



**NIRMALAGIRI COLLEGE**  
*Re-accredited by NAAC with A Grade (3<sup>rd</sup> Cycle)*  
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## **CERTIFICATE COURSE IN LIFE SKILLS**

### **GROUP DISCUSSION TIPS**

#### **Meaning of Group Discussion (GD)**

Group discussion may be defined as a form of systematic and purposeful oral process characterized 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 solving.

GD is a methodology used by an organization (company, institute, business school, etc.) to gauge whether the candidate has certain skills and personality traits suitable to a particular job position. The group of candidates is given a topic or a situation, some time to think about it, and then asked to discuss it among group members for a specific duration.

#### **Importance of Group Discussion:**

The main purpose of GD is to identify essential skills in a candidate. It helps in the final selection of the candidates for an organization (company, institute, business school, etc.) on the basis of the following skills:

- i. **Interactive skills:** Interactive skills are the most important skills under judgment during a GD. One needs to communicate his/her thoughts verbally through actual words and non-verbally through gestures.
- ii. **Leadership skills:** One who is able to get the topic discussed in the right direction or steer the whole discussion evolves as a leader. He/she encourages other members to put forward their views and helps them build a place for themselves. The panel tries to see if you are that person.
- iii. **Flexibility:** Sticking to one point till the end without seeing and accepting the logic given by others makes you come across as a stubborn participant. And yes, this is one quality which is under judgment.
- iv. **Creativity:** Creativity is essential to reach the right solution. Team workers should have distinct ideas, so that the best alternative can be reached. How you approach the topic and what you make out of the discussion.
- v. **Initiation:** For the success of a project, it is important that the team members take the initiatives. Through the GDs, the panel tries to identify the people who take the initiative. However, if you decide to initiate the discussion ensure that you have something substantial to say.
- vi. **Awareness:** Awareness is what helps you stay confident. Make sure that you read a lot and are aware about the current happenings in the world.
- vii. **Confidence:** Confidence is another important quality under judgment during a GD. Your knowledge about the topic does give you confidence but your overall conduct during the GD tells if the candidate is confident of himself and what he says. Do not try to snatch away the limelight by speaking when it is another candidate's turn. This is impolite and makes you look insecure.

## **Types of Group Discussion:**

GDs can be of two types: topic-based or case-based.

**I. Topic Based GDs:** Topic based GDs can be classified into following three types:

i. *Factual Topics:* Factual topics are about practical things, which an ordinary person is aware of in his/her, day-to-day life. These are current socio-economic topics, may be in the news lately, or could be unbound by time. A factual topic for discussion gives a candidate a chance to prove that he/she is aware of and sensitive to his/her environment. Examples: The education policy of India, Tourism in India, WTO and its impact on the Indian Economy etc.

ii. *Controversial Topics:* Controversial topics are the ones that are argumentative in nature. They are meant to generate controversy. The idea behind giving a topic like this is to see how much maturity the candidate is displaying by keeping his/her temper in check, by rationally and logically arguing his/her point of view without getting personal and emotional. Examples: Demonetization is a successful and effective move; Caste-based reservation must be replaced with economic status and education of parents.

iii. *Abstract Topics:* Abstract topics are about intangible things. These topics are not given often for discussion, but their possibility cannot be ruled out. These topics test your lateral thinking and creativity.

Examples: Every cloud has a silver lining, smart work v/s Hard work

**II. Case-Based GDs:** Another variation is to have group discussion on a case instead of a topic. The case study tries to simulate a real-life situation. Information about the situation is given to the members of the group and they are asked as a group to resolve the situation. In the case study there are no incorrect answers or perfect solutions. The objective in the case study is to get you to think about the situation from various angles. Management institutions usually have a case-based discussion rather than topic-based discussion in their selection procedures.

