

# Group Discussion (GD)

## **Initiation Techniques**

Initiating a GD is a high profit-high loss strategy.

When you initiate a GD, you not only grab the opportunity to speak, you also grab the attention of the examiner and your fellow candidates.

If you can make a favorable first impression with your content and communication skills after you initiate a GD, it will help you sail through the discussion.

But if you initiate a GD and stammer/ stutter/ quote wrong facts and figures, the damage might be irreparable.

If you initiate a GD impeccably but don't speak much after that, it gives the impression that you started the GD for the sake of starting it or getting those initial kitty of points earmarked for an initiator!

When you start a GD, you are responsible for putting it into the right perspective or framework. So initiate one only if you have in-depth knowledge about the topic at hand.

There are different techniques to initiate a GD and make a good first impression:

- i. Quotes
- ii. Definition
- iii. Question
- iv. Shock statement
- v. Facts, figures and statistics
- vi. Short story
- vii. General statement

### **Quotes**

Quotes are an effective way of initiating a GD.

If the topic of a GD is: Should the Censor Board be abolished?, you could start with a quote like, 'Hidden apples are always sweet'.

For a GD topic like, Customer is King, you could quote Sam (Wal-mart) Walton's famous saying, 'There is only one boss: the customer. And he can fire everybody in the company -- from the chairman on down, simply by spending his money somewhere else.'

### **Definition**

Start a GD by defining the topic or an important term in the topic.

For example, if the topic of the GD is Advertising is a Diplomatic Way of Telling a Lie, why not start the GD by defining advertising as, 'Any paid form of non-personal presentation and promotion of ideas, goods or services through mass media like newspapers, magazines, television or radio by an identified sponsor'?

For a topic like The Malthusian Economic Prophecy is no longer relevant, you could start by explaining the definition of the Malthusian Economic Prophecy.

### **Question**

Asking a question is an impactful way of starting a GD.

It does not signify asking a question to any of the candidates in a GD so as to hamper the flow. It implies asking a question, and answering it yourself.

Any question that might hamper the flow of a GD or insult a participant or play devil's advocate must be discouraged.

Questions that promote a flow of ideas are always appreciated.

For a topic like, Should India go to war with Pakistan, you could start by asking, 'What does war bring to the people of a nation? We have had four clashes with Pakistan. The pertinent question is: what have we achieved?'

### **~ Shock statement**

Initiating a GD with a shocking statement is the best way to grab immediate attention and put forth your point.

If a GD topic is, The Impact of Population on the Indian Economy, you could start with, 'At the centre of the Indian capital stands a population clock that ticks away relentlessly. It tracks 33 births a minute, 2,000 an hour, 48,000 a day. Which calculates to about 12 million every year? That is roughly the size of Australia As a current political slogan puts it, 'Nothing's impossible when 1 billion Indians work together'.'

### **Facts, figures and statistics**

If you decide to initiate your GD with facts, figure and statistics, make sure to quote them accurately.

Approximation is allowed in macro level figures, but micro level figures need to be correct and accurate.

For example, you can say, approximately 70 per cent of the Indian population stays in rural areas (macro figures, approximation allowed).

But you cannot say 30 states of India instead of 28 (micro figures, no approximations).

Stating wrong facts works to your disadvantage.

### **Short story**

Use a short story in a GD topic like, Attitude is everything.

This can be initiated with, 'A child once asked a balloon vendor, who was selling helium gas-filled balloons, whether a blue-colored balloon will go as high in the sky as a green-colored balloon. The balloon vendor told the child, it is not the color of the balloon but what is inside it that makes it go high.'

### **General statement**

Use a general statement to put the GD in proper perspective.

For example, if the topic is, Should Sonia Gandhi be the prime minister of India?, you could start by saying, 'Before jumping to conclusions like, 'Yes, Sonia Gandhi should be', or 'No, Sonia Gandhi should not be', let's first find out

the qualities one needs to be a good prime minister of India. Then we can compare these qualities with those that Mrs. Gandhi possesses. This will help us reach the conclusion in a more objective and effective manner.'

### **Summarization Techniques**

Most GDs do not really have conclusions. A conclusion is where the whole group decides in favor or against the topic.

