



# Group Discussion Strategies

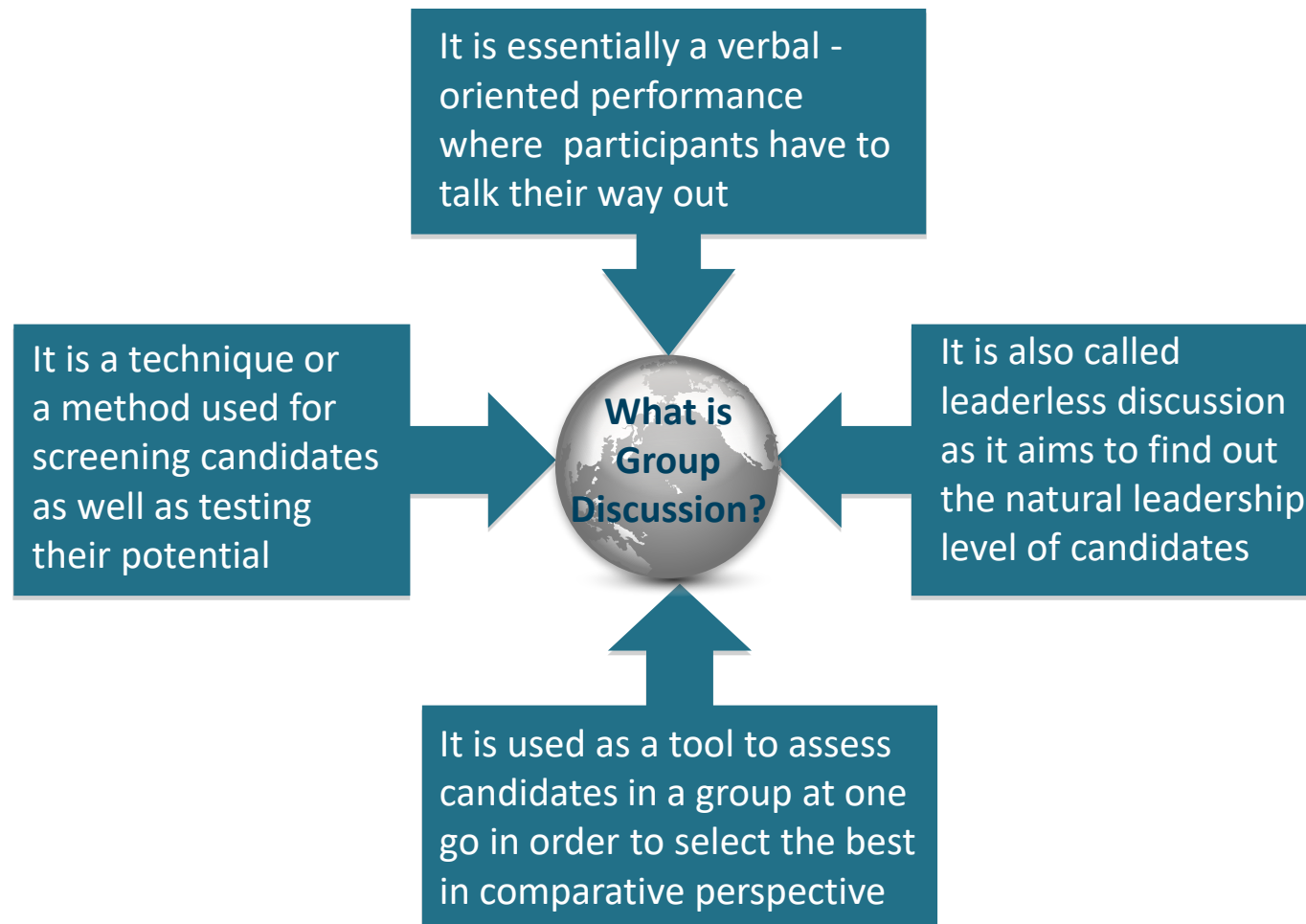
UKA TARSADIA  
university

# Learning Objectives



- 1 What is a Group Discussion
- 2 Importance of Group Discussion
- 3 Types of Group Discussion
- 4 Process of Group Discussion
- 5 Evaluation Criteria of Group Discussion
- 6 Preparing for Group Discussion
- 7 Do's & Don'ts of Group Discussion
- 8 FAQs on Group Discussion

## What is Group Discussion?



# Group Discussion Vs Public Speaking



## Group Discussion

- Many-to-many situation
- Not a solo performance
- Apart from individual views, views of entire group matter
- All the members of the group participate & one has to listen to the views of other members

## Public Speaking

- One-to-many communication situations
- Solo performances
- Individual views matter
- Speaker can take a particular position on the topic and speak accordingly

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# Importance of Group Discussion



## Recruitment

- 1 Group discussion has become an inevitable part of recruitment process. It measures certain attributes of candidates that are otherwise difficult to identify & time consuming to assess

