
**Shree H. N. Shukla Institute of
Pharmaceutical Education and Research,
Rajkot**



**Subject Name: Communication Skill
Subject Code: BP105TP**

CHAPTER-5- Group Discussion

SYLLABUS:

Introduction, Communication skills in group discussion, 4 Do's and Dont's of group discussion

This course will prepare the young pharmacy student to interact effectively with doctors, nurses, dentists, physiotherapists and other health workers. At the end of this course the student will get the soft skills set to work cohesively with the team as a team player and will add value to the pharmaceutical business.

Learning objectives

Upon completion of the course, the student shall be able to

1. Understand the behavioral needs for a Pharmacist to function effectively in the areas of pharmaceutical operation.
2. Communicate effectively (Verbal and Non-Verbal).
3. Effectively manage the team as a team player.
4. Develop interview skills.
5. Develop Leadership qualities and essentials.

Chapter 5. Group Discussion

5.1.1. Introduction

The derivation of word "discusses" took place from a Latin term *discutere*. The actual meaning of this term is to shake or strike. That is why discussion is considered as an activity where a particular topic issue is shaken thoroughly from head to toe. These discussions are either carried out by various groups or by several members in a single group. Simply, in group discussion each and every detail of the specific issue is examined and analysed systematically.

Group Discussion by its name clearly refers to the discussion or interaction carried out by a group of professionals regarding any particular issue. These professionals meet at a specific place, exchange their viewpoints and experiences regarding that issue and try to reach to an appropriate solution regarding it. These issues may be related to an organisation, the environment, or the society. Thus, the main purpose of conducting such group discussions is to enable each and every participant to express their outlook, and exchange their viewpoints with the other members of the group in order to reach desired conclusion.

The members carrying out the discussion may be small or large in number. Though, it is believed that GD having a smaller number of members does not go off the track but such discussions lack liveliness and variations which further result in negligence of important aspects of the discussion. On the other hand, GD having large number of participants have more number of new ideas and viewpoints but in such discussions some of the participants become dominating making others nervous to voice their own ideas. Thus, such discussions are not beneficial.

5.1.2. Objectives of Group Discussion

The main objectives that should be kept in mind while conducting group discussion are as follows:

- 1) To search out for better alternatives and best solutions for a specific issue.
- 2) To observe various dimensions of the particular issue, examine it thoroughly and come out with better ideas.

3) To allow free exchange of ideas and viewpoints among the members so that they can expand their perspective towards a particular issue. Exchange of their own experiences increases their understanding about the subject being discussed.

4) To build the interpersonal skills of the group members by motivating them to communicate with each other confidently and express their thoughts towards the issue more clearly.

5) To identify various effective methods by which the attitudes of the group members can be guided towards the right direction.

6) Group discussion is a beneficial method of getting feedback so that the group members can be trained appropriately. Group discussion must focus on enhancing verbal skills and personal characteristics of all the members participating in the discussion.

Types of Group Discussion There are two main categories of group discussion which are mentioned below:

5.1.3. Topic-Based Group Discussion: One of the most common type of discussions which are carried out in maximum organisations and institutions is topic-based discussions. In this type of discussion, participants are provided with a topic which may be factual, controversial, or theoretical in nature. Participants give their ideas and viewpoints and start exchanging them with each other. Sometimes, participants are also provided with multiple topics related to a single issue and they are asked to reach a particular conclusion or solution with their mutual consent.

