

Thomas – Kilmann

Dealing with Conflict Profile

This questionnaire is designed to find out your preferred way of behaving in conflict situations. Since you are probably unaware of this, this questionnaire will help you identify how you usually emerge from conflict situations and why you might benefit more from some experiences than from others. Knowing this will put you in a better position to consider making changes to behaviours which may not serve you well in conflict situations.

There is no time limit to this questionnaire. It will probably take you 10-15 minutes. The accuracy of the results depends on how honest you can be and there are no right or wrong answers.

How to complete

Consider situations in which you find your wishes, thoughts and/or expectations differing from those of another person. How do you usually respond in such situations?

On the following pages are several pairs of statements describing possible behavioural responses. For each pair, please circle the 'A' or 'B' statement, which is most characteristic of your own behaviour.

In many cases, neither the 'A' or 'B' statements may be very typical of your behaviour, but please select the responses which you would be more likely to use.

1.	A	There are times when I let others take responsibility for solving the problems
	B	Rather than negotiate the things on which we disagree, I try to stress those things which we both agree
2.	A	I try to find a compromise solution
	B	I attempt to deal with all of their and my concerns
3.	A	I am usually firm in pursuing my goals
	B	I might try to soothe the other's feeling and preserve our relationship
4.	A	I try to find a compromise solution
	B	I sometimes sacrifice my own wishes for the wishes of the other person
5.	A	I consistently seek the other's help in working out a solution
	B	I try to do what is necessary to avoid useless tensions
6.	A	I try to avoid creating unpleasantness for myself
	B	I try to win my position
7.	A	I try to postpone the issue until I have had some time to think it over
	B	I give up some points in exchange for others
8.	A	I am usually firm in pursuing my goals
	B	I attempt to get all concerns and issues immediately out into the open
9.	A	I feel the differences are not always worth worrying about
	B	I make an effort to get my way
10.	A	I am firm in pursuing my goals
	B	I try to find a compromise solution
11.	A	I attempt to get all concerns and issues immediately out into the open
	B	I might try to soothe the other's feeling and preserve our relationship
12.	A	I sometimes avoid taking positions which would create controversy
	B	I will let them have some of their positions if they let me have some of mine
13.	A	I propose a middle ground
	B	I press to get my points made
14.	A	I tell the other person my ideas and ask them for theirs
	B	I try to show them the logic and benefits of my position
15.	A	I might try to soothe the other's feeling and preserve our relationship
	B	I try to do what is necessary to avoid tensions
16.	A	I try not to hurt the other's feelings
	B	I try to convince the other person of the merits of my position
17.	A	I am usually firm in pursuing my goals
	B	I try to do what is necessary to avoid tensions

17.	A I am usually firm in pursuing my goals B I try to do what is necessary to avoid tensions
18.	A If it makes the other person happy, I might let them maintain their views B I will let them have some of their positions if they let me have some of mine
19.	A I attempt to get all concerns and issues immediately out into the open B I try to postpone the issue until I have had some time to think it over
20.	A I attempt to immediately work through our differences B I try to find a fair combination of gains and losses for both of us
21.	A In approaching negotiations, I try to be considerate of the other person's wishes B I always lean toward a direct discussion of the problem
22.	A I try to find a position that is intermediate between theirs and mine B I assert my wishes
23.	A I am very often concerned with satisfying all our wishes B There are times when I let others take responsibility for solving the problem
24.	A If the other's position seems very important to them, I would try to meet their wishes B I try to get them to settle for a compromise
25.	A I try to show them the logic and benefits of my position B In approaching negotiations, I try to be considerate of the other person's wishes
26.	A I propose a middle ground B I am nearly always concerned about satisfying all our wishes
27.	A I sometimes avoid taking positions that would create controversy B If it makes the other person happy, I might let them maintain their views
28.	A I am usually firm in pursuing my goals B I usually seek the other's help in working out a solution
29.	A I propose a middle ground B I feel that differences are not always worth worrying about
30.	A try not to hurt the other person's feelings B I always share the problem with the other person so that we can work it out

Scoring the Thomas – Kilmann Conflict Profile

Circle the letters below that you circled on each item of the questionnaire.

