

Group Discussion TIPS

A GD is a methodology used by an organization to gauge whether the candidate has certain personality traits and/or skills that it desires in its members. In this methodology, all short-listed candidates are divided into groups of 8-12 students. Each group is given a topic or a situation. The group is allowed a few minutes to think about the same, and then asked to discuss it among themselves for 15-20 minutes, while a panel of judges observes and analyzes the proceedings.

The topic could be anything ranging from current events to some political issues, from social issues to some Bollywood flick.

The Topics can be categorized in following broad level categories:

- Contemporary Issues
- Social Issues
- Management Issues
- Politics-related
- General Interest
- Sports-related
- Creative Topics
- Economics / Business-related Topics
- Education-related

What is the employer looking for?

Companies conduct group discussion after the written test so as to check on your interactive skills and how good you are at communicating with other people. The GD is to check how you behave, participate and contribute in a group, how much importance do you give to the group objective as well as your own, how well do you listen to viewpoints of others and how open-minded are you in accepting views contrary to your own. The aspects which make up a GD are verbal communication, non-verbal behavior, and conformation to norms, decision-making ability and cooperation. You should try to be as true as possible to these aspects.

Opening a GD:

For many people, being the first person to talk in a GD is imperative. They feel that it will give them brownie points and that they will be perceived as Initiators. Nothing can be more foolish if someone without a solid plan in place attempts to start the GD. He/She will definitely be the first one to be booted out if the content of the Opening sentences is pathetic.

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In case you are not too sure about the topic or are not good in opening a GD, WAIT for someone to start.

Normally, opening a GD involves these very important things:

1. Define the topic of the GD if there is a need to define it for others (clarity)
2. Set boundaries/parameters that you may feel will help the GD to be discussed without ambiguity.
3. In case you have a story/ incident/ experience for the topic, then start with that.
4. Creative GD will be started with your interpretation and the supporting thought process for the interpretation.

Now let us take a few examples and understand what is supposed to be done, and what is to be avoided:

Case 1:

TOPIC - "Rank the 10 most Significant things that happened in India in the last century"

Opener's tips -

1. Start by defining the key terms, which in this case are - Significant and Last century. Defining these two things would give a guiding light to the GD else everyone would come out with their own version of significance.
2. Set the tone by telling everyone the thumb rule - "bring on one point at a time and we will freeze it in terms of significance".
3. Remember - YOU MAY NOT BE ABLE TO RANK ALL 10 IN THE STIPULATED TIME.

Many people in the above GD will start of by giving their Top 10. It may be on the basis of Date, seriousness, religion, politics, etc. This will cause chaos and the entire group will be eliminated.

Case 2:

TOPIC - "Pink Pyjamas flying high on the Red-Fort"

Opener's tips -

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1. In case you don't get the essence of the topic, break down the topic into parts viz. pink pyjamas / flying high / on the Red fort. Pink pyjamas are worn by Ladies or gays and since the other part of the sentence doesn't suggest Gay protest, you can eliminate the second guess. Flying high indicates better status, better recognition, or independence. And lastly, "on the Red Fort" symbolizes something to do with the political perspective of India. So overall, the topic can be summed up as - the status or recognition of women in Indian Politics.

2. This kind of a topic can have different interpretation, and therefore please don't close yourself on someone else's idea.

This will be very rude and you will come across as someone who doesn't bother to listen.

3. As an Opener, get everyone to discuss and freeze on the meaning so that all are aware of what they will talk about.

Now, there are situations wherein you face two distinct problems:

1. You don't know the topic but the group knows it.
2. Neither you nor the group knows about the topic.

In the first scenario, it is okay to be quiet for sometime before entering to say something that will make sense. But what happens in the 2nd scenario? In situations like these, you have to do the most daring thing one can do - ASK for a change in the Topic before anyone else does. The ignorance will be visible within 30 seconds of the panel asking you to Start. If you are the one asking for the Change in topic, chances are that you may be the only one selected.

Body of the GD & the Chemistry inside a discussion:

We all know that a normal GD would have a time-frame of 20-30 minutes. If there are 10 students sitting in the GD, that translates into 2-3 minutes per person. This is one of the biggest truths that GD takers forget. The ideal time for you to talk would be this duration and consider yourself lucky if someone doesn't speak and you get that extra time as a bonus.

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