Different types of topics undertaken while carrying out any group discussions are explained below

i) **Factual or Realistic Topics:** Factual topics are generally real-life based topics, e.g., the topics which are constantly in news or are related to the present situations. Financial status of India, importance of girls' education, how to reduce poverty, etc. are some of the common topics that come under factual group discussion

ii) **Controversial Topics:** Controversial topics, by its name, clearly stand for those issues which are argumentative in nature. It often results in conflicts among the group members as different members have different outlook and opinions towards any

particular issue. Such topics are undertaken while GD to scrutinize the maturation level of the participants, degree of logical statements made by them and to assess their reaction when their opinions are contradicted by others.

ii) **Abstract Topics:** Abstract topics are based on theoretical concern and are not much beneficial for the discussion. Such topics can be defined clearly and are not very much interesting for the discussion. For example, love is good can become a topic of discussion but it cannot be defined in exact words as the meaning of love changes with the maturation level of an individual Similarly. the concept of freedom can vary depending upon the individual. For one freedom may mean freedom from a relation and for other in may mean becoming self-dependent.

2) Case-Based Group Discussion: Another type of group discussion is case-based. In this type of discussions, a small case regarding any situation along with some questions based on it is kept in front of the participants in a written form. This written material includes all the important information such as the past record of that situation, the major problem, causes responsible for that problem, etc. The main focus of case-based GD is to consider all types of suggestions given by the participants and search out for the best alternative that can solve the problem effortlessly

5.1.4. Preparing for Group Discussion

The main points that the participants must prepare while going for any group discussion are as follows

1) Group Speaking Preparation: The knowledge of the participant regarding the issue, his clarity and accuracy about the concept and his ability to express his views are some of the factors that play an important role during a group discussion. The participant should be able to convince the other members of the GD satisfactorily. Speaking too less or too much can prove out to be negative on the part of the participants. Thus, while preparing for a GD, participants can follow the tips mentioned below, that can enhance their speaking skills:

i) Reading books or editorials everyday helps in improving the fluency. voice tone, and pronunciation of the participant. Besides this, practicing in front of the mirror once or

twice a week not only helps in boosting up the confidence level of participant but also helps him to organise his thoughts effectively.

ii) Frequent discussion with friends regarding any topic is also a good start to enhance speaking skills. Since these discussions are not formal and competitive in nature, with the passage of time such discussions reduce the fear of participants and make them confident.

iii) Once the confidence is developed within the participants, they can go for little competitive group discussions

2) Group Content Preparation: Presentation of content by the participant also plays an important role in any group discussion as it indicates the performance of the participants. Strong and heavy content, such as facts and numbers, created by any participant make his content influential and impactful. Such contents force the other members to listen to them carefully and make them revise their contents again. Participants who are well aware with day-to-day happenings, easily prepare strong contents without any problem. In order to develop content preparation skills, participants can follow the below mentioned instructions:

i) Participant can research on various topics or events that may have happened in the past. These topics can be political, social, personal or cultural. Reading about current affairs is a good source of enhancing content preparation.

ii) Reading articles from different magazines and newspapers such as Business Standards, the Economists, Sunday Express, etc., is a good way of preparing content for any GD. Reading well covered and well researched editorial is also beneficial.

iii) During the research work, participants can note down the important points, facts and figures and then try to develop their viewpoints regarding those points along with the justifications.

iv) When the topics are based on the impact of two situations on each other, it is clear that the comparison has to be made. For example. how recession in China threatens the Indian outsourcing industry While discussing about this topic, a comparison has to be made between India and China. Thus, the participants must be clear about the GDP. population, socio-economic structure, etc., of both the countries.

3) Listening Preparation: Generally, in group discussions, people try to dominate the discussion by using loud noise. But sometimes, among these loud noises, an important point may get overlooked. A good listener never misses out this opportunity and presents this important point in his own way which actually belongs to some other member. That is why it is said that GD does not mean only throwing out ideas but also listening to the ideas of others as listening has its own benefits. Thus, the points that can be followed by the participant to augment his listening preparation are as follows:

- i) Participation of an individual in some discussions simply as a listener is a good exercise that may help the participant in improving the listening skills. Such discussions help the participant in understanding the various levels of noises made by the other participants, thereby preparing him for the entry level competitive group discussions
- ii) Sometimes, listening to the ideas of different people helps the participant in making some additions to his own viewpoint by focussing on other dimensions which were left by him.

