Group Discussions (GD) when held as selection process always involves two parties: the selectors and the GD participants.

The former plays only a passive role; they only watch the GD process and observe each participant. They seldom intervene or interfere. Their sole objective is to identify certain attributes in the participants which they could not easily identify by other means.

Group Discussion (GD), as selection tool, is gaining more and more importance for a variety of reasons. Usually GDs are conducted after the written test to shortlist candidates for the next stage of the selection process. GD also helps the selection panel to reject outright candidates because of their poor performance in the GD.

This technique is being increasingly used by professional educational institutions, especially business schools, as well as by business houses to select professionals. GD allows the selection panel to observe, compare and form opinions about a large number of candidates in a relatively short span of time.

GD gives the opportunity to assess certain traits and skills, (such as the following) of the candidates that are not possible to observe in a resume, written examination or an interview:

• leadership qualities

• quality of participation

• analytical skills

• problem solving skills

• oral communication skills

• ability to handle people

• team spirit

• non-verbal behaviour

• conformation to norms

• decision-making ability

* inter-personal behavior

• behaviour in a group

• body language

• 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.

CONDUCT OF GROUP DISCUSSIONS

A Group Discussion is normally a formal discussion involving an invited group of participants. The number of participants usually will be around eight, but there is no guarantee it will not be fifteen!

They will be given a topic, often a contemporary and debatable topic. The participants will be allowed a few minutes, about 10 minutes, to understand the topic and organize their thoughts. Then they will be asked to discuss the topic for about 20 to 25 minutes. The time available for the discussion will be communicated to the participants in advance.

In such GDs no one is appointed as the leader or coordinator. Everyone is treated at par by the selection panel, but it is not uncommon for someone to take the initiative and take on a leadership role.

A GD is normally not conditioned by such procedural rules as in the case of a formal debate. Here the candidates can say whatever they like and whenever they like on the subject under discussion.

A candidate can speak in favour of the subject, against the subject or even follow a neutral path. Everything depends on the interest and ability of each member of the group. So the candidates are quite free to discuss the topic without any interference from the selection panel. The entire discussion process will take place in front of the selection panel. They will be observing every action of each participant closely.

WHAT DO SELECTORS LOOK FOR?

In a GD what do the panel of selectors look for? They will be looking for a variety of attributes in you, which they were unable to assess from the resume.

These will include the following:

• Did you make any useful contribution at all?

• What was your level of knowledge about the subject?

• Did you communicate effectively?

• Were you a good listener?

• Did you unnecessarily interrupt others?

• How positive or negative was your body language?

• Did you exhibit any analytical skills?

• Did you provide leadership to the group?

• How good a team player were you?

• Did you look or sound “selfish”?

• Did you do anything to bring the group to focus on the topic rather than going outside it?

GROUP DISCUSSION:

THE DO’S If you have a reasonably good level of general knowledge, that will come in handy in a GD. So also your proficiency in vocabulary, grammar, accent and so on. These help to draw the attention of the selectors towards you. To bring out the best in you and to create the desired impact on the selectors, you need to adhere to some Do’s and Don’ts.

These are:

* Listen to others attentively; you may even take brief notes.
* Enter the discussion at an early stage.
* Communicate with confidence.
* Make sure that your contributions are focused on the given topic.
* Try to speak something new which has not been said by the earlier speakers.
* If you find that any participant is not making her/his viewpoint clear, ask pertinent questions.
* Even when you oppose a view point, use dignified language.
* Try to make your contributions take the centre point for the discussion.
* If the discussion is going out of focus, try to point this out and bring it back on track.
* Use positive body language. Example, looking into the other person’s eyes when listening or speaking.
* Remain confident and interested throughout, whether you are speaking or not speaking.
* Conclude each argument at the right time and in the right manner. Collaborate instead of compete.

GROUP DISCUSSION:

THE DON’TS The selectors will be critically observing your every action while the GD is on, and will be making notes of the positive points as well as the negative points. While it is important to demonstrate strengths, it is equally important to work on your weaknesses. So please take note of the don’ts listed below:

• Don’t appear or feel restless when someone is speaking.

• Don’t keep silent for a long time; the selectors are there to hear you speak.

• Don’t exhibit negative body language. Example, shaking your leg when speaking.

• Don’t use abusive or objectionable language or gestures.

• Don’t interrupt others when they are speaking.

• Don’t impose your views upon others.

• Don’t get irritated or lose temper if someone disagrees with you.

• Don’t deviate from the subject given for discussion.

• Don’t take anything personally.

• Don’t give instructions to others in the group.

• Don’t speak for the sake of speaking.

**LANGUAGE FOCUS** Here is some helpful language for group discussions:

• Stating an opinion –

* It seems to me... –
* In my view… –
* I tend to think… –
* It’s obvious that… –
* I believe… –
* Clearly…

• Interrupting –

* Excuse me, may I ask for a clarification on this… –
* If I may interrupt… –
* Sorry to interrupt but…

• Handling Interruptions –

* Sorry, please let me finish…
* – If I may finish what I am saying…
* – Could you please allow me to complete what I’m saying…?

• Moving the discussion on

* Can we go on to think about…? –
* I think we should now move on to consider…

• Expressing disagreement Group Discussions –

* I think quite differently on this –
* I don’t really think so –
* I’m afraid I can’t agree with you there

• Checking comprehension / reformulating –

* To put that another way… –
* If I follow you correctly… –
* So what you’re saying is… –
* Does that mean…? –
* Are you saying…?

• Making a suggestion –

* I suggest that… –
* We could… –
* Perhaps we should… –
* It might be worth… –
* What about...? –
* Why don’t we...?

GRAMMAR: LINKING WORDS

In any piece of writing the sentences and the ideas in them are logically related by certain words or phrases that are known as linkers. These linkers have different functions and belong to different parts of speech. These may be pronouns, conjunctions, conditionals, determiners, etc. Let us look at some of the linkers and their functions in the following table:

Table Linkers and their functions Linkers

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Linkers | Functions | Examples |
| And, as well as, moreover | Used to add new elements | This technique is being increasingly used by professional educational institutions, especially business schools, as well as by business houses to select professionals |
| Or, in other words, alternatively | Used to express opposite ideas or an alternative choice | A candidate can speak in favour of the subject, against the subject or even follow a neutral path |
| But, however, yet, still, on the other hand, on the contrary, even though | Used to express contrast | Slouching tells them that you are indifferent or you do not care, even though you might care a great deal! |
| Because, since, for, as | Giving a cause for a particular statement | And since you cannot see the listener in a telephone conversation, you need to confirm if important information has been correctly heard and understood |
| Therefore, consequently, so, so that, hence | Used to express a result | Speak softly so that others around you do not get disturbed |
| If, provided that, otherwise, unless, in case | Used to express condition | Do not telephone anyone at odd hours, unless it is very urgent. |

Source : <http://egyankosh.ac.in//handle/123456789/35846>