## Admission to B-Schools

- 2 Group Discussions are an important part of the short-listing process for admission to B-Schools as working with groups is one of the most important parameter of success as a manager

A number of people who can communicate their ideas well and discuss effectively with others in a one-on-one situation become tongue-tied in a group situation. A Group Discussion will identify people who have such group communication skills and people who do not possess such group communication skills

# Importance of Group Discussion

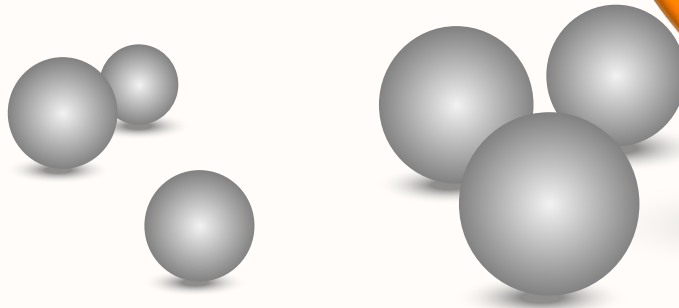


**It helps understand a subject more deeply and improves ability to think critically**

**More often than not, it helps the group reach a decision and solve a particular problem**

**It improves listening skills and also gives a chance to listen other participants' view points**

**It helps participants gain confidence by being vocal about their thoughts / opinions**





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## Types of Group Discussion



1.  
Topic Based

The diagram features three large blue arrows pointing to the right, each corresponding to a type of group discussion. The arrows are positioned to the left of three circular nodes. The first arrow points to the 'Topic Based' node, the second to the 'Case Studies' node, and the third to the 'Group Tasks' node. The nodes are arranged in a descending staircase pattern from top-left to bottom-right.

2.  
Case Studies

3.  
Group Tasks

# Types of Group Discussion



## Topic Based

- Based on specific topics
- Could be Factual, Controversial, or Abstract topics
- Normally used during recruitment process in organizations

