

# Adult Personal Conflict Style Inventory



## Adult Personal Conflict Style Inventory

*This survey will calculate your preferred method of dealing with conflict.*

**Please note:** The reflection this inventory can create is more important – and more reliable – than the numbers calculated from your responses to this form. There are no “right” or “wrong” answers, nor have we “standardized” this instrument. Some takers agree with the results; others disagree. Whether you like the results or not, you should rely on them for an accurate picture of yourself only after further self-scrutiny and discussion with others. The inventory is merely a tool to enable these larger tasks.

**Instructions:** Consider your response in situations where your wishes differ from those of another person. Note that statements A-O deal with your initial response to disagreement; statements P-DD deal with your response *after the disagreement has gotten stronger*. If you find it easier, you may choose one particular conflict setting and use it as background for all the questions. Circle one number on the line below each statement.

## When I first discover that differences exist...

A...I make sure that all views are out in the open and treated with equal consideration, even if there seems to be substantial disagreement

*Not at all characteristic*... 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6... *Very characteristic*

B...I devote more attention to making sure others understand the logic and benefits of my position than I do to pleasing them.

*Not at all characteristic*... 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6... *Very characteristic*

C...I make my needs known, but I tone them down a bit and look for solutions somewhere in the middle.

*Not at all characteristic*... 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6... *Very characteristic*

D...I pull back from discussion for a time to avoid tension.

*Not at all characteristic*... 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6... *Very characteristic*

E...I devote more attention to feelings of others than to my personal goals.

*Not at all characteristic*... 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6... *Very characteristic*

F...I make sure my agenda doesn't get in the way of our relationship.

*Not at all characteristic*... 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6... *Very characteristic*

G...I actively explain my ideas and just as actively take steps to understand others.

*Not at all characteristic*... 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6... *Very characteristic*

H...I am more concerned with goals I believe to be important than with how others feel about things.

*Not at all characteristic*... 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6... *Very characteristic*

I...I decide the differences aren't worth worrying about.

*Not at all characteristic*... 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6... *Very characteristic*

J...I give up some points in exchange for others.

*Not at all characteristic*... 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6... *Very characteristic*

K...I encourage each person to voice his/her perspective and concerns openly in order to resolve disputes in the best possible way.

*Not at all characteristic*... 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6... *Very characteristic*

L...I am firm in my resolve when it comes to justifying my side of the issue.  
*Not at all characteristic*... 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6... *Very characteristic*

M...I seek to work out some mutually beneficial solutions; win a little, lose a little.  
*Not at all characteristic*... 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6... *Very characteristic*

N...I avoid hard feelings by keeping my disappointment with others to myself.  
*Not at all characteristic*... 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6... *Very characteristic*

O...I attempt to meet the expectations of others.  
*Not at all characteristic*... 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6... *Very characteristic*

### **If differences persist and feelings escalate...**

P...I trade important information with others so that problems can be solved together.  
*Not at all characteristic*... 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6... *Very characteristic*

Q...I argue my case with peers, colleagues and co-workers to demonstrate the merits of the position I take.  
*Not at all characteristic*... 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6... *Very characteristic*

R...I put forward middle positions in efforts to break deadlocks.  
*Not at all characteristic*... 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6... *Very characteristic*

S...I try to avoid being singled out, keeping conflict with others to myself.  
*Not at all characteristic*... 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6... *Very characteristic*

T...I accept the recommendations of colleagues, peers, and co-workers.  
*Not at all characteristic*... 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6... *Very characteristic*

U...I enter more actively into discussion and hold out for ways to meet the needs of others as well as my own.  
*Not at all characteristic*... 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6... *Very characteristic*

V...I put forth greater effort to make sure that the truth as I see it is recognized and less on pleasing others.  
*Not at all characteristic*... 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6... *Very characteristic*

W...I try to be reasonable by not asking for my full preferences, but I make sure I get some of what I want.

