

Communication Skills: Lecture No. 21

Module 7

Lecture 3

GROUP DISCUSSION



In this lecture, I will give you some suggestions and tips for ensuring success in group discussions.

LEADING GROUP DISCUSSIONS

As far as leading group discussion is concerned, you can either be a *discussion killer* or a *discussion igniter*. Needless to say, that you should train yourself to be a discussion igniter to ensure your selection. In order to train yourself, you need to know the phrases which will be helpful either in killing a discussion or in encouraging it. Take a look at the phrases listed below and make use of the ones under Discussion Igniters.

LEADING GROUP DISCUSSIONS KILLERS AND IGNITERS	
Discussion Killers <u>deter discussion & creativity</u>	Discussion Igniters <u>encourage a creative climate</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">> That will never work> That's crazy> That's not practical> Let's get back to ...> You're wrong> You don't know what you are talking about> That's ridiculous> No, that's not what I'm talking about	<ul style="list-style-type: none">> That's good!> I agree> That's a great idea.> I'm glad you brought that up> You're on the right track> I never thought of that> We can do a lot with that idea> Really good, anyone else?

Develop a balanced attitude so that you can promote a win-win situation.



AVOIDING PITFALLS

In order to emerge as a successful candidate in group discussions, you need to carefully avoid some common pitfalls. These are limitations which actually if people tend to ignore will definitely not make them get through in a GD. Take note of the most common pitfalls listed below.



MOST COMMON PITFALLS

- ✗ Tendency to sermonise
- ✗ Anxious to talk too much
- ✗ Nervous and talks little
- ✗ Self-centred; Fails to involve everyone
- ✗ Digressive; not Progressive
- ✗ Cannot summarise or conclude
- ✗ Neither shares views nor is open to contrary view-points
- ✗ Distractive body language
- ✗ Indifference; spectator behaviour

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ENSURING SUCCESS IN GDS

Now let's look at some interesting points which will definitely ensure success in GD's. Observe these norms, follow them as serious rules, remember to use them in GDs, repeat them, and keep reviewing them—you will be definitely ensuring success in GD's.

I have presented them to you in short phrases so that you can remember and recall easily.

ENSURING SUCCESS IN GDS

- ❑ Initiate and generate the discussion
- ❑ Be Assertive (*not aggressive*)
- ❑ Avoid Blocking
- ❑ Be a Patient but Active Listener
- ❑ Use Parliamentary Language
- ❑ Be Analytical and Fact-Oriented
- ❑ Seek Clarifications
- ❑ Accept Criticism
- ❑ Interfere forcefully but politely, when the situation demands
- ❑ Avoid Attention-Seeking



ENSURING SUCCESS IN GDS...

- ❑ Maximize Participation (*silence is not golden! – contribute fully, vigorously, and steadily*)
- ❑ Respect Other Speakers (*differences of opinion do not imply inferiority or superiority*)
- ❑ Show Leadership Ability/Harmonize
- ❑ Don't act as a mere facilitator
- ❑ Avoid individual conversations
- ❑ Be Precise
- ❑ Summarize
- ❑ Maintain Eye Contact
- ❑ Control distractive/negative body language
- ❑ Smile; exhibit a light-hearted frame of mind



PREPARING YOURSELF FOR GDS

You should prepare yourself in small informal groups with some stock topics. Listed below are topics that help you to practice.

LOCAL/CAMPUS TOPICS

- Stopping internet connection from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. at IIT Kanpur
- Banning mobile phones inside the campus
- Banning cars and bikes inside the campus
- Ragging is a necessary evil
- Love marriage versus arrangement marriage
- Reservation Policy/Fee hike

EVERGREEN TOPICS

- Global warming/Climate Change
- Euthanasia
- Brain Drain
- TV/Computer/Internet/Mobile: Boon or Bane?
- Caste system in India
- Women emancipation
- Globalization versus Nationalism
- Cybercrime
- Cloning

GENERAL TOPICS

- Does India need a dictator?
- Is India moving away from a secularist state?
- Education in India—or the lack of it
- What ails Indian sports?
- The Age of Information
- Is Philosophy just an armchair theory?
- Success is all about human relations
- Borderless worlds: Dream or reality?
- Quality is a myth in India.
- Education and success—Is there a correlation?

