

GROUP DISCUSSION – Protonized !!!



A group discussion refers to a communicative situation that allows its participants to share their views and opinions with other participants. It is a systematic exchange of information, views and opinions about a topic, problem, issue or situation among the members of a group who share some common objectives.

What really works in a GD? What are the popular "Do's" in a GD?

Clear and structured thinking and communication is the key. While putting forward your thoughts in a group, one must align them first in mind, and then present. Charm and personality take you up to a certain point but after that it is simply your intelligence, thought process and command over the language which pulls you through. After proposing your idea, you should seek for the reaction of other group members. The person who present the opinion should make an eye contact with you while answering, giving you a chance to intervene with another idea. Once you learn to handle the group discussions in a scientific way, there is no need for you to resort to techniques such as shouting, hammering your fist on the table, and other TV debate show techniques. Whenever you face a tough situation, go back to basics and that is where you will find the answer. Be as confident as you are while discussing a match or movie with your friends.

Some of **the popular "Do's"** in a GD

Enter with a supportive statement-

Generally, when we enter a group discussion, we do so by interrupting the other person and contradicting his viewpoint. A street-smart way to enter the discussion could be by supporting the point of another person. By using statements such as "I agree with what my friend says..." or "I would like to add..." or "I think a point we could add here..." This would also help you gain support from the person whom you interrupted instead of the person holding grudges against you for interrupting.

Enter by increasing volume-

The popular way adopted to enter a loud GD is to increase one's volume. Though it a method that comes almost naturally and one is prone to shouting in such an environment, this may contribute to the fight. Also, make sure that even though with a raised voice, it does not pass the impression that you are shouting. Be calm and composed with raised voice. Best way to neutralise aggressive participants is participating with a voice in higher pitch, solid point and straight eye contact with more aggressive people. Eye contact will help them pacify so that you can put in your point with more people listening to you instead of getting distracted by aggressive people.

Generate supportive data-

Use facts and illustrations to add value. However, be very sure of the validity of any statistic you quote. If you mention a wrong figure, someone in the group could point out the mistake. If that doesn't happen, the evaluators might notice the mistake. A fact or a statistic cannot be an argument. It can only support a point you are making. So, do not quote a fact and let it land. Follow it up with some sort of inference or conclusion that can be drawn from it.

Be an active listener-

Listen carefully to others' contributions to avoid pitfalls. Listening will benefit you in the following ways:

- It will prevent you from repeating something already said
- It will give you new areas to think about since a participant may have introduced an excellent point, which you had not thought of
- It will help you take the discussion forward, taking on from where another participant has left

- It may even help you understand a topic, which you were ignorant of, before the first speaker defined it.

Be assertive, not aggressive -

It is a myth that successful managers are aggressive. They are not aggressive, rather they are assertive. There is a fine dividing line between assertiveness and aggressiveness. An aggressive person is someone who puts forward his point and tries to dominate others. He raises his voice, does not listen to or understand other people's viewpoint, takes it as a personal insult if others disagree with him and ends up offending others. On the other hand, an assertive person puts across his point strongly and rationally with valid facts (which an aggressive person has to agree to) and inclusiveness, which is very difficult for aggressive person. So, do not be aggressive in your next GD. Instead, be assertive.

Make Friends-

Building allies is often an important aspect of a GD. Being heard is one thing and getting a positive response to your arguments is another. Get people on your side and ensure that they are paying attention to your comments. They will not only allow you to interject in the discussion, but they will also support your arguments. When supporting someone else's arguments, try to add value by adding points of your own that extend the argument. You could build allies by giving others a chance to speak when they agree with you (but only after you feel you have made your point). During a discussion, if you observe that someone is trying to make an entry but is always being cut down by others, after completing your point, you can let that person make a statement by completing your argument in a following manner – “we should listen to Mr./Ms. A’s thoughts over this”. By concluding like this, others will have to let A speak and you have also garnered A’s goodwill as well as evaluator’s.

The final weapon at our disposal is **your body language**. Try and appear friendly, not intimidating. Smile, it often works! Speak clearly, speak sense and let others speak. In a GD, you must speak, but you must also be heard by the other participants. Other participants will listen to you IF:

- Your voice is audible and clear
- Your contribution is relevant and made at the appropriate time
- You listen to others; you let them speak and you are not too aggressive. This does not mean that you should only let others speak. You must let them speak and speak yourself.

Quality of Content-

More important than the amount of time you speak for, is the quality of what you have said and the impact that it has on the group. You do not have to dominate the GD by speaking for a long period of time. You must influence a group by providing it direction, highlighting the crucial issues and putting forth convincing arguments. There is no formula to calculate the right duration of participation in a GD. In a 15-minute GD in which there are 12 participants, if you can speak for two minutes spread across four or five occasions, it should be enough.

Value-Additions –

You can add value to a discussion keeping the following in mind:

Provide a structure that enables the discussion to carry on

Provide analysis that helps in distilling the discussion

Provide new facts and details

Examples should be rational and clear

Avoid flimsy repetition of thought

Do not lose focus and discuss trivial issues

When you feel, there is a void, enter with valid point and provide new direction to the group to think upon

Try to provide a summary to the discussion

Here is some **popular "Don'ts" in a GD**

There are several candidates who commit common blunders in GDs.. The most common ones are:

Aggression:

Being too aggressive is one of the most common mistakes in GDs. While trying to make presence felt and acknowledged, students commits the mistake of being over-aggressive in the GD. Actions such as over-animation, dramatizations, banging the table, entering in one-to-one discussions or criticizing others unfairly are some of the misplaced manifestations of aggression. It needs to be clearly understood that aggression in thinking is required, not in behaviour. A candidate who is polite, but firm wins the day.

Negativity:

The words you select to express yourself are indicators of your personality. A negative approach is highlighted by negative words and body language. Of course, if you have observed yourself using negative language a little too often, you need to do some self-analysis and sort out your attitude related problems. Nervous body movements, having your hands folded across your chest, carrying sceptical expressions, constantly moving and fidgeting, evasive eye movements, etc. are all indicators of a negative personality and should be avoided at all costs.

Unfocussed Behaviour:

Instances like trying to fit your example/knowledge of data to every GD topic, using examples or quoting facts, figures and data that have no relevance to the discussion, etc. can only lead to a negative assessment. Try to avoid nonsenses and technical language that seemingly makes you learned; these can only do more harm than provide any extra brownie points.

Telling Wrong Facts:

One thing about factual data is that it can provide extra-points to you but if you get a fact wrong, you can be stuck with someone explaining that you need to check your facts. In case you are not sure about something, you can always say that you are quoting that piece of information approximately. You could use phrases such as: "I think" or "Probably/Approximately" or "If I remember correctly". Do not jump the gun and make a blunder that you cannot correct later. Also, you should not judge someone who has made such an error; do not jump into the discussion and criticize him. If you need to make a factual correction, do so in the most polite and humble manner.

Being Highly Individualistic:

Being a strong independent personality is a good virtue to possess. but you should remember that the hallmark of a good manager is the interpersonal skill he possesses. Make sure that you provide a good reflection of yourself in a group as your social interaction is being evaluated. The goal must be achieved in teams and therefore your interpersonal skills are extremely vital. In fact, one must strike the right balance between individual performance and group excellence.