

# What's Your Conflict Management Style?

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**Instructions:** Listed below are 15 statements. Each strategy provides a possible strategy for dealing with a conflict. Give each a numerical value. Don't answer as you think you should, answer as you actually behave.

**(1=Always, 2=Very often, 3=Sometimes, 4= Not very often, 5= Rarely, if ever.)**

\_\_\_ a. I argue my case with peers, colleagues and coworkers to demonstrate the merits of the position I take.

\_\_\_ b. I try to reach compromises through negotiation.

\_\_\_ c. I attempt to meet the expectation of others.

\_\_\_ d. I seek to investigate issues with others in order to find solutions that are mutually acceptable.

\_\_\_ e. I am firm in resolve when it comes to defending my side of the issue.

\_\_\_ f. I try to avoid being singled out, keeping conflict with others to myself.

\_\_\_ g. I uphold my solutions to problems.

\_\_\_ h. I compromise in order to reach solutions.

\_\_\_ i. I trade important information with others so that problems can be solved together.

\_\_\_ j. I avoid discussing my differences with others.

\_\_\_ k. I try to accommodate the wishes of my peers and colleagues.

\_\_\_ l. I seek to bring everyone's concerns out into the open in order to resolve disputes in the best possible way.

\_\_\_ m. I put forward middle positions in efforts to break deadlocks.

\_\_\_ n. I accept the recommendations of colleagues, peers, and coworkers.

\_\_\_\_ o. I avoid hard feelings by keeping my disagreements with others to myself.

**Scoring:** The 15 statements you just read are listed below under five categories. Each category contains the letters of three statements. Record the number you placed next to each statement. Calculate the total under each category.

Style				Total
Competing/Forcing Shark	a. ____	e. ____	g. ____	____
Collaborating Owl	d. ____	i. ____	l. ____	____
Avoiding Turtle	f. ____	j. ____	o. ____	____
Accommodating Teddy Bear	c. ____	k. ____	n. ____	____
Compromising Fox	b. ____	h. ____	m. ____	____

**Results:** My dominant style is \_\_\_\_\_ ( Your **LOWEST** score)

and my back-up style is \_\_\_\_\_ (Your second Lowest score)

**NOTE: Did you use your lowest scores? Just checking!**

# Conflict Management Styles

## The Competing Shark

- Sharks use a forcing or competing conflict management style
- sharks are highly goal-oriented
- Relationships take on a lower priority
- Sharks do not hesitate to use aggressive behavior to resolve conflicts
- Sharks can be autocratic, authoritative, and uncooperative; threatening and intimidating
- Sharks have a need to win; therefore others must lose, creating win-lose situations
- Advantage: If the shark's decision is correct, a better decision without compromise can result
- Disadvantage: May breed hostility and resentment toward the person using it
- Appropriate times to use a Shark style
  - when conflict involves personal differences that are difficult to change
  - when fostering intimate or supportive relationships is not critical
  - when others are likely to take advantage of noncompetitive behavior
  - when conflict resolution is urgent; when decision is vital in crisis
  - when unpopular decisions need to be implemented

## The Avoiding Turtle

- Turtles adopt an avoiding or withdrawing conflict management style
- Turtles would rather hide and ignore conflict than resolve it; this leads them uncooperative and unassertive
- Turtles tend to give up personal goals and display passive behaviour creating lose-lose situations
- Advantage: may help to maintain relationships that would be hurt by conflict resolution
- Disadvantage: Conflicts remain unresolved, overuse of the style leads to others walking over them
- Appropriate times to use a Turtle Style:
  - when the stakes are not high or issue is trivial
  - when confrontation will hurt a working relationship
  - when there is little chance of satisfying your wants
  - when disruption outweighs benefit of conflict resolution
  - when gathering information is more important than an immediate decision

- when others can more effectively resolve the conflict
- when time constraints demand a delay

## The Accommodating Teddy Bear

- Teddy bears use a smoothing or accommodating conflict management style with emphasis on human relationships
- Teddy bears ignore their own goals and resolve conflict by giving into others; unassertive and cooperative creating a win-lose (bear is loser) situation
- Advantage: Accommodating maintains relationships
- Disadvantage: Giving in may not be productive, bear may be taken advantage of
- Appropriate times to use a Teddy Bear Style
  - when maintaining the relationship outweighs other considerations
  - when suggestions/changes are not important to the accommodator
  - when minimizing losses in situations where outmatched or losing
  - when time is limited or when harmony and stability are valued

## The Compromising Fox

- Foxes use a compromising conflict management style; concern is for goals and relationships
- Foxes are willing to sacrifice some of their goals while persuading others to give up part of theirs
- Compromise is assertive and cooperative-result is either win-lose or lose-lose
- Advantage: relationships are maintained and conflicts are removed
- Disadvantage: compromise may create less than ideal outcome and game playing can result
- Appropriate times to use a Fox Style
  - when important/complex issues leave no clear or simple solutions
  - when all conflicting people are equal in power and have strong interests in different solutions
  - when there are no time restraints

## The Collaborating Owl

- Owls use a collaborating or problem confronting conflict management style valuing their goals and relationships

- Owls view conflicts as problems to be solved finding solutions agreeable to all sides (win-win)
- Advantage: both sides get what they want and negative feelings eliminated
- Disadvantage: takes a great deal of time and effort
- Appropriate times to use an Owl Style
  - when maintaining relationships is important
  - when time is not a concern
  - when peer conflict is involved
  - when trying to gain commitment through consensus building
  - when learning and trying to merge differing perspectives

Source: Mastering Human Relations, 3rd Ed. by A. Falikowski 2002 [Pearson Education](http://www.pearsoneducation.ca) <http://www.pearsoned.ca>