	Competing (forcing)	Collaborating (problem solving)	Compromising	Avoiding (withdrawal)	Accommodating (soothing)
1				A	B
2		B	A		
3	A				B
4			A		B
5		A		B	
6	B			A	
7			B	A	
8	A	B			
9	B			A	
10	A		B		
11		A			B
12			B	A	
13	B		A		
14	B	A			
15				B	A
16	B				A
17	A			B	
18			B		A
19		A		B	
20		A	B		
21		B			A
22	B		A		
23		A		B	
24			B		A
25	A				B
26		B	A		
27				A	
28	A	B			
29			A	B	
30		B			A

Total number of items circled in each column:

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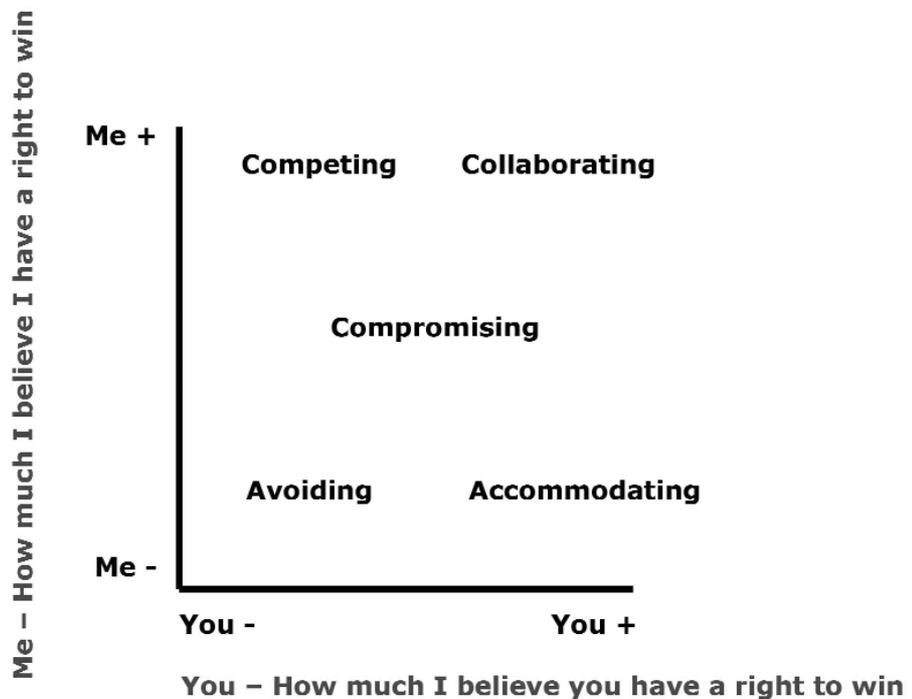
Your scores on the Thomas – Kilmann Conflict Profile

	Competing	Collaborating	Compromising	Avoiding	Accommodating	
High 25%	100%	12		12	12	
				11	11	
		11	12	11	10	10
		10	11	10	9	9
					8	
	90%	9	10		7	
		8		9	8	
	80%		9			
				8		6
	70%	7				
Middle 50%	60%			7		
		6			5	
			8			
	50%			7	6	
			7			
		5				
	40%				4	
				6		
		4		5		
	30%			5		
Low 25%				6		
					3	
		3		4		
	20%		5			
				4		
		2		3		
	10%		4			
			3	3		
			2	2	2	2
		1	1	1	1	1
0%	0	0	0	0	0	

Interpreting your scores on the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Profile

The Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Profile is designed to assess an individual's behaviour. In conflict situations. "Conflict Situations" are situations in which the concerns of two people appear to be incompatible. In such situations, we can describe a person's behaviour along two basic dimensions: (1) Assertiveness, the extent to which the individual attempts to satisfy his/her own concerns, and (2) co-operativeness, the extent to which the individual attempts to satisfy the other person's concerns. These two basic dimensions of behaviour can be used to define five specific methods of dealing with conflicts. These five 'conflict-handling modes' are shown below:

5 Ways of Handling Conflict



Competing is assertive and uncooperative – an individual pursues their own concerns at the other person's expense. This is a power-orientated mode, in which one sees whatever power seems appropriate to win one's own position – one's ability to argue, one's rank, economic sanctions. Competing might mean 'standing up for your rights', defending a position which you believe is correct, or simply trying to win.

Accommodating is **unassertive and cooperative** – the opposite of competing. When accommodating, an individual neglects their own concerns to satisfy the concerns of the other person; there is an element of self-sacrifice in this mode. Accommodating might take the form of selfless generosity or charity, obeying another person's order when one would prefer not to, or yielding to another's point of view.