But every GD is summarized. You can summarize what the group has discussed in the GD in a nutshell.

Keep the following points in mind while summarizing a discussion:

- Avoid raising new points.
- Avoid stating only your viewpoint.
- Avoid dwelling only on one aspect of the GD.
- Keep it brief and concise.
- It must incorporate all the important points that came out during the GD.
- If the examiner asks you to summarize a GD, it means the GD has come to an end. Do not add anything once the GD has been summarized.

To be able to meet the above requirements during a Group Discussion, one should keep in mind the following basic mantras:

- a) Be Yourself. Be as natural as possible and don't try to be someone you are not.
- b) Take time to organize your thoughts. Don't suddenly jump to any conclusion. Think before you speak so that you don't speak anything irrelevant to the topic being discussed.
- c) Don't make the mistake of looking at the panel while you are speaking. You are in a Group Discussion and you are expected to discuss among group members, so always look at your group members while you are speaking.
- d) Seek clarifications if you have any doubts regarding the subject, before the discussion commences.
- e) Your body language says a lot about you - your gestures and mannerisms are more likely to reflect your attitude than what you say.
- f) Never try to show your dominance. Be assertive, speak yourself and let others speak as well.
- g) Don't lose your cool if anyone says anything you object to. The key is to stay objective: Don't take the discussion personally.
- h) Show your leadership skills. Motivate the other members of the team to speak. Be receptive to others' opinions and do not be abrasive or aggressive.
- i) Remember, opening the discussion is not the only way of gaining attention and recognition. If you do not give valuable insights during the discussion, all your efforts of initiating the discussion will be in vain.

Don't be disheartened if you did not do well in your First Group Discussion. Instead try to learn from your past mistakes. Remember,  
Practice makes man perfect!!!!

**Parameters used to assess speeches and group discussions in All India Debates Conducted in Loyola College:**

## **I) Speech Assessment**

- Ideas & their Logical Coherence
- Opening Statement
- Effective Conclusion
- Posture
- Gesture
- Eye-contact
- Audibility
- Clarity
- Pronunciation
- Modulation
- Personalized presentation
- Conviction
- Time

## **II) Group Discussion**

- Body Language with cordiality and confidence
- Avoiding argument and debates
- Speaking loudly
- Speaking clearly
- Speaking to all
- Listening fully
- Listening attentively
- Contributing new facts
- Following systematic procedure
- Giving chance to all the members
- Point of Order
- Raising questions for clarifications
- Effective Summing up

## Do's and Don'ts of GD

1. Be as natural as possible. Do not try and be someone you are not. Be yourself.
2. A group discussion is your chance to be more vocal. The evaluator wants to hear you speak.
3. Take time to organize your thoughts. Think of what you are going to say.
4. Seek clarification if you have any doubts regarding the subject.
5. Don't start speaking until you have clearly understood and analyzed the subject.
6. Work out various strategies to help you make an entry: initiate the discussion or agree with someone else's point and then move onto express your views.
7. Opening the discussion is not the only way of gaining attention and recognition. If you do not give valuable insights during the discussion, all your efforts of initiating the discussion will be in vain.
8. Your body language says a lot about you - your gestures and mannerisms are more likely to reflect your attitude than what you say.
9. Language skills are important only to the extent as to how you get your points across clearly and fluently.
10. Be assertive not dominating; try to maintain a balanced tone in your discussion and analysis.
11. Don't lose your cool if anyone says anything you object to. The key is to stay objective: Don't take the discussion personally.
12. Always be polite: Try to avoid using extreme phrases like: 'I strongly object' or 'I disagree'. Instead try phrases like: 'I would like to share my views on...' or 'One difference between your point and mine...' or "I beg to differ with you"
13. Brush up on your leadership skills; motivate the other members of the team to speak (this surely does not mean that the only thing that you do in the GD is to say "let us hear what the young lady with the blue scarf has to say," or "Raghu, let us hear your views" - Essentially be subtle), and listen to their views. Be receptive to others' opinions and do not be abrasive or aggressive.
14. If you have a group of like-minded friends, you can have a mock group discussion where you can learn from each other through giving and receiving feedback.
15. Apart from the above points, the panel will also judge team members for their alertness and presence of mind, problem-solving abilities, ability to work as a team without alienating certain members, and creativity.