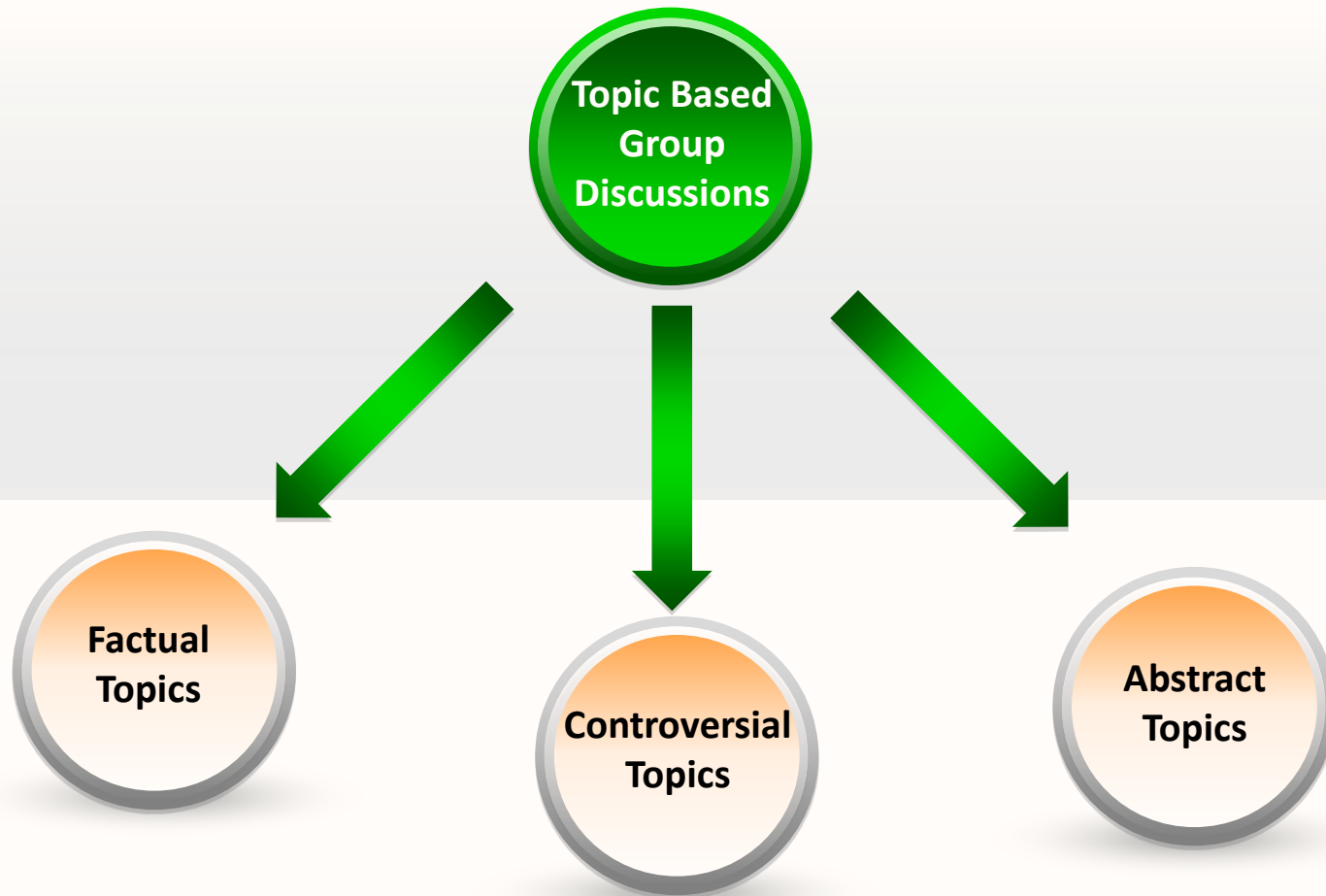
## Case Studies

- Tries to simulate a real-life situation with an objective to get you to think about the situation from various angles.
- Information about the situation is given and participants are asked as a group to resolve the situation. There are no incorrect answers / perfect solutions.
- This type of GDs are normally used by management institutes

## Group Tasks

- These are an extension of case studies where specific objectives are to be achieved as a group.

## Types of Group Discussion



# Types of Group Discussion



## Factual Topics

- Are about practical things, which an ordinary person is aware of.
- Typically these are socio-economic topics which may have been in the news lately, or could be unbound by time.
- Gives a candidate a chance to prove that he is aware of his environment.
- E.g. The Education Policy of India, Tourism in India, LokPal Bill

## Controversial Topics

- Are argumentative in nature and are meant to generate controversy.
- Noise level is usually high, there may be tempers flying.
- Objective is to see how much maturity the candidate displays by keeping his temper in check, by rationally and logically arguing his point of view without getting personal and emotional.
- E.g. Reservations should be removed, Women make better managers

## Abstract Topics

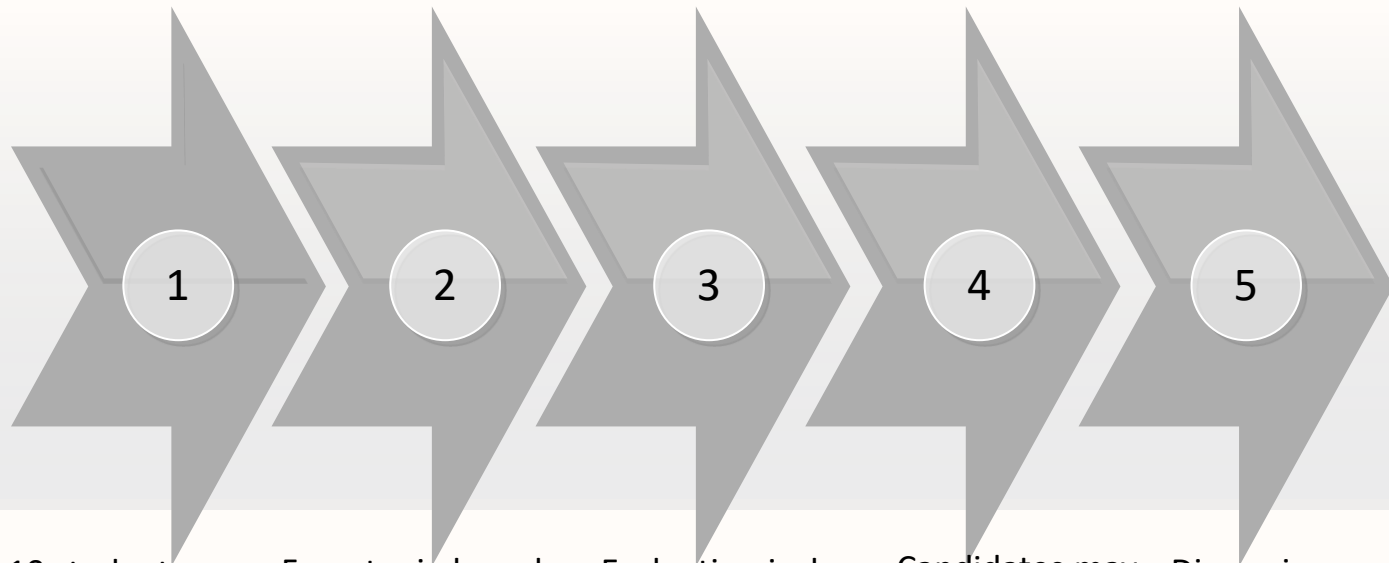
- Are about intangible things.
- Usually not given often for discussion, but their possibility cannot be ruled out.
- Objective is to test your lateral thinking and creativity.
- E.g. A is an alphabet, Twinkle twinkle little star, The number 10

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## Process of Group Discussion



8-10 students are taken as a group, though in some cases, up to 16 people may be included in a group. The GD lasts for 10-15 minutes

For a topic-based GD, 2-3 minutes of thinking time may be given; though the group is often told to start right away. For case studies, however, about 15 minutes is given