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GENERAL TOPICS ...

- We don't learn from history, we repeat it
- Do we need a global policeman?
- Indian villages—our strength or our weakness?
- Agrarian Economy in India—boon or bane?
- If there were no armies in the world . . .
- Indian customs—are we in a time warp?
- "How green was my valley" Is nature paying the price ?
- Management Education—Is it necessary to succeed in business?
- The role of NGOs in economics and politics
- NGOs—Do they serve people's interests or are they pressure groups?

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General Topics ...

- **Death of Socialism**
- **Role of women in development**
- **Kids today are not what they used to be**
- **Casteless India—A pipe dream**
- **Should Trade Unionism be banned in India?**
- **Repeated elections—Should taxpayers pay for it?**
- **Indian bureaucracy—foundation strengths or colonial hangovers?**
- **In India, the whole is less than the parts—Do we lack in team spirit?**
- **Generation X—Drivers of our future or are they our lost souls?**
- **Do we need a cut in the defence budget?**
- **"Dot.com" companies—Is there room for everyone?**

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General Topics ...

- **Artificial Intelligence—Will man be ever replaced by machines?**
- **If I were to choose my person of the millennium...**
- **All the world is a stage . . .**
- **Materialism—Have we sold our souls to the Devil?**
- **You've come a long way, baby—The rise and rise of feminist power.**
- **Role of ethics in tobacco industry, liquor industry, etc.**
- **Should gambling be legalised in India?**
- **Are we unfit for Democracy?**

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General Topics ...

- **Survival tools for the new millennium**
- **Examinations—has it killed education?**
- **Should doctors be tried in Consumer Courts**
- **Abortion and Euthanasia—Is it morally right for society?**
- **Are beauty pageants necessary?**
- **The relevance of Gandhism today**
- **Can India handle the issue of same sex marriage?**
- **Is E-Commerce the best thing for India?**

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SOME PRACTICAL TIPS

Before I conclude, I would like to sum up by giving some practical tips as follows. Do not prepare for a GD only the day before; keep practicing regularly

SOME PRACTICAL TIPS

- ❖ Maintain eye contact throughout the GD
- ❖ Avoid distractive and negative body language:
 - Biting nails, shaking legs,
 - Picking nose, playing with pen
- ❖ Do not lean back in chair with hands clasped behind head (indicates arrogance/disinterest)
- ✕ Don't be aggressive, be assertive!



SOME PRACTICAL TIPS

- ❖ To avoid getting too emotional in GDs, have enough practice at home
- ❖ Form small, like-minded groups in colleges
- ❖ Be the one to take such initiative
- ❖ Do not prepare for GD the day before; prepare as and when possible
- ❖ Read with interest and purpose
- ❖ Keep Listening
- ❖ Listen with an open mind

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SOME PRACTICAL TIPS

- ❖ Accept criticisms
- ❖ Learn to develop a thick-skin
- ❖ Look for and generate creative ideas
- ❖ Keep honing your communication skills
- ❖ Monitor your performance using feedback from friends or from own video recording
- ❖ Do not wait to change your personality once you get a particular job; assume the personality even before!
- ❖ Go with the winning attitude!

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IN THIS MODULE . . .

You learnt and understood –

Why Group Discussion?

What is Group Discussion?

Evaluation Criteria

Ensuring Success in GDs

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FURTHER REFERENCES

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Fensterheim, Herbert and Jean Baer. *Don't Say Yes When You Want To Say No*. New York: Dell, 1975.

Prasad, H. M. *How to Prepare for Group Discussion and Interview*. New Delhi: Tata McGraw-Hill Publishing Company Limited, 2001.

Raman, Meenakshi & Sangeeta Sharma. *Technical Communication: Principles and Practice*. Second Edition. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2011.

<http://www.indiabix.com/group-discussion/topics-with-answers/>

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