

Conflict Styles Comparison Chart

Style	Potential Strengths	Potential Challenges	Most Appropriate When
Avoidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Resolves” unimportant conflicts • Conserves limited resources • Allows time for reflection or managing emotions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not address concerns • Possibly creates bigger issues out of smaller ones • Vulnerable to competition • Prolongs conflict 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issue is not urgent or is of lower priority than others • High emotions are triggered and a break is needed • Costs outweigh the potential benefits
Competition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Often quick and decisive; good in an emergency • Accomplishes tasks/goals • Enforces something that is unpleasant but necessary • Can help level the field with other “competitors” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overuse can damage relationships • Can feel aggressive to others • Not well suited to consensus building • Might miss important information/contributing factors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protection from imminent danger is necessary • Accountability is necessary for serious offense (e.g. policy and/or law violation) • No time for interaction
Accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritizes people over problems • Preserves harmony • Can build goodwill 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vulnerable to abuse • Inhibits innovation or growth • Reinforces bad habits • Can leave one’s own needs unsatisfied • Builds resentment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issue is not important to self • Relationship is more important than one’s own needs • Issues are of lopsided importance
Compromise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breaks deadlocks • Resolves complex and/or multifaceted conflicts • Backup to other conflict styles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May jeopardize principles, values, or long-term objectives • Focus on the strategy can detract from the issues • Prolonged negotiation can deplete trust 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issue is important for all • There is limited time • Some progress is more important than stalemate
Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helps build understanding • Prioritizes creative solutions • Often results in win-win outcomes • Ideal for building consensus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time consuming • Requires willing participation from all sides • Can paralyze large group decision-making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issue is highly important to all • Interdependent relationship • Creative solution is needed • Constructive interaction is possible

Adapted by the UC Davis Ombuds Office using material from Search for Common Ground. (2013). *Facilitation guide for experiential learning*.

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