Avoiding is **unassertive and uncooperative** – the individual does not immediately pursue their own concerns or those of the other person. They do not address the conflict. Avoiding might take the form of diplomatically sidestepping an issue, postponing an issue until a better time or simply withdrawing from a threatening situation.

Collaborating is **both assertive and cooperative** – the opposite of avoiding. Collaborating involves an attempt to work with the other person to find some solution which fully satisfies the concerns of both persons. It means digging into an issue to identify the underlying concerns of the two individuals and to find an alternative which meets both sets of concerns. Collaborating between two persons might take the form of exploring a disagreement to learn from each other's insights, concluding to resolve, or confronting and trying to find a creative solution to an interpersonal problem.

Compromising is **Intermediate in both assertiveness and cooperativeness**. The objective is to find some expedient, mutually acceptable solution which partially satisfies both parties. It falls on a middle ground between competing and accommodating. Compromising gives up more than competing but less than accommodating. Likewise. It addresses an issue more directly than avoiding, but doesn't explore it in as much depth as collaborating. Compromising might mean splitting the difference, exchanging concessions, or seeking a quick middle-ground position.

What do your scores mean?

Usually, after getting back the results of any test, people first want to know “What are the right answers?” In the case of conflict-handling behaviour, there are no universal right answers. All five modes are useful in some situations: each represents a set of useful social skills. Our conventional wisdom recognises, for example, that often “two heads are better than one” (Collaborating). But it also says “kill your enemies with kindness” (Accommodating), “Might makes right (Competing). The effectiveness of a given conflict-handling mode depends upon the requirements of the specific conflict situation and the skill with which the mode is used.

Each of us is capable of using all five conflict-handling modes: none of us can be characterised as having a single, rigid style of dealing with conflict. However, any individual uses some modes better than others and therefore, tends to rely upon those modes more heavily than others, whether because of temperament or practice.

The conflict behaviours which an individual uses are therefore a result of both his/her personal predispositions and the requirements of the situation in which they find themselves. The Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument is designed to assess this mix of conflict-handling modes.

To help you judge how appropriate your utilisation of the five modes is for your situation we have listed a number of uses for each mode – based upon lists generated by company presidents. Your score, high or low, indicates its usefulness in your situation. However, there is the possibility that your social skills lead you to rely upon some conflict behaviours more or less than necessary. To help you determine this, we have also listed some diagnostic questions concerning warning signals for the overuse or underused of each mode.

A. COMPETING

Uses:

1. When quick, decisive action is vital, e.g. emergencies.
2. On important issues where unpopular courses of action need implementing, e.g. cost cutting, enforcing unpopular rules, discipline.
3. On issues vital to company welfare when you know you're right.
4. To protect yourself against people who take advantage of non-competitive behaviour.

If you scored High:

1. **Are you surrounded by 'yes' people?**
(If so, perhaps it's because they have learned that it's unwise to disagree with you, or have given up trying to influence you. This closes you off from information).
2. **Are direct reports or colleagues afraid to admit ignorance and uncertainties to you?**
(In competitive climates, one must fight for influence and respect – which means acting more certain and confident than one feels. The upshot is that people are less able to ask for information and opinion – they are less able to learn).

If you scored Low:

1. **Do you often feel powerless in situations?**
(It may be because you are unaware of the power you do have, unskilled in its use, or uncomfortable with the idea of using it. This may hinder your effectiveness by restricting your influence).
2. **Do you have trouble taking a firm stand, even when you see the need?**
(Sometimes concerns for others feelings or anxieties about the use of power cause us to vacillate, which may mean postponing the decision and adding to the suffering and/or resentment of others).

B. COLLABORATING

Uses:

1. To find an interactive solution when both sets of concerns are too important to be compromised.
2. When your objective is to learn – e.g. testing your own assumptions, understanding the views of others.
3. To merge insights from people with different perspectives on a problem.
4. To gain commitment by incorporating other's concerns into a consensual decision.
5. To work through hard feelings which have been interfering with an interpersonal relationship.

