# CONFLICT STYLES

## When To Use Which Style?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>I. Competing</strong></th>
<th><strong>II. Collaborating</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Often Appropriate When:</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>- an emergency looms.</td>
<td>- the issues and relationship are both significant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- you’re sure you’re right, and being right matters more than preserving relationships.</td>
<td>- cooperation is important.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- the issue is trivial and others don’t really care what happens.</td>
<td>- a creative end is important.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Often Inappropriate When:</strong></td>
<td>- reasonable hope exists to address all concerns.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- collaboration has not yet been attempted.</td>
<td>- time is short.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- cooperation from others is important.</td>
<td>- the issues are unimportant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- used routinely for most issues.</td>
<td>- you’re over-loaded.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- self-respect of others is diminished needlessly.</td>
<td>- the goals of the other person certainly are wrong.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## III. Compromising

**Often Appropriate When:**
- cooperation is important but time or resources are limited.
- when finding some solution, even less than the best, is better than a complete stalemate.
- when efforts to collaborate will be misunderstood as forcing.

**Often Inappropriate When:**
- finding the most creative solutions possible is essential.
- when you can’t live with the consequences.

## IV. Accommodating

**Often Appropriate When:**
- you really don’t care about the issue.
- you’re powerless but have no wish to block the other person.
- when you realize you’re wrong.

**Often Inappropriate When:**
- you’re likely to harbor resentment.
- used habitually in order to gain acceptance (Outcome: depression and lack of self-respect).
- when others wish to collaborate and will feel like enforcers if you accommodate.

## V. Avoiding

**Often Appropriate When:**
- the issue is trivial.
- the relationship is insignificant.
- time is short and a decision not necessary.
- you have little power but still wish to block the other person.

**Often Inappropriate When:**
- you care about both the relationship and the issues involved.
- used habitually for most issues.
- negative feelings may linger.
- others would benefit from caring.

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*This two-dimensional model of conflict-handling behavior is adapted from "Conflict and Conflict Management" by Kenneth Thomas in The Handbook of Industrial and Organizational Psychology, edited by Marvin Dunnette (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1976).*

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