTION POINT 6:**

Did someone re-energize the group by adding fresh discussion points?

If yes, how was this done? If not, how could this have been done?

☒ **CONTRIBUTION POINT 7:**

Did someone summarize the discussion thus far, thereby allowing new ideas to flow into the group?

If yes, how was this done? If not, how could this have been done?

☒ **CONTRIBUTION POINT 8:**

Did someone support / encourage some quieter and more thinking members of the group to express their thoughts?

If yes, how was this done? If not, how could this have been done?

Sometimes the GD can become very noisy and individuals may begin “fighting” or arguing with each other. At this stage...

☒ **CONTRIBUTION POINT 9:**

Did someone offer some common platform / ideas for both the arguing parties to agree upon?

If yes, how was this done? If not, how could this have been done?

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☒ **CONTRIBUTION POINT 10:**

Did someone lift up the quality of the discussion by making some “solid points”, thus rising above the arguments / fights?

If yes, how was this done? If not, how could this have been done?

Towards the end of the discussion...

☒ **CONTRIBUTION POINT 11:**

Did someone help crystallize some of the key conclusions / learnings of the group?

If yes, how was this done? If not, how could this have been done?

☒ **CONTRIBUTION POINT 12:**

Did someone recap the points made – giving credit to those who made each of these points originally?

If yes, how was this done? If not, how could this have been done?

IN CLASS PROJECT: Conduct multiple GD rounds

PROJECT ACTIVITY:

- Conduct many Group Discussion rounds with different groups of 8-12 students getting a chance to be active participants. Others are observers.
- It is recommended that every student gets to be an active participant in a minimum of 4-5 rounds (however plan this depending on time available).
- At the end of every GD round, do a feedback discussion, where observers share their observations / evaluations of active participants (based on the 12 contribution points).

TIME NEEDED: 20-25 mins per GD round

STEPS TO BE FOLLOWED IN EACH GD ROUND:

STEP 1: Choose a new topic (refer to the topics on page 228 of the Unit 14 Study Booklet, or choose any other topic of the group's choice)

STEP 2: 8-12 different students come forward to be active participants in the GD. Remaining students take the role of observers.

STEP 3: Spend 5-7 minutes thinking about the chosen topic. In this time –

- a. Active participants think about their GD Topic (using any of the techniques learnt in 14.2-14.5 on pages 220-223 of the Unit 14 Study Booklet).
- b. Observers study the Checklist of “contribution points” in a GD (given on pages 229-230 of the Unit 14 Study Booklet). These are the 12 “contribution points” that observers need to look out for and answer the given questions during upcoming GD.

STEP 4: Begin the GD. With the active participants sitting in a circle / around a table in front of the class. Observers sit behind, observing the active participants in action.

STEP 5: After about 7 mins of discussion, active participants conclude their discussion (taking about 3 mins for this).

STEP 6: Do an open class discussion to share feedback and also generate more strategies to the 12 Contribution Points (on page 229-230). In this session, observers share their answers and observations for each of the 12 Contribution Points.

STEP 7: Individuals take 2-3 mins to write down tips / suggestions / strategies for improving performance in a GD (using the 12 Contribution Points as a guideline).

Repeat this for all GD rounds.