Evaluation is done by experts, usually professors from B-School. These people are experts and observe all details, even if the GD is chaotic

Candidates may be seated in a circle or in a rectangular arrangement, with/out a table. Seating arrangements may be prefixed

Discussion may be stopped at the set time / even earlier. Conclusion may be asked for. A written / oral summary may be asked for at the end from each candidate

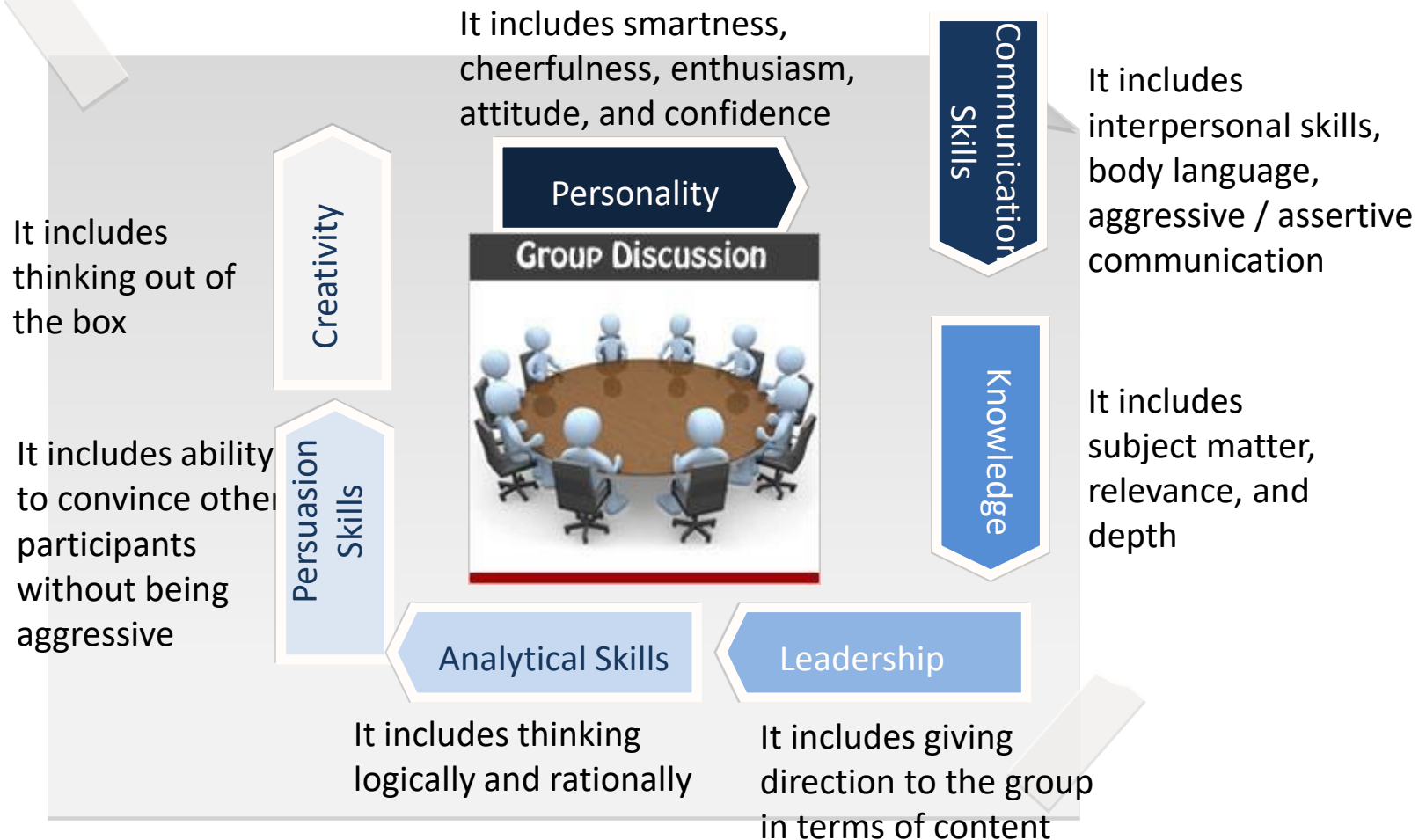
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# Evaluation Criteria for Group Discussion



# Evaluation Criteria for Group Discussion



- ▶ **Content**  
Combination of knowledge & ability to create logical arguments on the basis of that knowledge
- ▶ **Communication Skills**  
Besides listening, evaluators observe your ability to express ideas clearly & concisely, build on others' points, sum up the discussion made by the entire group
- ▶ **Group Dynamics**  
The evaluators observe participants' willingness to listen & discuss various points, ability to appreciate good points made by others, ability to disagree politely & summarize
- ▶ **Leadership**  
Evaluators evaluate on basis of who initiates the discussion, allows others to express their views & channels discussion to a probable decision

**Content**

**Communication Skills**

**Leadership**

**Group Dynamics**

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## Preparing For Group Discussion



Have you heard yourself saying this post participating in a Group Discussion?

