FREE STUDY NOTES

Types of Conflict Management

5 styles, the five C method and exam ready answers

In one line

There are five types of conflict management. They are **competing, collaborating, compromising, avoiding and accommodating**. Each style shows how firmly you ask for your own needs and how much you care about the other person's needs.

The two questions behind every style

Assertiveness	Cooperativeness
How hard do you push for **your own** goals?	How much do you care about the **other person's** goals?

The model was built by Kenneth Thomas and Ralph Kilmann. It is called the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI). It builds on earlier work by Blake and Mouton in 1964.

The 5 styles at a glance

Style	Assertive	Cooperative	Best used when	Main risk
Competing	High	Low	Speed or safety matters	Hurts trust
Collaborating	High	High	The issue and the relationship both matter	Takes time
Compromising	Medium	Medium	Time is short and both sides can give a little	Nobody is fully happy
Avoiding	Low	Low	The issue is small or emotions are high	The problem returns
Accommodating	Low	High	The issue matters more to the other person	Your needs get ignored

Remember: No style is best every time. The skill is choosing the style that fits the situation.

One scenario, five styles

Aryan and Kavya work at a startup in Bengaluru. Aryan wants to release an app feature on Friday. Kavya wants two more days of testing. The names and the story are made up to show how each style sounds.

Style	What it sounds like	What happens
Competing	"We launch Friday. This is my decision."	Aryan wins. Kavya feels ignored and stops sharing ideas.
Collaborating	Both list their needs. They plan safe features on Friday and the rest on Monday.	Both goals are met.
Compromising	Aryan waits one day. Kavya tests only the main features.	Each person gives up something.
Avoiding	"Let us talk about this on Monday."	Everyone cools down. The issue is still open.
Accommodating	"Fine, launch Friday."	Peace is kept. Kavya's concern is dropped.

Which style should you use?

Situation	Style to try
A real emergency or safety risk	**Competing**
An important issue with someone you see every day	**Collaborating**
The deadline is close and both sides are partly right	**Compromising**
The issue is small or tempers are high	**Avoiding, then talk later**
The other person cares more, or you are wrong	**Accommodating**

Pro tip: You can use styles in order. Pause first (avoiding). Then sit down and collaborate. Any style can also be used in a respectful way or a harsh way, so tone matters as much as the choice.

Your personality and your conflict style

Personality does not lock you into one style. It only nudges you. Researchers study this link with the Big Five traits: openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism.

What one well known study found

In 1998, David Antonioni tested 351 students and 110 managers. His paper was published in the International Journal of Conflict Management.

Trait	Link found in the study
Extraversion, conscientiousness, openness, agreeableness	Positive link with the **integrating** style (same as collaborating)
Extraversion	Positive link with the **dominating** style (same as competing)
Agreeableness, neuroticism	Negative link with the **dominating** style

These are tendencies, not rules. Your choices matter more than your traits.

The five C method

This is the PersonaGuru framework. It is not an official model. It uses ideas from the Thomas-Kilmann research and common workplace practice. Use it as a checklist.

1 **Calm**
Pause and breathe. Do not reply while you are angry.
Try: "Give me ten minutes. Then we can talk."

2 **Clarify**
State the issue in one sentence. Ask what the other person needs.
Try: "What I understand is that you want more testing. Is that right?"

3 **Consider**
List two or three options that could work. Write them down if the issue is big.

4 **Choose**
Pick the style from the table that fits the situation.

5 **Check**
Follow up after a few days.
Try: "Is the new plan working for you?"

10 practical ways to resolve a conflict

1. Pick the right time and place.

2. Start with facts, not blame.

3. Use "I" statements, such as "I feel stressed when the deadline moves."

4. Listen without interrupting.

5. Repeat what you heard in your own words.

6. Separate the person from the problem.

7. Look for goals you share.

8. Offer two or three options.

9. Agree on next steps and a date.

10. Ask a neutral person to help if you are stuck.

Mistakes that make conflict worse

- Bringing up old issues that are already settled
- Using words like "always" and "never"
- Arguing over text messages, where tone gets lost
- Taking sides before hearing both stories
- Treating the talk as a contest to win
- Ignoring feelings and talking only about facts

The four types of conflict

Intrapersonal	Interpersonal	Intragroup	Intergroup
A struggle inside you, such as a hard choice	A clash between two people	A disagreement inside a team	A clash between two groups or departments

The five styles work in all four types of conflict.

Did you know?

In a 2025 Acas survey of 4,558 working-age people in Great Britain, **44%** had faced conflict at work in the past 12 months. Acas called it the highest level ever reported in a survey of British workers. Around **19%** of those in conflict did nothing about it.

Source: Acas, November 2025. The data is from Great Britain.

Exam corner

5 marks: Explain the types of conflict management.

Conflict management means handling a disagreement so the issue is solved and the relationship survives. Thomas and Kilmann describe five styles based on assertiveness and cooperativeness. Competing is high on assertiveness and low on cooperativeness. Collaborating is high on both. Compromising is medium on both. Avoiding is low on both. Accommodating is low on assertiveness and high on cooperativeness. No single style is best. The right choice depends on the situation.

10 marks: Discuss conflict management in personality development.

1	Define conflict management in two lines.
2	Explain the two dimensions, assertiveness and cooperativeness.
3	Describe all five styles with one example each.
4	Link personality traits to styles using the Big Five.
5	Add the five C method: calm, clarify, consider, choose, check.
6	Conclude that no style is best and that the choice depends on the situation.

Find your default style

Think of your last three conflicts. Fill in the table. A pattern will show your default style.

Conflict	Style I used	What happened	Style I could try next

Tip: To change a default, notice the moment you slip into it. Pause for ten seconds. Then ask, Which style fits this problem? Practice on small issues first.

Sources and notes

• Ralph Kilmann, A Brief History of the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument, kilmanndiagnostics.com.
• David Antonioni (1998), Relationship between the Big Five personality factors and conflict management styles, International Journal of Conflict Management, 9(4), 336 to 355. DOI 10.1108/eb022814.
• Acas (20 November 2025), How prevalent is individual conflict at work in Great Britain in 2025? acas.org.uk.
• The five C method is the PersonaGuru framework and not an official model. The Aryan and Kavya scenario is made up. These notes are for study and general learning.

Want the full guide? Read the complete article on **PersonaGuru.in** for more examples, tips and FAQs. Search for "types of conflict management" on the site.