***Not at all characteristic...*** 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6... ***Very characteristic***

X...I don't push for things to be done my way, and I pull back somewhat from the demands of others.

***Not at all characteristic...*** 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6... ***Very characteristic***

Y...I set aside my own preferences and become more concerned with keeping the relationship comfortable.

***Not at all characteristic...*** 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6... ***Very characteristic***

Z...I interact less with others and look for ways to find a safe distance.

***Not at all characteristic...*** 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6... ***Very characteristic***

AA...I do what needs to be done and hope we can mend feelings later.

***Not at all characteristic...*** 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6... ***Very characteristic***

BB...I do what is necessary to smooth the other's feelings.

***Not at all characteristic...*** 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6... ***Very characteristic***

CC...I pay close attention to the desires of others but remain firm that they need to pay equal attention to my desires.

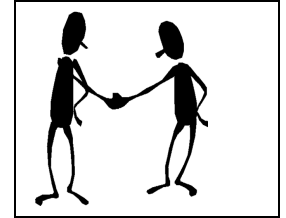
***Not at all characteristic...*** 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6... ***Very characteristic***

DD...I press for moderation and compromise so we can make a decision and move on with things.

***Not at all characteristic...*** 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6... ***Very characteristic***

# Style Inventory Tally Sheet

When you are finished taking the inventory, write the number you circled for each situation beside the corresponding letter on the tally sheet below. Add each of the 10 columns of the tally chart, writing the total of each in the empty box just below.



A ____	U ____	B ____	V ____	C ____	W ____	D ____	X ____	E ____	Y ____
G ____	Z ____	H ____	AA ____	J ____	BB ____	I ____	CC ____	F ____	DD ____
K ____	P ____	L ____	Q ____	M ____	R ____	N ____	S ____	O ____	T ____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Calm	Storm	Calm	Storm	Calm	Storm	Calm	Storm	Calm	Storm
<b>Collaborating</b>		<b>Competing</b>		<b>Compromising</b>		<b>Avoiding</b>		<b>Accommodating</b>	

Now list your scores and the style names in order from the highest score to lowest score in both the **Calm** and **Storm** columns below.

<b>Calm</b> Response when issues or conflicts first arise.		<b>Storm</b> Response when things escalate or stress rises.	
<b>Highest Calm Score</b>	<b>Style Name</b>	<b>Highest Storm Score</b>	<b>Style Name</b>
2nd		2nd	
3rd		3rd	
4th		4th	
5th		5th	

### Interpreting the Scores:

This exercise gives you two sets of scores for each of the five approaches to conflict. **Calm** scores apply to your response when disagreement first arises. **Storm** scores apply to your responses if things are not easily resolved and emotions get stronger. The higher your score in a given style, the more likely you are to use this style in responding to conflict. The highest score in each column indicates a “preferred” or primary style. If two or more styles have the same score they are equally “preferred.” The second highest score indicates one’s “backup” style if the number is relatively close to the highest score. A fairly even score across all of the styles indicates a “flat profile.” Persons with a flat profile tend to be able to choose easily among the various responses to conflict.

### Working With The Storm Shift

Some people experience a change in preferred style as conflict heats up. They begin a conflict with one style but as emotions and stress go up, they shift to a different style. They may shift, for example, from accommodating or competing, or the other way around. This Storm Shift can be quite sudden and surprise or shock others.

Calm Conditions	Storm Conditions
Our response when we first realize there are differences. We are not yet very upset or anxious. The style we use for day-to-day decision-making and problem-solving of difference that has not stirred emotions strongly.	After we’ve made some effort to resolve things without success. Emotions have risen; we are anxious, upset, worried, etc.

Some people **stay the same** in calm and storm. But some people have sharp differences between the two. For example:

- ◆ A competing person who in Calm conditions is very assertive might rather suddenly go quiet, or back off and say, “Well, if you feel *that* strongly about it, let’s do it your way...” This would be a Storm shift from competing to accommodating.
- ◆ Someone who is normally eager to please might indicate a lot of flexibility in the beginning of a conflict and then suddenly turn sharp and angry: “Look, I’ve had enough of this. I insist that...” This would reflect a shift from accommodating in Calm to competing in Storm.