**"I couldn't finish".**

**"I couldn't start".**

**Nobody let me speak".**

**"Someone got sarcastic".**

**"I didn't understand the topic".**

**"Someone else dominated the GD".**

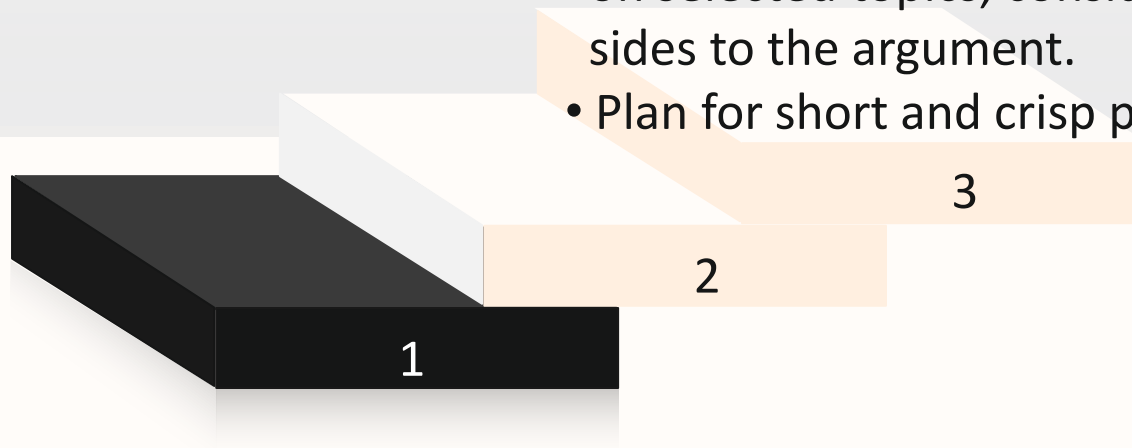
Here is how you can better prepare for Group Discussions...

# Preparing For Group Discussion



## 1. Content

- Develop subject knowledge on current affairs, general awareness & business trends.
- Structure arguments [for & against] on selected topics, considering both sides to the argument.
- Plan for short and crisp points.

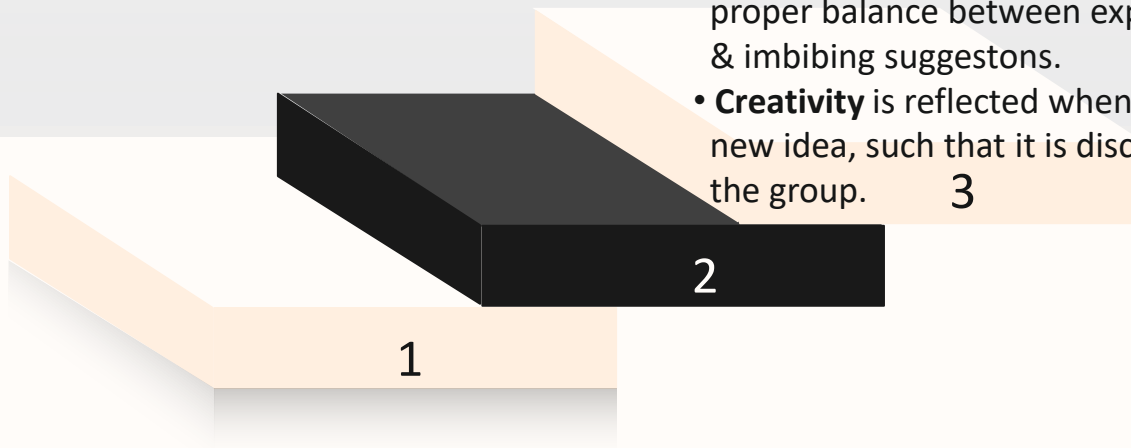


# Preparing For Group Discussion



## Display Behavioral Traits

- **Leadership** trait by showing direction to the group whenever group moves away from the topic, coordinate the effort of participants.
- **Assertiveness** is displayed when you put your point to group in a very positive & confident manner.
- **Listening** skills can be displayed by striking a proper balance between expressing your ideas & imbibing suggestions.
- **Creativity** is reflected when you put across new idea, such that it is discussed at length by the group.

