

How to Face GD

A group discussion consists of:

- Communication Skills
- Knowledge and ideas regarding a given subject
- Capability to co-ordinate and lead
- Exchange of thoughts
- Addressing the group as a whole
- Thorough preparations

Communication Skills

The first aspect is one's power of expression. In a group discussion, a candidate has to talk effectively so that he is able to convince others. For convincing, one has to speak forcefully and at the same time create an impact by his knowledge of the subject. A candidate who is successful in holding the attention of the audience creates a positive impact.

It is necessary that you should be precise and clear. As a rule evaluators do not look for the wordage produced. Your knowledge on a given subject, your precision and clarity of thought are the things that are evaluated. Irrelevant talks lead you nowhere. You should speak as much as necessary, neither more nor less. Group discussions are not debating stages.

Ability to listen is also what evaluators judge. They look for your ability to react on what other participants say. Hence, it is necessary that you listen carefully to others and then react or proceed to add some more points. Your behavior in the group is also put to test to judge whether you are a loner or can work in a group.

You should be able to convey your thoughts satisfactorily and convincingly before a group of people. Confidence and level headedness in doing so is necessary. These add value to your presentation. In case you are not good at it, you might gain by joining an institute that offers specialized courses in public speaking. For instance, British Council Division's English Language Teaching Centre offers a wide range of courses like conversation skills, business communication skills, business writing, negotiation skills and presentation skills. Mostly people attend these courses to improve their communication skills. Students here are involved in activities which use communication skills and teachers provide inputs, monitor and facilitate the classes. The course at the Centre makes you confident enough to speak before people without any nervousness.

Knowledge and Ideas Regarding a Given Subject

Knowledge of the subject under discussion and clarity of ideas are important. Knowledge comes from consistent reading on various topics ranging from science and technology to politics. In-depth knowledge makes one confident and enthusiastic and this in turn, makes one sound convincing and confident.

Leadership and Coordinating Capabilities

The basic aim of a group discussion is to judge a candidate's leadership qualities. The examiner withdraws and becomes a silent spectator once the discussion starts. A candidate should display tactfulness, skill, understanding and knowledge on varied topics, enterprise, forcefulness and other leadership qualities to motivate and influence other candidates who may be almost equally competent.

Exchange of Thoughts

A group discussion is an exchange of thoughts and ideas among members of a group. These discussions are held for selecting personnel in organisations where there is a high level of competition. The number of participants in a group can vary between 8 and 15. Mostly a topic or a situation is given to group members who have to discuss it within 10 to 20 minutes.

The purpose is to get an idea about candidates in a short time and make assessments about their skills, which normally cannot be evaluated in an interview. These skills may be team membership, leadership skills, listening and articulation skills.

A note is made of your contributions to the discussion, comprehension of the main idea, the rapport you strike, patience, assertion, accommodation, amenability, etc. Body language and eye contact too are important points which are to be considered. .

Addressing the Group as a Whole

In a group discussion it is not necessary to address anyone by name. Even otherwise you may not know everyone's names. It better to address the group as a whole.

Address the person farthest from you. If he can hear you everyone else too can. Needless to add, as for the interview, attend the group discussion in formal dress. The language used should also be formal, not the language used in normal conversations. For instance, words and phrases like "yar", "chalta hai", "CP", "I dunno", etc. are out. This is not to say you should use a high sounding, pedantic language. Avoiding both, just use formal, plain and simple language. Hinglish, (mixture of Hindi and English) should be discarded.

Confidence and coolness while presenting your viewpoint are of help. See that you do not keep repeating a point. Do not use more words than necessary. Do not be superfluous. Try to be specific. Do not exaggerate.

Thorough Preparation

Start making preparations for interview and group discussions right away, without waiting till the eleventh hour, this is, if and when called for them. Then the time left may not be adequate. It is important to concentrate on subject knowledge and general awareness. Hence, the prime need for thorough preparation. Remember, the competition is very tough. Only 460 candidates make it to the final list from 2.75 lakh civil service aspirants each year.

It may so happen that you are called for interviews and group discussions from three or four organizations but are not selected by any. The reason obviously lies in your not being well-prepared.

In a group discussion you may be given a topic and asked to express your views on it. Or in a case study GD, students have to read a case study and suggest ways of tackling the problem. For this you should have a good general knowledge, need to be abreast with current affairs, should regularly read newspapers and magazines. Your group behaviour and communication skills are on test, i.e. how you convince the others and how clearly you are able to express your points of view. You should be articulate, generate ideas, not sound boring, should allow others to speak, and adopt a stand on a given subject. During the course of the GD this stand can even be changed, giving the impression that you are open to accommodate others' viewpoints.

Additional marks may be given for starting or concluding the discussion.

Points to Remember

- Knowledge is strength. A candidate with good reading habits has more chances of success. In other words, sound knowledge on different topics like politics, finance, economy, science and technology is helpful.
- Power to convince effectively is another quality that makes you stand out among others.
- Clarity in speech and expression is yet another essential quality.
- If you are not sure about the topic of discussion, it is better not to initiate. Lack of knowledge or wrong approach creates a bad impression. Instead, you might adopt the wait and watch attitude. Listen attentively to others, may be you would be able to come up with a point or two later.
- A GD is a formal occasion where slang is to avoided.
- A GD is not a debating stage. Participants should confine themselves to expressing their viewpoints. In the second part of the discussion candidates can exercise their choice in agreeing, disagreeing or remaining neutral.
- Language use should be simple, direct and straight forward.
- Don't interrupt a speaker when the session is on. Try to score by increasing your size, not by cutting others short.
- Maintain rapport with fellow participants. Eye contact plays a major role. Non-verbal gestures, such as listening intently or nodding while appreciating someone's viewpoint speak of you positively.

- Communicate with each and every candidate present. While speaking don't keep looking at a single member. Address the entire group in such a way that everyone feels you are speaking to him or her.

Do's and Don'ts

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 effect 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.

MBA GD- Specimen Topics

- Is India moving towards people management?
- Education in India – burden or opportunity?
- Football means to India?
- IT chain puller of Indian economy.
- Indian Philosophy in the world?
- Team worker or a Leader?
- Davinci code.
- Role of IT in other managerial functions (required)?
- Interview or GD?
- Management or technology –contributed to Indian development?
- Blue eyes.
- Reason for tourism in India –business or tourist place?
- Decreasing defense expenditure and increasing social expenditure is the need of the hour