People who show little difference in Calm and Storm are usually perceived as steady and predictable. People who have a sharp contrast between the two may surprise or alarm others and themselves. It is *important to be self-aware* if people have a sharp shift in styles so they can manage it better.

# Ways to Approach CONFLICT

## *Styles of Conflict Management*



### Collaborating

Also described as:

Problem solving

We both win

“Two heads are better than one.”

**Description:** Merging perspectives; welcome differences; identify all main concerns; generate options; search for solution which meets as many concerns as possible; search for integrating solutions; learning.

**Perspective on Conflict:** Conflict is natural, neutral. So affirm differences, prize each person’s uniqueness. Recognize tensions in relationships and contrasts in viewpoint. Work through conflicts of closeness.

**Collaborating Style:** This method represents the same concern we have for our own as well as the other person’s needs and desires. Its objective is to arrive at a win-win in a conflict.

**Collaborating Skills:** Ability to listen, ability to empathize, identifying underlying concerns.

#### Collaborating IS good when:

- ◆ You have the time and want to work something out that satisfies all sides.
- ◆ You care about the other person(s) and the issue.
- ◆ You want to leverage collective I.Q.

*“But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruit, and a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.”*

- James 3:17-18 (NRSV)

#### Collaborating is NOT good when:

- ◆ You don’t care that much about the issue.
- ◆ You need to do something quickly. (“Fire! Everybody out!”)

*“...clothe yourself with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other.”*

- Col. 3:12-13 (GNB)

**Illustration:** Luisa and Jacob work together to have the home clean for the party that they will have this weekend. Collaborating possibly sounds as the best approach to manage conflict. Probably in many cases it is certain. It requires much energy, patience, thinking and imagination. Although it might seem like the best approach, it can also be the most complicated. (Interpersonal communication The Whole Story, p. 400)



## Competing

Also described as:  
I take charge.  
"My way or the highway"  
"Might makes right"

**Description:** Control the outcome; discourage disagreement; insist on my view prevailing.

**Perspective on Conflict:** Conflict is obvious; some people are right and some people are wrong. The central issue is who is right. Pressure and coercion are necessary.

**Competing Style:** This style refer to high concerns about our own needs without distressing the concerns of the other party.

**Competing Skills:** Arguing, debating, clearly stating your position and standing your ground.

### Competing IS good when:

- ◆ You need to take quick action.
- ◆ Your conscience tells you to do or not to do something that displeases others.
- ◆ You know you are standing up for vital issues.

*"[The high priest said] 'We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name [of Jesus]...but Peter and the apostles answered, 'We must obey God rather than any human authority.'"*

- Acts 5:27-29 (NRSV)

### Competing is NOT good when:

- ◆ You use it often with people you care about or will need to spend time with in the future.
- ◆ You want people to feel they can discuss and disagree with you openly.
- ◆ You need "buy-in" of others.

*"You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself."*

- Lev. 19:18 (NRSV)

**Illustration:** Emily and Alex are competing for the same job at Cub foods. Alex is worried about his own needs and desires such as buying a new car, paying rent and cell phone bill. He does not care about Emily's owns needs or desires. Alex just wants to get the job position at Cub foods and obtain what he wants and desires. "This style is assertive, without real consideration for other's outcomes." (Interpersonal Communication a Goals-Based Approach, p. 402) Your goal is to win the conflict while the other person loses.



## Compromising

Also described as:

We must meet half-way.  
“Let’s make a deal”  
“Let’s split the difference”

**Description:** Creating temporary solutions; bargain; split the difference; find a little something for everyone; meet them halfway.

**Perspective on Conflict:** Conflict is mutual difference best resolved by cooperation and compromise. If each comes halfway, progress can be made by the democratic process.