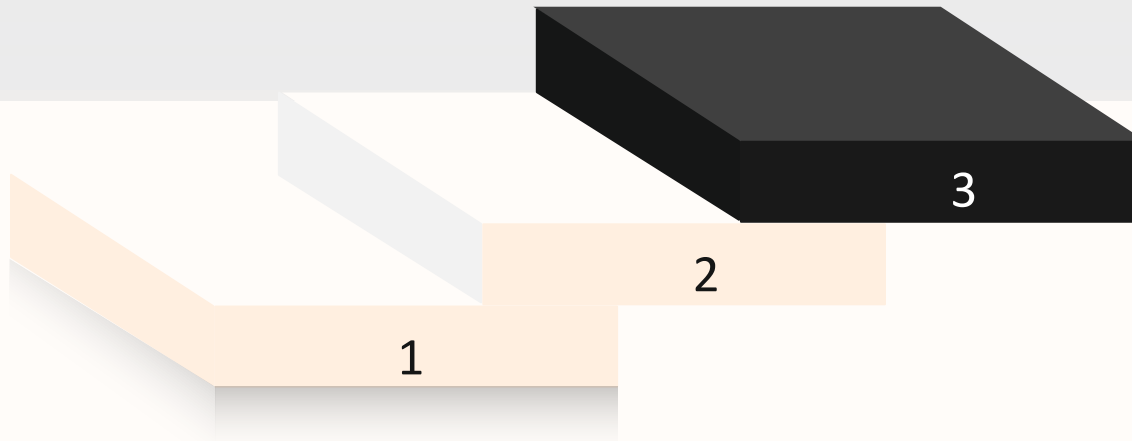


# Preparing For Group Discussion



## Practice

- GD skills cannot be learned from books.
- Get into practice groups.
- Get skilled people to observe and give feedback.
- Spend a lot of time analysing each GD performance. Plan specific improvements





## Preparing For Group Discussion



We hear discussions in the college canteen, in the train, at the bus stop, during a meeting or anywhere where people come together. Before starting a Group Discussion let's remember to ask ourselves:

**Can we disagree without being disagreeable?**

**Can we be analytical without being critical?**

**Can we be assertive without being aggressive?**

**Can we listen and not just speak?**

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# Do's & Don'ts of Group Discussion

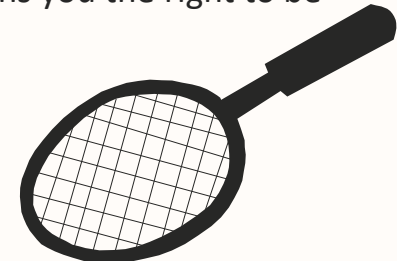
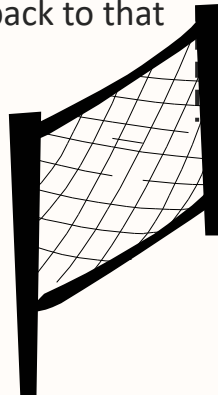
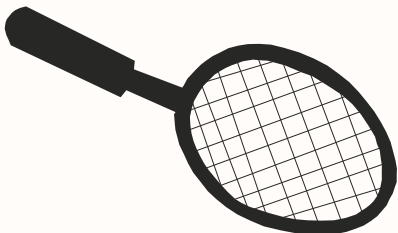


## Do's

- ✓ Respect the contribution of other speakers.
- ✓ Speak pleasantly.
- ✓ Listen well to the ideas of other speakers; you will learn something.
- ✓ Learn to disagree politely.
- ✓ Respect that others have differing views.
- ✓ Think about your contribution before you speak.
- ✓ Try to stick to the discussion topic.
- ✓ Your body language should be 'open' & friendly.
- ✓ Agree & acknowledge anything interesting.
- ✓ Stay with the topic. If the discussion does waiver, bring it back on topic by saying 'that's an interesting point, can we come back to that later?'
- ✓ Try to speak clearly. Don't whisper.

## Don'ts

- ✗ Don't take offence if a person disagrees with you.
- ✗ Don't ridicule the contribution of others by using comments like 'that's stupid', 'that's ridiculous', or 'you're wrong'.
- ✗ Don't try to intimidate another speaker.
- ✗ Don't use a loud or angry tone. Others will not want to listen to you if you are being aggressive.
- ✗ Don't use aggressive gestures like finger-pointing and table-thumping.
- ✗ Try not to dominate the discussion. Confident speakers should allow others a chance to speak.
- ✗ Avoid drawing too much on personal experience.
- ✗ Don't interrupt or talk over another speaker. Listening to others earns you the right to be heard.



## Do's & Don'ts of Group Discussion



Be prepared with some of the topics. Keep yourself updated on current affairs.

Listen to the given topic carefully. Structure your points on the sheet provided

Be assertive not dominating; try to maintain a balanced tone in your discussion and analysis

Summarize the discussion if the group has not reached a conclusion

Try to remember the names of the participants in the GD, when you are targeting individuals address them with the names

## Do's & Don'ts of Group Discussion



### *Initiate the GD:*

Initiate GD only when you understood the topic clearly & have some knowledge

*Allow others to speak:*  
Do not interrupt anyone while speaking even if you don't agree with his/her. Wait for your chance

### *Speak clearly:*

Use simple words while speaking. Don't be too aggressive if you are disagreeing with someone

### *Formal dressing:*

No fancy and funny dressing. You should be comfortable while speaking in group.