5.1.5. Conducting Group Discussion

Most of the organisations believe that group discussions are a great source of collecting information regarding any particular topic. While conducting group discussion, 6-12 professionals sit together, exchange their ideas regarding any topic for about 10 to 20 minutes and then give their ideas regarding that topic or issue. There is an observer who not only makes all the arrangements for conducting GD but also records the feedback given by the participants. Thus, group discussion is considered as an effective way of getting diversified feedbacks from the professionals belonging to different cultures having varied ideas.

The steps to be followed while conducting any group discussions are as follows:

Step 1: Identification of People to be Invited: While conducting GD, the first step is to prepare the list of participants which can be done through various selection methods such as nomination, selecting randomly or selection on the basis of the position, etc. Depending upon the requirement, the observer can opt either for a co-facilitator or a note-taker which he may require during the discussion. The number of sessions to be

conducted, the method of recording feedback, and the compensation to be given to the participants is to be decided beforehand to make the discussion go smoothly

Step 2: Preparing Questionnaire for Group Discussion: In the next step a questionnaire having around 5 to 12 questions is designed in such a way that the main facts and feedback are covered entirely. These questions are generally short, precise, clearly specified, open-ended, focused on main issue, and cover all the aspects of what, how, and why.

Step 3: Arrangements for the Group Discussion: In the third stage, the entire schedule of the GD such as date, time, venue, duration of discussion as well as breaks, etc, decided and then confirmed to the participants invited for the discussion. Then, all the participants are called telephonically for the confirmation of their attendance and the final dates for the sessions are provided to them

Step 4: Observer as a Facilitator: In this stage, observer introduces himself and clarifies the points that should be kept in mind while carrying out the discussion. Observer acts as a facilitator by allowing all the members to express their viewpoints regarding the questions given. He provides his appropriate reaction before moving on to the next question and then summarizes all the responses he receives for each question. Finally, he ends the session by taking the participants into confidence that the suggestions given by them will be used appropriately

Step 5: Vote of Thanks: Last but not the least, honoring the participants by thanking them for devoting their precious time and their valuable responses. Finally, wind-up the group discussion session.

5.1.6. Communication Skills in Group Discussion

Communication skills refer to the ability of a person to effectively express his/her views to others and listen to the views of other members in a group. Group communication is different from the communication that happens between two individuals to interpersonal communication. Group discussion has the following features.

1) As the members of a group remain unknown to each other, it is possible that there may be some introduction before the group discussion starts Thus it becomes important to communicate in a formal manner This manner gets reflected through the language,

tone, body language, etc. of the participants. Group members may refer to each other by adding the prefix Mr. or Miss They usually avoid referring each other using their first names

2) As the members of the group can be from different backgrounds, it becomes necessary that the language used for discussion is simple and free from all jargons. Use of jargons and technical terms usually complicate the discussion and it may not go down well with the person who is judging though it may sound impressive. In case a jargon is necessary, one should always explain what it means for the benefit of the larger group so that everyone can understand what one is trying to say However, this should not be done too often On the other hand, if the participants share similar backgrounds then technical terms or jargon can be used.

3) The communication should be addressed to the whole group and not only to a particular individual For example, if one does not agree what a person has said it is necessary that one says that "I do not agree with what Mr. X has a rather than disagreeing with him directly. After this one may explain the reason for such disagreement.

4) The communication should be persuasive in nature. Persuasive communication persuades the group to observe the issue from different viewpoints without being disrespectful or hurting the feelings of any group member. Also, one should appreciate the viewpoint of other members and put his points in a persuasive manner.

5) One should not stop another person from speaking. However, if one person takes too much time then this can be pointed out to the group.

6) Listening is as important in group discussions as talking. This should be reflected through the body language of every group member. The key to effective group discussion is the ability of the person to effectively communicate through his verbal and non-verbal skills. For this purpose, all the ideas and viewpoints should be clarified in a clear and direct manner Even excellent ideas become useless if they are not properly expressed. The person needs to know how to speak well and should also have a very good vocabulary. Besides having good spoken skills, the person should also have good listening skills and must understand what other group members are trying to say.