**Compromising style:** This style refers to both parties having a reasonable concern for everyone’s needs and desire.

**Compromising Skills:** Negotiating, ability to find middle ground.

### Compromising IS good when:

- ◆ You need a quick solution
- ◆ You both want exactly the same thing and it can be divided up or shared.
- ◆ You have tried to satisfy each one completely and it isn’t possible.

*“Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are on the way to court with him.”*  
- Matt. 5:25 (NRSV)

### Compromising is NOT good when:

- ◆ You might work a little longer and find a solution that pleases each one better.

*“In everything do to others as you would have them do to you.”*

- Matt. 7:12 (NRSV)

**Illustration:** Mark and Sheila want to use their mom’s car in the evenings. After a long discussion they agreed to use the car on certain days: Mark will use the car Monday, Wednesday and Friday. Sheila will use it Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday. Saturdays their mom will use it all day.



## Avoiding

Also described as:

I leave

"I'll think about it tomorrow"

"I'd rather not deal with it now."

**Description:** Delay or avoid response; withdraw; be inaccessible; divert attention; buying time; reducing tensions.

**Perspective on Conflict:** Conflict is hopeless; avoid it. Overlook differences, accept disagreement or get out.

**Avoiding style:** This is a poor strategy involving a low concern for both the self and the other.

**Avoiding Skills:** Sidestepping, ability to leave agenda items unresolved, withdrawn.

### Avoiding IS good when:

- ◆ You view the issue as not important.
- ◆ You (or someone else) are very angry and need time to cool off before discussing the issue.
- ◆ You are in a dangerous situation and don't need to be there.
- ◆ You need more information.

*"Do everything possible on your part to live at peace with everybody."*

- Rom. 12:18 (GNB)

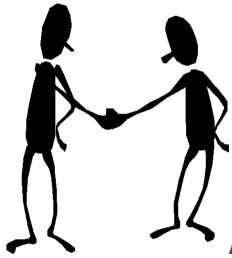
### Avoiding is NOT good when:

- ◆ You allow decisions to happen by default.
- ◆ You care about an issue but are afraid to speak up.
- ◆ You keep wasting emotional energy from suppressing the issue.
- ◆ You sacrifice relationships.

*"Let...us speak the truth to our neighbors, for we are members of one another."*

- Eph. 4:25 (NRSV)

**Illustration:** Adopting this style means pay no attention to the conflict and hope it will go away on its own (Interpersonal Communication The Whole Story, p. 399). Avoiding or ignoring the conflict in the first place is the beginning of the conflict. Some do this because they do not care about the discussion's topic or because they feel uncomfortable about it. Avoidance also leaves important conflicts unresolved and dissatisfies relationships.



## Accommodating

Also described as:

Giving in

“It would be my pleasure”

“I don’t care that much; have it your way.”

**Description:** Accept the other’s view; let the other’s view prevail; keep peace; retreating; decide it’s no big deal or it doesn’t matter.

**Perspective on Conflict:** Conflict is usually disastrous, so yield. Sacrifice your own interests, ignore the issues, put relationships first, keep peace at any price.

**Accommodating Style:** It is the opposite of competing. Its goal is to sacrifice your own needs and desires for the other party's needs.

**Accommodating Skills:** Ability to yield, obedience, selflessness.

### Accommodating IS good when:

- ◆ You are not confident that you are right.
- ◆ You care more about the relationship than you do the issue.

*“Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way.”*

- 1 Cor. 13:4-5 (NRSV)

### Accommodating is NOT good when:

- ◆ It happens a lot and you wish you could speak up more often.
- ◆ It sacrifices a better solution.

*“Instead, by speaking the truth in...love, we must grow up in every way to Christ, who is the head.”*

- Eph. 4:15 (GNB)

**Illustration:** Linda encourages her mom to let her brother borrow the car instead of her. Something interesting about this style is that we frequently use more accommodated reaction (Interpersonal Conflict, p. 158)