### *Positive attitude:*

Be confident. Do not try to dominate anyone. Keep positive body language. Show interest in discussion

## Do's & Don'ts of Group Discussion



### Some Myths about Group Discussion

- You should speak more (No!)
- You should dominate the discussion (No!)
- You should project yourself in style (No!)
- You should speak in favor of topic (No!)
- You should make others agree to your point (No!)

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## FAQs on Group Discussion



### Is there time given for preparation after the topic is given and before starting the GD?

Usually some time (2-5 minutes) is given to collect one's thoughts, but there could be instances when this does not happen, so it is best not to bank on this.

### Should I address the panel or the group members?

Don't ever make the mistake of addressing the panel members while the GD is on. The GD is between you and the other members, not the panel members. You must avoid even looking at the panel members while the GD is in progress. Just ignore their existence.

### What is the seating arrangement like?

It could be semi-circular, or circular, or seating alongside a rectangular table, depending upon the venue. It is best not to bother about trivial issues like this, which you have no control over.



## FAQs on Group Discussion



### How should I address the other group members?

If you are initiating the discussion, you could do so by collectively addressing the group as "Friends". Subsequently, you could use names (if the group has had a round of self-introduction prior to starting the discussion and you remember the names) or use pronouns like "he" / "she".

### Suppose I have a lot to say on the topic, should I say all of it?

You would not be looked upon favorably if you kept speaking all the time and did not listen to anyone else. Contrary to the misconception, the person who talks the most is not necessarily the one who is judged the best. The quality and not the quantity of your contribution counts.

### Should I encourage others to speak up?

Do not directly put someone who is consistently silent on the spot by asking him / her to speak up. But If someone has been trying to speak and has a good point but is cut off constantly, you may encourage him / her to continue with her point.



## FAQs on Group Discussion



### Are the group members supposed to keep track of the time or will the panel keep track?

It would be good if you are conscious of the time, but not to the point of getting so distracted looking at your watch that you do not contribute to the discussion.

### Is there any particular seating arrangement, which is favorable to the participants?

If participants are asked to sit in a circle or a semi circle, one position is as good as another. But if you are asked to sit on either side of a rectangular table, then choose a position as close to the centre as possible.

### Should we begin the GD by appointing a leader amongst ourselves?

No. You should not. Leadership in a GD is established implicitly through one's performance in a GD.



## FAQs on Group Discussion



### **If I feel strongly about an issue, should I voice my feelings?**

It is important to be cool and emotionally objective in a GD. If you react emotionally you are likely to lose control over yourself during the group discussion. Be calm and logical, not emotional in a GD.

### **Can I use technical terms or jargon, which is clear to me, but not to the group?**

If you have to use technical terms, do not use abbreviations. After mentioning the term in full, explain to the group what it means. It is quite likely that other participants of the group have a different academic background than you. Make sure you are all on a level playing field.

### **Do I begin my participation by requesting the group's permission to do so?**

It is not likely that you will get a chance to ask for such permission. It may also go against you (as appearing weak on your part).



## FAQs on Group Discussion



### What is the right time to enter a GD to ensure that I am heard properly?

In any GD, there are crests & troughs during the discussion. Crest - when the noise level is at its peak. Trough - when there is almost total silence. Ideally, you should enter the GD during the trough period. But in competitive GDs, crests occur often and troughs may not occur at all. In such cases, enter the GD irrespective of the noise level provided you have a point to make.

### How do I participate when the noise level is too high?

You could try the following strategy:

- Identify most powerful speaker in the group, and note down the points that he/she is making.
- The moment the noise level reduces, enter supporting the powerful speaker.

### Do I have to be cautious about participants' feelings (on sensitive issues like religion, caste etc.)?

You certainly do. Insensitivity to others displays a lack of maturity and viciousness. It will act against your favor.



## FAQs on Group Discussion



### Is it beneficial to be the first speaker in a group discussion?

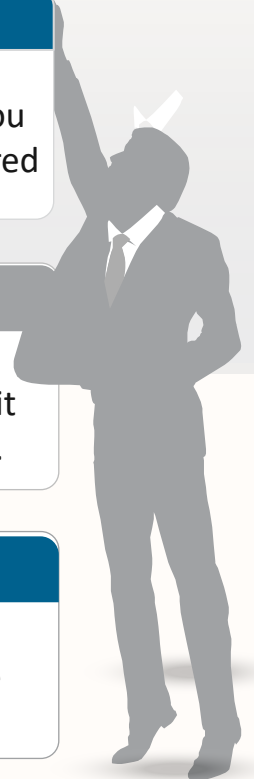
Being the first speaker is a high risk, high return strategy. If you can make a good opening statement, which is relevant and sets the tone for the GD, it will go in your favor. However if you speak for the sake of speaking, not really having anything pertinent to say, it will be remembered and will go against you.

### How critical is my fluency in English to my performance?

Command over English is certainly advantageous but will not compensate for lack of good content. If your content is good, then even if your English might not be great, you must speak it out, rather than be inhibited by lack of good English. You will get credit for soundness of ideas.

