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Importance of Group Discussions

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ABSTRACT: A Group discussion is a formal discussion which involves six to fifteen participants who sit in a group to discuss a topic or a case given for this purpose. It is a methodology used by an organization to gauge whether a candidate possesses certain personality traits and or skills that are desired of him. It is like a football or hocky game where all the players pass the ball to their team players and aim for a common goal. In these games, the team which has better coordination and skills wins the game and so is the case with GDs. In GDs, the group members have to interpret, analyse, and argue, so as to discuss the topic or case threadbare as a team.

I.DIFFERENCE BETWEEN GD AND DEBATE

A GD is not the same as a formal debate. In a debate, you are supposed to speak either for or against a motion. In GDs, on the other hand, all the members of the group are expected to deliberate upon the issue extensively, and it is possible for any of them to change their stand if they find themselves convinced about the other side of the perspective. This kind of alteration in the stance does not find a place in debates w for both the sides. here those who speak for the motion or against it prepare their argument well in advance, and the contestant is not supposed to argues Such is not the case in GDs, where the discussion just evolves naturally without anything to be proved, from the onset. The very nature of GD, therefore, demands flexibility on the part of the participants, and a lack of it, or a consequent stubbornness or rigidity is seen as a serious flaw in their personality.

II.NUMBER AND DURATION

In a formal GD, there are six to fifteen members in a group and they are asked to sit in a circular, semi-circular, or U-shaped seating style(senate room sitting). They may be familiar or unfamiliar to each other. They are a given fifteen to forty-five minutes to discuss a topic or a case study depending on its nature.

III.PERSONALITY TRAITS TO BE EVALUATED

Following are the most important personality traits that a candidate should possess to do well in GDs;

- ◆ Reasoning ability
- ◆ Leadership
- ◆ Openness

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- ◆ Assertiveness
- ◆ Initiative
- ◆ Motivation
- ◆ Attentive listening
- ◆ Awareness
- ◆

IV. REASONING ABILITY

If you possess good reasoning skills, it helps you express your ideas and opinions in a convincing and rational manner. The golden rule is that when you present your ideas with proper reasoning and argument, you have a better score.

The following example serves to suggest how to rationally express your views on the topic *Democracy is the Best Form of Government*

Friends, in my view, compared to any other form of governance, there is a greater possibility of peace, justice, and harmony in a democratic set-up. In democratic governments, people are connected with the system directly as well as indirectly at every level, and it provides maximum opportunity to people for development. Above all, the people in authority are answerable to the common people. I think that is why, a big portion of the world today happens to be under a democratic system of governance.

While participating in a discussion, use facts and figures to lend credence and conviction to your arguments, as is shown in the following example:

Friends, I think it is wrong to assume that terrorism and unrest in Jammu and Kashmir is the problem of the last one decade alone. If you take a look at the statistics from 1985 to 2001, you can easily observe that even during those years, tens of thousands of innocent people were killed in such incidents. In fact, Pakistan once claimed that over 75,000 Kashmiris had been killed between 1985 and 2001. India holds that the total number of casualties was around 30,000. In any case, such a large number of casualties conclusively proves that the problem is of a chronic nature.

Leadership

An effective leader discusses the topic assertively by touching on all its nuances and tries to help the group reach the objective of the GD. Leadership in GDs is never pre-defined through the person's performance that he emerges as a leader in a GD. A person aspiring for that, however, must display leadership qualities such as clarity, objectivity, perception, poise, and communication skills. So, a leader would be someone who facilitates discussion on a GD topic in a constructive manner. A leader shows direction to the group whenever the group drifts away from the topic. So, a leader should not only contribute to the GD with his ideas and opinions, but also try and steer the conversation towards a goal.

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V.ASSERTIVENESS

You must put forth your point to the group in a very emphatic, positive, and confident manner. Participants often confuse assertiveness with aggressiveness. aggressiveness is all about forcing your point on the other person, which can be a threat to the group. An aggressive person uses negative body language while putting forth his point, whereas an assertive person displays positive body language, both while speaking and listening to others.

Initiative

Participants have a tendency to start a GD to get initial benefit of the points. But that is a high risk-high return strategy. You should initiate a GD only if you are well-versed with the topic. If you start and fail to contribute at regular intervals, it gives the impression that you started the GD just for the sake of the initial points. Also, if you fumble or stammer, it may work against you. Moreover, a choppy, cluttered, and prejudiced beginning is a definite spoilsport.

Motivation

In order to exhibit good leadership skills, always try to encourage the inert participants. This will reflect your positive trait. It is seen that in GD's, participants are more keen to speak rather than listen to others. Similarly, many of them try to speak for most of the time. This however is a negative trait of one's personality. Remember, a leader and good team member not only participates in the discussion but also encourages others to do so.

Attentive listening

You should listen carefully to others when they present their views. This will help you in two ways. First, it will help you understand the ideas presented and second, you can get your ideas analysed by others, which in turn enables you to critically ascertain their validation. Remember, it is only a good listener who can present himself as a good speaker in a GD.

Awareness

You must be aware of the things that are happening around you, be it a political, religious, financial, or social development. As an educated person, you are required to be aware of that. Your awareness helps you provide proper examples, adequate facts, and proper analysis in GDs. Moreover, it is not about just being aware but also about having a view. So, it is your perspective of the issue and not just your being vaguely aware of something which actually matters in GDs.

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