## **SOME G D TOPICS FOR PRACTICE**

Is china a threat to India

Present state of Indian Cricket team

Advantages of Co-education.

How to deal with international terrorism .

Should we pursue our policy of dialogue with Pakistan?

Is peace and non-violence outdated concepts?

A Unipolar World spells disaster for underdeveloped countries like India.

Is Globalization Really Necessary?

What shall we do about our ever-increasing Population?

Corruption is the price we pay for Democracy.

Foreign Television Channels are destroying our culture.

What India needs is a Dictatorship.

With media publishing and telecasting trivia, censorship is the need of the hour.

Kaun Banega Krorpati is less about knowledge but more about money and personality.

Beauty contests degrade womanhood

The rise of regional blocs threatens independent nations like India

Six billion and one bronze!

Is dependence on computers a good thing?

Should the public sector be privatized?

China and India are similar nations with contrasting ways

Is India a Soft Nation?

Value based politics is the need of the hour

Religion should not be mixed with politics

How to deal with high oil prices

Our cricketers are not to blame for match fixing

Why cant we be world players in industry as we are in software?

Multinational corporations: Are they devils in disguise?

Should there be limits on artistic freedom (the controversy on Fire).

Should there be private universities?

Does banning fashion shows and New Year parties save our culture?

Public sector is more a hindrance than help to promote socialism.

Economic betterment of the poorer nations is as important as disarmament to ensure lasting world peace.

From public sector to privatization as in the U.K., is the right answer for India's instant economic breakthrough.

The doctrine of "limited nuclear war" is an ill-convinced, ill- logical, irrational and extremely dangerous concept.

Some simple but effective electoral reforms will enable us to retain the present parliamentary system and ensure the preservation of democracy in India.

Nuclear war cannot be won and should not be fought.

Private enterprise and not public sector will contribute to faster and higher economic growth in India

Inflation is inevitable in our developing country.

The policy of reservation is a legacy of the British and it has done more harm than good.

For a marketing post graduate, without prior work experience working in a big marketing firm is a disadvantage when compared with working in a small firm. Discuss.

Should agricultural subsidies be stopped?

Do we lag behind China? Che tanaS

Who says MNCs are superior to Indian companies?

Food comes first, ethics later!

To survive in the civilized world one needs to be a hypocrite.

Money is the sixth sense without which one can't enjoy the other five.

English language as a mode of instruction in primary level.

Men and Women are different.

Given the present state of affairs, India will remain a developing country forever.

IIM's and IIT's encourage only brain drain.

Whether reservation to women is beneficial?

There is no alternative to Pokhran nuclear test in present scenario.

Modern cinema is a boon to Indian society.

Should youth indulge in politics?

US war on Iraq-justified or not.

Role of UN in peacekeeping.

Position of Women in India compared to other nations.

Environment Management .

Is China better than India in software?

Should SONIA Gandhi be made the PM

BPOs in INDIA

Govt contribution to IT

Will punch lines rule the Advertisements?

Premarital sex

India or west, which is the land of opportunities.

Water resources should be nationalized

"BALANCE BETWEEN PROFESSIONALISM AND FAMILY"

Is it necessary to ban COCOCOLA in India?

About Hockey being the primary game in India.

Cricket should be banned or not.

Present state of Indian Cricket team.

Love marriage/Arranged marriage.

Advantages of Co-education.

How to deal with international terrorism .

Is peace and non-violence outdated concepts?

A Unipolar World spells disaster for underdeveloped countries like India.

What shall we do about our ever-increasing Population?

Group discussion

A group discussion can be categorically divided into three different phases:

i. Initiation/ Introduction

ii. Body of the group discussion

iii. Summarization/ Conclusion

Let's stress on the initiation and summarization:

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For a GD topic like, China, a Rising Tiger, you could start with, 'In 1983, when China was still in its initial stages of reform and opening up, China's real use of Foreign Direct Investment only stood at \$636 million. China actually utilised \$60 billion of FDI in 2004, which is almost 100 times that of its 1983 statistics.'

Short story

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