5.1.7. Do's and Don'ts of Group Discussion

The do's and don'ts of group discussion are as follows:

1) Do's of Group Discussion: While preparing for a group discussion, a person can follow the following points

i) Maintain Eye Contact while Speaking: A person should not just look at the evaluators, rather he/she should maintain eye contact with every group member.

ii) Initiate the GD: A person should try to initiate the group discussion as it counts as an additional benefit. However, this should be done only if the topic of group discussion has been understood clearly. People often create a bad impression on the evaluators by opening the discussion without any prior knowledge.

iii) Allow Others to Speak: One should allow other group members to speak by not interrupting in between. Everybody should have their chance to put their thoughts even if the other members do not agree with it. Rather than interrupting, candidates can make notes on the wrong points and discuss them at their turn.

iv) Speak Clearly: In any group discussion, people should speak in a clear and polite manner. They must use simple and comprehensible words to discuss their viewpoints. Even if they disagree with the other person's points, they must not show any kind of aggressiveness, instead, they must reply them in a calm and polite manner.

v) Ensure to Bring the Discussion on Track: There are situations when the discussion is distracted from the main topic. In such cases, one must make effort to bring the discussion back on track by making all the members realize that they have gone far away from the main essence of the topic.

vi) Positive Attitude: One should have a positive attitude and confidence. He/she must be devoted to the discussion with a positive body language. Also, practices of dominating other group members should be avoided.

vii) Speak Sensibly: One should try not to speak unnecessarily simple to their time of speaking. This can create a bad impression on the evaluators. Instead, one should speak in adequate amount with sensible and relevant speech of thoughts.

viii) Listen Carefully to Others: Apart from speaking, one should also focus on listening to other group members attentively. It helps in getting involved in the discussion in a positive way.

ix) Be Short and Simple: In a group discussion, one must present his/her thoughts in a simple and concise form. Providing extravagant data or numbers is usually not necessary as there is a limited time for presenting the thoughts.

x) Formal Dressing: One should do not opt for fancy or unusual dressing. A proper formal dressing should be chosen in which a person can speak freely with positive body language and gesture.

2) Don'ts of Group Discussion: While preparing for a group discussion, a person should avoid the following:

i) Being Aggressive: In any situation, the person should not be aggressive during the GD. Rather, one should avoid blaming others, devaluing their status or ego, complaining, etc.

ii) Blocking: Blocking means to interrupt the group's progress by discussing unrelated personal experiences, indulging into unnecessary arguments, or rejecting others' ideas without any judgement.

iii) Self-Confessing: Self-confessing means to express non-group, and personal feelings and opinions by using the group as a discussion board.

iv) Competing: It involves competing with the other group members in the fields of providing ideas, playing role models, talking the most, gaining leadership, etc.

v) Seeking Sympathy: It involves catching the sympathy of group members by showcasing personal problems, hardships, misfortunes, etc. It also includes disapproving one's own opinions and ideas to gain responsive support of the others.

vi) Special Pleading: It means providing supporting proposals which are related to one's own philosophies or pet concerns.

vii) Horsing Around: It means to joke, mimic, or pass unproductive comments that may hinder the progress of the group.

viii) Seeking Recognition: As it suggests, it involves seeking focus and recognition by talking excessively and loudly, giving extreme and unusual ideas, behaving in a different manner, etc.

ix) Withdrawing: It involves whispering, acting unusual, not participating in the discussion, daydreaming, etc.

x) Speak Loudly: Many times, people speak louder than their usual volume due to the inability of being listened to. Such situations may lead to virtual screaming which involves louder tone and pushy manner of presentation. Such an action creates a negative impact on the evaluators as well as on the other group members. One should try not to adopt this kind of strategy while preparing for a GD.

