

What's Your Conflict Management Style?

Instructions: Listed below are 15 statements. Each statement provides a possible strategy for dealing with a conflict. Using the scale below, give each statement a numerical value according to how often you use this strategy. Don't answer as you think you should; answer as you actually behave.

1	2	3	4	5
Always	Very often	Sometimes	Not very often	Never

- _____ 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. _____	_____
Avoiding Turtle	f. _____	j. _____	o. _____	_____
Accommodating Teddy Bear	c. _____	k. _____	n. _____	_____
Compromising Fox	b. _____	h. _____	m. _____	_____
Collaborating Owl	d. _____	i. _____	l. _____	_____

Results:

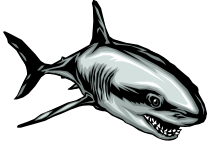
My dominant style is _____ (Your **LOWEST** score)

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

Source:

Falikowski, A. (2002). *Mastering Human Relations* (3rd edition). Pearson Education.
<http://www.pearsoned.ca>

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, uncooperative, threatening, and intimidating.
- Sharks have a need to win; therefore others must lose. This creates win-lose situations.
- Advantage – If the shark’s decision is correct, a better decision without compromise can result.
- Disadvantage – This may breed hostility and resentment toward the person using this style.
- Appropriate times to use the 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, or when a decision is vital in a 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.
- Turtles’ desire to ignore conflict leads them to be uncooperative and unassertive.
- Turtles tend to give up personal goals and display passive behavior. This creates lose-lose situations.
- Advantage – This may help to maintain relationships that would be hurt by conflict resolution.
- Disadvantage – Conflicts remain unresolved. Overuse of this style allows others to walk over you.
- Appropriate times to use the turtle style:
 - when the stakes are not high or the issue is trivial
 - when confrontation will hurt a working relationship
 - when there is little chance of satisfying your wants
 - when disruption outweighs the 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.
- Teddy bears emphasize human relationships.

- Teddy bears ignore their own goals and resolve conflict by giving in to others.
- Teddy bears are unassertive and cooperative. This creates a win-lose situation with bear as loser.
- 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 you are outmatched or losing
 - when time is limited
 - when harmony and stability are valued



The Compromising Fox

- Foxes use a compromising conflict management style.
- Foxes' concern is for both 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. This creates either win-lose or lose-lose situations.
- Advantage – Relationships are maintained, and conflicts are removed.
- Disadvantage – Compromise may create a less than ideal outcome. Game playing can result.
- Appropriate times to use a fox style:
 - when important/complex issues leave no clear or simple solutions
 - when all parties 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.
- Owls value both goals and relationships.
- Owls view conflicts as problems to be solved by finding solutions that are agreeable to all sides.
- Owls are assertive and cooperative. This creates win-win situations.
- Advantage – Both sides get what they want, and negative feelings are eliminated.
- Disadvantage – The process 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:

Falikowski, A. (2002). *Mastering Human Relations* (3rd edition). Pearson Education. <http://www.pearsoned.ca>
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