

# Are You Ready For Admission In MBA?

## GROUP DISCUSSION & PERSONAL INTERVIEW

By Ms. Mekhla Sinha, Sr VP (Operations), GHRDC

GD and interview preparation is not a 10 to 15 sessions' programme, but a continuous, a year-long process. They are more about sharpening your business acumen and skill. There are topics in GD which give you surprise such as

- Do you know something about impact of China's deliberate slowdown on Indian economy?
- Why does the Indian Prime Minister give top billing to infrastructure?
- What are your thoughts on the consolidation in the Indian telecom sector etc.?

If you have an idea of the current affairs and topics likely to be discussed in GD like above, your preparation has direction. If not, you probably are so engrossed in your Mathematics and English that you are ignoring the real aspects of preparation for admission.

Apart from your performance in the Written Entrance Test, Group Discussions and Personal Interviews are vital and an integral part of the selection processes of most the top B-Schools. While the weightage given to these factors varies from one B-School to another, it is normally in the range of 30-40 percent of the total weightage. So, when it comes to GD and Personal Interview preparation, leave no stone unturned.

### What is a Group Discussion (GD)?

A GD is a process and forum to discuss and put forth your opinion on a topic in a logical, coherent, and mature manner. The person who conducts the GD and assesses your performance is called a moderator. The number of students participating in a Group Discussion varies from 8 to 10 to about 15 to 20, which differs from school to school.

In order to prepare well to be successful in Group Discussions, it is important for you to understand what a GD is all about and the various parameters on which you are likely to be judged. A GD is a many-to-many interaction where a participant, at any time, may interrupt another to put forth his/her point of view on the topic. The competencies that are looked into are—your personality, logical thinking, strategy (for solutions), listening skills, reactions and proactiveness, verbal communication, etc. In earlier times, GD used to be topical and main concentration was on the content and attitude. Today, things have changed. GD has become

more of an exercise of Group Dynamics rather than a discussion. There are basically three types of Group Discussion:

(a) **Topic-based GD** : In topic-based GDs, an individual will be asked to discuss a knowledge-based topic that may pertain to society/social trends, education, politics, economics, legal/judicial system, information technology, sport or current events as mentioned in the opening paras above.

(b) **Article-based GD** : Sometimes, the GD is based on an article from a newspaper clipping.

(c) **Case-based GD** : The GDs at some top institutes such as IIM-Ahmedabad, IIM-Bangalore, and IIM-Indore have case studies instead of regular topics. Institutes such as SCMHRD and IRMA have, as a part of their selection process, been asking students to enact role-plays and analyse situations.

### Tips for participating in Group Discussion:

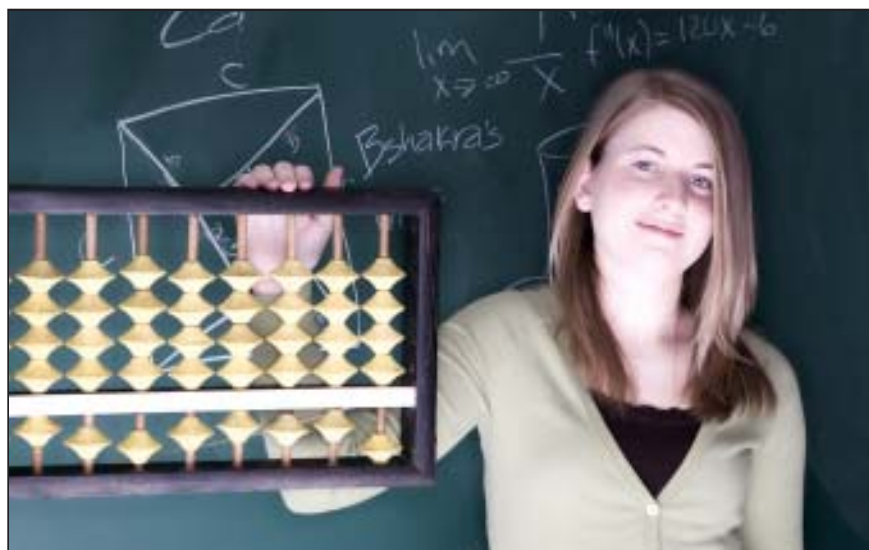
#### 1. Appearance & Attitude:

Appearance and Attitude are like the two sides of the same coin. If one dresses smartly, it has a direct positive impact on the attitude of the individual. As in anything and everything in life, the key to success lies in our attitude towards things and how we orient our minds accordingly. If one looks at this GD as unachievable, success is indeed going to be difficult to achieve. However, if one learns to look at it from the perspective of self-development and as a positive



challenge, the whole mindset towards it changes for the better.