## **Procedure for Group Discussion**

**1. Methodology:** In a group discussion, there are 8-10 participants seated in semi-circle or a U shaped arrangement. Occasionally there might be a round table for a group discussion. The panelists sit in front of the group or in the case of a round table; they may observe the group from a distance. Duration of the GD depends on the Corporate / Institute conducting the group discussion. There are a number of roles that a candidate can play in a GD such as Initiators, Data Giver, Criticizer, Supporter, Listener, Questioner, Traffic Policeman, Spectator and Leader (Coordinator). It has been observed that many candidates act or behave in a certain way or make their points in a particular manner. English is the common language of the GD. During the Group Discussion, the panel evaluates the candidate's potential to be a leader and also his/her ability to work in teams.

**2. Ground Rules:** Following are the ground rules of a group discussion to keep the discussion on track:

- Everyone should treat everyone else with respect: no name-calling, no emotional outbursts, and no accusations.
- No arguments directed at people – only at ideas and opinions. Disagreement should be respectful – no ridicule.
- Don't interrupt. Listen to the whole of others' thoughts – actually listen, rather than just running over your own response in your head.

- Respect the group's time. Try to keep your comments reasonably short and to the point, so that others have a chance to respond.
- Consider all comments seriously, and try to evaluate them fairly. It is important to be open to others' ideas and comments. It may change your mind, or vice versa.
- Don't be defensive if someone disagrees with you. Evaluate both positions, and only continue to argue for yours if you continue to believe it is right.
- Everyone is responsible for following and upholding the ground rules.

**3. Evaluation of Group Discussion:** The GD may be evaluated on following parameters:

**A. Initiative:** It is the ability to impart directional inputs and provide a flowchart for the subsequent discussion. Initiative is not just limited to being the first speaker in the discussion; even a speaker who participates later in the discussion may be high on initiative. It depends on the ability of a speaker to add something new and relevant to the discussion. It includes following three 'C' approaches helping in taking the right initiative:

i. *Clarity:* This refers to the clarity in thought process and is manifested in the way the speaker channelizes the discussion.

ii. *Content:* This refers to the ability of a speaker to add discrete subject matter for the discussion at hand. A grip on current affairs and strong environmental sensitivity is helpful.

iii. *Confidence:* This is your ability to connect comfortably with other members of the group and participate confidently.

**B. Contribution**

a. *Action/Reaction:* A group member may contribute in two ways- either initiate an action or react to someone's action. Initiating the discussion requires the clarity with respect to the topic for discussion, as well as sufficient content. Reacting to a member's viewpoint may either indicate your agreement with him/her or disagreement. In case of agreement with the group member's point, value to the point by giving an illustration or example is added. In case of a disagreement, the contradiction is supported by giving effective arguments.

**b. Role**

i. *Leader:* A leader's role in GD showcases his/her lead the discussion and ability to motivate the team members.

ii. *Fountainhead:* In this role a member exhibit the ability to add new and relevant points to the discussion so as to keep it active.

iii. *Piggy Rider:* A piggy rider in GD steals someone else's idea and ride on the other someone. However, the member needs to be smart and fluent to measure up to this role.

**c. Nature of contribution**

i. *Positive:* A positive contribution of the member creates a learning and participative environment for the group members. He/She would not dampen the spirits of other participants.

ii. *Negative:* A negative contributor in GD impedes the flow of meaningful discussion by unnecessary intervention and objectionable behaviour/attitude. Such a participant doesn't conform to the basics of team dynamics and is therefore, undesirable.

**C. Communication:** It includes both verbal and non verbal communication.

**a. Verbal Communication**

i. *Fluency:* This is the ability to speak in a continuous and uninterrupted manner.

ii. *Articulation:* This is the ability to speak in a clear and pleasantly audible manner

iii. *Modulation:* This is the ability to add a contextually relevant flavor to your voice, as reflected in occasional pitch variation.

**b. Non-verbal Communication**

i. *Energy:* Member's high energy level indicates his/her capacity for work. However, this should not be confused with impulse, which is a negative trait.

ii. *Posture:* Upright and appropriate body posture of the candidate project a well composed and poised candidate.