### How necessary is it to use examples for illustrating an idea?

Use of examples is helpful in elaborating your point, and helping others understand your idea better. But remember to keep it short and simple because in a competitive GD nobody has the patience to listen to long, drawn out examples.



## FAQs on Group Discussion



### How much or for how long should I participate?

In a 20 minute GD with 10-12 participants, try and participate at least 4 times with each entry lasting at least 25-30 seconds. You could participate more depending on your comfort level and the need for participation.

### Is it good to be humorous in a GD?

Depends on the situation. In a GD that is fairly relaxed, it may be acceptable. But in a competitive situation, where the participants are tensed up, your attempts at humour may fall flat.

### What do I do if someone else has already said what I wanted to say?

To avoid such situation, speak up in the first 4-5 minutes of the GD, else you have two choices:

- Agree with the point made by that person and add to it to broaden the scope of the argument.
- Drop the point and think of fresh points.





## FAQs on Group Discussion



### How is aggression taken and measured in a GD?

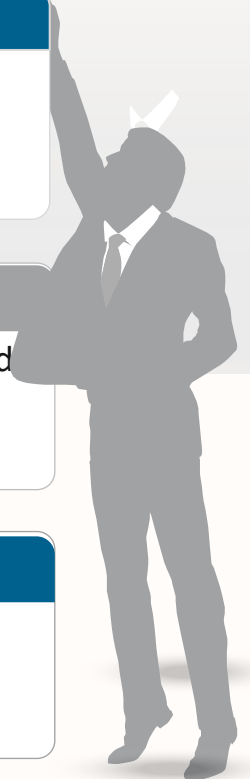
The moment you notice people reacting to you negatively or strongly, you may take it that you are being too aggressive. The degree of the reaction is the measure of your aggression.

### What level of aggression is seen acceptable?

There is a very thin line between aggression and assertiveness. You should always aim to sound assertive and not stubborn.

### Will I be quizzed about my (or others) participation in the GD?

You may be asked about other participant's response / views. Therefore it helps to be alert all through the GD.



## FAQs on Group Discussion



**Is it true that the GD is used more as an elimination technique rather than as a selection tool?**

Depends on the institute. In most premier institutes/companies it is used as a selection tool, not as an elimination technique.

**Is motivating other people in the group to speak looked upon favorably?**

Depends on how it is done. If you openly request someone to speak, you may be putting the other person in a difficult spot. It is better to use other means of motivation, such as agreeing with a halting speaker, adding on to their points, supporting and giving them direction.

**Can the moderator to stop or cut short the GD much before the stipulated time is over?**

This may happen if the GD becomes too noisy and if the level of discussion deteriorates abysmally.



## FAQs on Group Discussion



### Can I be aggressive with a lady participant?

A GD is not the place to demonstrate chivalry (gallantry). Being rude to any participant [male or female] is downright unacceptable. You need not extend any special privileges to a lady.

### Is it all right to ask pointed questions to other participants during a GD?

It is alright to ask questions for the purpose of clarification but not for the purpose of playing the devil's advocate and proving them wrong. By playing the devil's advocate you hamper the flow of the GD. The pointed questions unsettle the other participant.

### Are we expected to stick to a line of thought or can we come up with something radical?

By all means you can. It would demonstrate your creativity and originality. Just make sure it is relevant to the topic.



## FAQs on Group Discussion



### Is an end-summary absolutely essential?

No. If the group has not reached a conclusion, then it would be good if someone puts the whole discussion into perspective by summarizing. But if there isn't sufficient time, a summary may be avoided.

### Is voting an acceptable method of reaching a consensus?

No. Topics are usually general in nature to give a level playing field to everyone.

### Are the topics decided on the basis of the academic background of the participant?

No. Topics are usually general in nature to give a level playing field to everyone.



## FAQs on Group Discussion



### What do I do if one member is very stubborn and aggressive?

You could use any of the following methods:

- Ignore him and address the other members of the group.
- Be assertive and tell him that his argument is faulty.
- Point out to him that his point is well taken and that the group must progress further.

### What are the acceptable ways of interrupting somebody else, so that I may make my point?

You can interrupt in any of the following ways:

- "Excuse me, but I feel that what you are saying isn't universally true ..."
- "Yes, I agree with your idea, and I would like to add on to it ..."

### How should a group select a topic if asked to?

The group should brainstorm for about two minutes and narrow down the list of topics to 3-4. After this the group should prioritize them based on the comfort level and ease of discussion of the topics.



## Summary



### Group Discussion Strategies – Key points and advantages

- Group discussion makes complex and difficult tasks into parts and steps
- Group discussion makes to plan ahead and manage time
- Refine understanding through discussion and explanation
- Giving and receiving feedback on performance
- Group discussion results in stronger communication skills
- Individuals can solve their problems on their own
- Able to delegate roles and responsibilities
- Group discussion enhances knowledge and skills of an individual
- Build a rapport and identity with other group members
- Develop their own voice and perspectives in relation to peers