2. **Cool & Calm Orientation:** In the GD, maintain your cool, posture, and modulate your voice well. Admission coordinators look for team players, candidates with original ideas & analytical skills, and quick thinkers.
3. **Be your natural self:** Do not attempt to garner attention during the GD. Be your natural self. Do not fake up your answers in the interview. Be honest if you do not know the answer.
4. **Communication & Content:** Communication does not refer to use of flowery language. It means conveying one's ideas in such a manner that the persons being addressed clearly understands what you are telling them. Students who use simple, easily comprehensible language to convey their ideas, will have an advantage over others. Content refers to the quality of 'what you say'. In a GD, unless one knows something about the topic,





one will not be able to make a positive contribution to the topic, hence the content is the single most important factor that determines success in a GD. So one must read as much as one can.

5. **Listening Skills:** One is also expected to be a good listener. Unless an individual is a good listener, he/ she will find it very difficult to add to the points made by other participants. Moreover, one may be asked to summarise the discussion and unless you are a good listener, you will not be able to do that.
6. **No Room for Emotions:** The disagreement that an individual expresses is with the point of view or a particular data he or she is provided with. It is not your personal opinion. In GD topics that are a little emotional like “India should give away Kashmir to Pakistan”, the aspirant is there to discuss and understand the probability to have a Plan of Action or a solution coming in from a mature person. Emotions are best left outside the GD room.
7. **Time-factor:** We all know that a normal GD would have a time-frame of 20-30 minutes. If there are 10 students sitting in the GD, that translates into 2-3 minutes per person. This is one of the biggest truths that GD takers forget. The ideal time for one to talk would be this duration. A very big fact that many of us tend to overlook is that during the GD process, the GD taker needs to ensure that the candidates do their job perfectly. So the message is quite clear—“Concentrate on your role and your job as a team person. Forget the rest”.

### PERSONAL INTERVIEW

Interviewers develop an impression of an individual in the first few minutes of the meeting, and spend the rest of the interview confirming their initial impression. Therefore, practice, practice and practice some more... The information given below has tips on attending interviews for the purpose of joining an MBA programme (in top B-Schools). B-School interviews may become a strong tool for both MBA applicants and admission committee representatives to take the final decision. From a college’s point of view, it would be able to gauge through applicant’s interpersonal skills and pick candidates who not only look great managers on paper but also in real life.

#### Tips for a successful B-School Personal Interview–

1. **Attitude towards the Interview:** An admission interview should always be treated as a healthy conversation and with the understanding that the people sitting on the other side of the table are interested in knowing you. The questions in B-School interviews can range from academics to work experience to broad discussion on life.
2. **Body Language:** As soon as a candidate walks into a room, he/ she exudes certain qualities such as positivity/ negativity, charm/ dullness etc. Interviewers are definitely looking forward to meeting pleasant candidates who know how to conduct themselves.
3. **Prepare, prepare and prepare:** Well prepared candidate will always stand out from the crowd. The following points should be kept in mind while preparing: It is imperative to be thorough with what has gone in the admission

essays, resume, etc. There should be no mismatch between what an individual would be speaking and what has been written in his/her Business School application. Practising mock interviews and work on the feedback can also prove a good idea. Answers to questions on programme that you have applied for, career goals/ vision, strength and weakness, why XYZ B-School, work experience, extra-curricular experience, and why MBA, such kind of questions should be at your fingertips.

4. **Be Your natural self:** Do not try to put on. The interviewers will be able to see through your masks. Be honest and sound honest. This is mostly appreciated and tends to give the applicant brownie points as well.
5. **Don’t beat about the bush:** Maintaining focus on fostering a friendly conversation with the interviewer is important. Interviewers want to know how interested the applicant is in their B-School and not otherwise. A thorough research on B-School (programmes, alumni, student clubs, specialisation etc.), clarity about goals, vision, and work experience would always help candidates to give concrete and concise answers.
6. **Dress Code:** Well cut, clean, and neatly ironed conservative business suits or dress are appreciated.

Your personality is combination of all factors added together, may be your communication, may be your body language, may be your dress, may be your attitude etc. In final decision to select a student for admission, your personality plays an important role however intelligent you may be.