If you scored High:

1. **Do you spend time discussing issues in depth that do not seem worth it?**
(Collaboration takes time and energy – perhaps the scarcest organisational resources. Trivial problems don't require optimal solutions, and not all personal differences need to be hashed out. The overuse of collaboration and consensual decision making sometimes represents a desire to minimise risk by diffusing responsibility for a decision or by postponing action.)
2. **Does your collaborative behaviour fail to elicit collaborative responses from others?**
(The exploratory and tentative nature of some collaborative behaviour may make it easy for others to disregard collaborative overture; or the trust and openness may be taken advantage of. You may be missing some cues which would indicate the presence of defensiveness, strong feelings, impatience, competitiveness, or conflicting interests).

If scored Low:

1. **Is it hard for you to see differences as opportunities for joint gain – as opportunities to learn or solve problems?**
(Although there are often threatening or unproductive aspects of conflict, indiscriminate pessimism can prevent you from seeing collaborative possibilities and thus deprive you of the mutual gains and satisfactions which accompany successful collaboration.)
2. **Are direct reports or colleagues uncommitted to your decisions or policies?**
(Perhaps their own concerns are not being incorporated into those decisions or policies).

C. COMPROMISING

Uses:

1. When goals are moderately important, but not worth the effort or potential disruption of more assertive modes.
2. When two opponents with equal power are strongly committed to mutually exclusive goals – are in labour management bargaining.
3. To achieve temporary settlements to complex issues.
4. To arrive at expedient solutions under time pressure.
5. As backup mode when collaboration or competing are unsuccessful.

If you scored High:

1. Do you concentrate so heavily upon the practicalities to compromise that you sometimes lose sight of larger principles, values, long term objectives, company welfare?
2. Does an emphasis on bargaining and trading create a culture of game playing?

If you scored Low:

1. Do you find yourself too sensitive or embarrassed to engage in bargaining situations?
2. Do you find it hard to make conversations?
(Without this safety value, you may have trouble getting out of mutually destructive arguments and power struggles).

D. AVOIDING

Uses:

1. When an issue is trivial, of only passing importance or if more important issues are pressing?
2. When you perceive no change of satisfying your concerns, when you have low power or you are frustrated by that.
3. When the potential damage of confronting a conflict outweighs the benefits of its resolutions.
4. To let people cool down – to reduce tensions to a productive level and to regain perspective and composure.
5. When gathering more information outweighs the advantages of an immediate decision.
6. When others can resolve the conflict more effectively.
7. When the issue seems tangential or symptomatic of another more basic issue.

If you scored High:

1. Does your coordination suffer because people have trouble getting your inputs on issues?
2. Does it often appear that people are “walking on eggshells?”
(Sometimes a dysfunctional amount of energy can be devoted to caution and the avoiding of issues, indicating that issues need to be faced and resolved).
3. Are decisions on important issues made by default?

If you scored Low:

1. Do you find yourself hurting people’s feelings or stirring up hostilities?
(You may need to exercise more discretion in confronting issues or more tact in framing issues in non-threatening ways. Tact is partially the art of avoiding potentially disruptive aspects of an issue).
2. Do you often feel harried or overwhelmed by a number of issues?
(You may need to devote more time to setting priorities – deciding which issues are relatively unimportant and perhaps delegating them to others).

E. ACCOMMODATING

Uses:

1. When you realise that you are wrong – to allow a better position to be heard, to learn from others, and to show that you are reasonable.
2. When the issue is much more important to the other person than to yourself - to satisfy the needs of others, and as a goodwill gesture to help maintain a cooperative relationship.
3. To build up social credits for later issues which are important to you.
4. When continued competition would only damage your cause-when you are outmatched and losing.
5. When preserving harmony and avoiding disruption are especially important
6. To aid in the managerial development of subordinates by allowing them to experiment and learn from their own mistakes.

If you scored High:

1. **Do you feel that your own ideas and concerns are not getting the attention they deserve?**
(Deferring too much to the concerns of others can deprive you of influence, respect and recognition. It also deprives the organisation of your contributions).
2. **Is discipline lax?**
(Although discipline for its own sake may be of little value, there are often rules, procedures, and assignments whose implementation is crucial for you or the organisation).

If you scored Low:

1. **Do you have trouble building goodwill with others?**
(Accommodation on minor issues which are important to others are gestures of goodwill).
2. **Do you often seem to regard you as unreasonable?**
3. **Do you have trouble admitting it when you are wrong?**
4. **Do you recognise legitimate exceptions to rules?**
5. **Do you know when to give up?**