- iii. Eye Contact: Eye contact with the key speakers adding value and otherwise acknowledge your attentiveness. Occasional eye contact should also be made with other participants, including the ones who are absolutely quiet.
- iv. Gesticulation: Appropriate and well positioned gestures, add to the effectiveness of communication.
- v. Persuasion: In controversial topics, a persuasive speaker leads the discussion.
- vi. Ethos: This refers to persuading on the basis of trust and credibility. Candidates who add value to the discussion in its formative stages are more probable to be heard and respected.
- vii. Pathos: This is about managing the emotions of other group members by knowing when to counter/support the viewpoints of other participants and knowing the right entry/exit points in a discussion etc.
- viii. Logos: This refers to the logical proposition of a candidate in speech. Candidates with stronger logical quotient are better received than others.
- ix. Group Dynamics: Effective group dynamics helps in keeping balance between individual excellence and group performance. Establishing positive relationships with other members is a great advantage in connecting with the team. However, this should not be misconstrued for compromising the essence of healthy controversy.

Another effort towards positive group dynamics is to ensure a logical progression of the discussion. It is advised to logically go from one discussion thread to another, rather than in a haphazard manner.

## **Common Errors**

It is very necessary to know about the rules of participating in GD as well as what role one would like to play. If we do not develop this understanding then errors will come in naturally. Following are few common errors people make while participating in GD.

- i) Wrong Starting:* It is good to initiate the discussion on the given topic in GD. It has its benefits of making your presence known and demonstrates leadership skills. But this requires command over the topic and knows what to say. Maybe sometimes we didn't listen attentively and miss heard what was said or don't really know the topic well enough. One should take initiative if and only if he/she is confident in the subject. The alternative is to understand the topic via what others have said. Then add to the discussion by building off someone's idea or throw a new idea into the mix.
- ii) Nerves:* Participating in GD may lead to nerves. It is quite normal. One can get over it by preparation and knowing how to relax.
- iii) Lack of Communication skills:* To be successful in GD one needs strong and effective communication skill especially in English. It is also essential to communicate meaningful ideas supported by facts, figures, and examples; in a comprehensible manner.
- iv) Lack of Confidence:* Self confidence plays an important role in participating successfully in GD. Worrying that you won't do well or think others are doing better take away your focus on grasping the topic and participating in the discussion successfully. Lack of confidence may be seen in your body language too.
- v) Talking Too Much:* Too much talking may be considered negatively in GD. It would be better if you demonstrate your presence strategically at some point in the beginning, middle and the end offering sound ideas and interact with others too.
- vi) Deviating from the Topic:* Sometimes the topic is misunderstood and facts and figures are misquoted. In addition, getting distracted such as daydreaming or writing notes without listening to what others say. It is necessary to participate in a GD with active listening and speaking with quality ideas.
- vii) Poor Body Language:* Body language like hand gestures, eye contact, body posture, and facial expressions is as important as verbal communication. The way you use your body language tells the evaluator about your personality.

viii) Interruption: Interrupting when some other member is speaking is evaluated negatively. One has to wait to listen what others are saying. It could be adding value to the discussion. Once you hear and see a small gap only you can speak.

ix) Showing Off: It is important to talk in GD as you would normally talk with others in your day to day life. Need not to show off as it can be easily detected and perceived as being over the top not got along with the group. Furthermore, it suggests that though you may 'know it all' you could also be insincere and not a team player in the workplace environment too.

x) Losing Your Cool: Sometimes topic in GD can be quite touchy. On many instances, candidates make blatant statements and generalized comments that will offend someone in the group. So much so, that they feel the need to react in an aggressive manner. Retaliating in the form of anger will always go against you. The interviewer/panelist may also notice where you could break. So no matter how much you have an urge to react, always keep calm.

### **Key points for success in Group Discussion:**

One has to work on the following key points for success in GD.

- Enhance your knowledge of current affairs
- Do not dress casually
- Be the Initiator
- Be a good listener, do not dominate
- Make eye contact with all participants
- Do not go into specific details
- Differ in a polite manner
- Focus on body language and posture
- Work on your communication skills

### **Suggested Videos on Mock GD:**

<https://placement.freshersworld.com/gd-mock-2/33122059>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CmGuCGPsoSM>

<https://www.shiksha.com/mba/articles/group-discussion-topics-for-mba-blogId-19559>

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