xi) Adopt a Negative Stance: One should never make a negative stance for any group member, irrespective of how unskilled or incompetent he/she may look. Candidates must keep in mind that their expressions or feelings, whether positive or negative for any group member are strictly restricted during the time of GD.

xii) Negative Gesticulation: During the group discussion, some of the group members tend to make an impression of informality or casualness. There are some common appearances that portray such impression, which are discussed below:

a) Positioning of Legs

Making a casual 4-like posture with legs by sitting with one-leg folded on the top of another leg in a way that the first leg's ankle rests upon the second leg's knee. Such a posture reflects the informal approach of a person during the discussion. It is usually chosen by the people who like to be relaxed. Some people like to cross their legs in order to acquire a more comfortable position. This posture should be avoided at all as it indicates casualness towards the formal discussion.

Another commonly observed gesture is shaking legs while listening to other participants. Such a posture creates a negative impact on the group members and shows signs of frustration or inability to obtain what is needed.

Some people like to stretch their legs all around them as to show that the entire floor belongs to them. This posture should also be avoided as it reflects casualness.

b) Movement of Hands: Along with monitoring the positions of legs, one should also regulate their movement of hands. Some people like to flay their hands in the mid-air for explaining things. Excessively flaying the hands often decreases the value of words and people start focusing on the movement of hands which overall becomes unproductive. Also, it denotes that the person has a shortage of good words or appropriate expressions for explaining his opinions and thoughts. However, this does not strictly mean that one should not use his/her hands at all but rather the occasional and timely use of hands gives an added advantage to the speaker.

5.1.8. Guidelines for Effective Group Discussion

Following guidelines are considered for ensuring effective group discussion:

- 1) **Prepare:** If a person is aware about the discussion topic then he/she can do advance preparation to ensure a good discussion. Literature study on the discussion topic for finding its major viewpoints can also be done. Also, the availability of content in video or audio format should also be checked. One can also search for the key terms on the topic so that he/she can be well-prepared. Making a list of various nouns, pronouns and adjectives can also be useful for the preparation
- 2) **Listen:** A group discussion is not a wrangling match. It is very important to listen attentively to what other group members are saying, understand their point of views and then respond with relevant thoughts and observations
- 3) **Do Not Dominate:** One should not try to dominate the discussion. A common mistake that everyone makes in a group discussion is trying to talk a lot without being much effective in the discussion. Every group participant must remember that the quality of input is more important than the quantity. It is important to allow others to speak and to respond to their observations with intelligence and simple responses
- 4) **Backing-up the Points:** The points stated by a speaker should be backed by reliable data. One should not talk in the air without any proof or do not try to bluff other participants. The speaker should have relevant statistics or research information which proves his/her points. This can be done in many ways. One can quote data which is relevant or refer to experts in that particular domain or simply give more clarity to what one is trying to say. For this purpose, the speaker needs to be prepared with back-up

data before making necessary points. This ensures that the points made by the speaker are no empty points but a universal, reliable and real.

5) Learn Some Useful Phrases: A speaker can use numerous common phrases which can be useful in a group discussion. Few of them follows

i) **Agreeing:** I agree with your point.

ii) **Disagreeing:** I am sorry I do not feel same about it

iii) **Interrupting:** I beg your pardon, but can I add something here?

iv) **Dealing with Interruptions:** Can you allow me to finish?

v) **Asking for an Explanation:** Can you please explain in greater detail what you are saying?

vi) **Asking for More Information:** Could you please give some more information on this point?

VI) Adding More Information: I would like to add more information into this point.

6) Be Polite: Arguing and discussing are different in their meanings. In an argument, people usually lose their tempers and give vent to their feelings using undiplomatic language. On the other hand, when one is having a discussion, he/she has to maintain the decorum by being calm and gentle. Do matter how passionately one may feel about the topic. The use of words like May I. Please thank you, etc. give the discussion a polite tone thereby achieving the objectives of a group discussion.

7) Take/Make Notes: The group members should take notes during group discussions for noting down the important points that may be useful for further discussions. Such points become a reliable source of generating new ideas.

8) Speak Clearly: Generally, people overlook the grammatical mistakes when an individual speaks in a foreign language. However, people become impatient when the speaker is incoherent or speaks faster (or slowly) than the normal pace. Moreover, improper pronunciation also imitates and confuses other group members in the discussion. Hence, it is very important to speak clearly and practice proper pronunciation. During the discussion, the speaker can also buy some time by using phrases like 'Hmmm... let me think over it', or 'let me get back to you. This gives you a little more time give an appropriate reply think about the question and

9) Relax: A group discussion is a platform where a free exchange of views and opinions take place between group members. For ensuring the exchange of innovative and open ideas, it is necessary that the group members feel relaxed and stress-free. This is possible if one spends some time to prepare for the group discussion. This makes the discussion much easier and the level of stress also gets reduced to a great extent. In addition, it is necessary to speak slowly and coherently, respect the viewpoint of other members and respond in a meaningful manner.

5.1.9. Advantages of Group Discussion

Discussion on any topic is a time-consuming as well as a resource demanding process. Thus, it is important that the discussion should be to the-point so that time and resources are appropriately utilized Understanding the benefits of conducting GD helps the participants as well as the observers to search out for the best solution of the organisational and societal problems easily and promptly

Advantages of GD are given below:

- 1) During group discussion, the learning takes place both cognitively as well as effectively within an individual.
- 2) Equal importance is given to both the issue and the participants' viewpoints. Thus, it focuses on the learner as well as the subject or the issue to be discussed.
- 3) It motivates the participants to think over the particular issue and freely express their views and ideas about it.
- 4) During discussion sessions, all the group members actively exchange their experiences and ideas, reducing the isolated environment.
- 5) Generally, GD is considered as the best way of expressing one's ideas, outlook, belief, preferences, concerns, emotions, feelings, etc.
- 6) All group members feel that they are an integral part of the group, hence the sense of positivity creeps in.
- 7) GD is a good source of strengthening the previous knowledge and learning of an individual.

5.1.10. Disadvantages of Group Discussion

There are several disadvantages that take place while a group discussion is going on. Some of them are as follows:

- 1) Sometimes, it happens that the discussion is controlled and dominated by a single individual.
- 2) During G.D, people often move off the track and start discussing different topics.
- 3) People who are introvert and have less self-confidence are unable to express their viewpoints in such discussions,
- 4) In GD, some of the group members act dominantly. In such situations, spectators should be capable of handling those situations sensitively in order to keep the interest of all the group members in mind.
- 5) The situations when the group members do not interact with each other comfortably. it becomes difficult for the new and inexperienced observer to make any decision.
- 6) Since observer is the major source of information, thus, absence of observer at any of the sessions may hamper the discussion.

QUESTION BANKS

True or False

- 1) Factual topics are generally real-life based topics.
- 2) Controversial topics are based on theoretical concepts and are not much beneficial for the discussion.
- 3) Reading books or editorials everyday helps in improving the fluency, voice tone, and pronunciation of the participant.
- 4) Listening is as important in group discussions as talking.
- 5) During discussion sessions, all the group members actively exchange their experiences and ideas, reducing the isolated environment.

Very Short Answer Type Questions

- 1) Expand GD.
- 2) List any four advantages of GD.
- 3) What is case-based group discussion?
- 4) List any two objectives of GD.

Short Answer Type Questions

- 1) What do you mean by group discussion?
- 2) List the types of GD.
- 3) Highlight the disadvantages of group discussion.
- 4) What communication skills are important in group discussion?

Long Answer Type Questions

- 1) How to prepare for group discussion?
- 2) How to conduct group discussion?
- 3) Describe the do's and don'ts of group discussion.
- 4) State the guidelines for effective group discussion.



All the best