

# Advantages and Disadvantages of Conflict

by Sophia Tutorial



## WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, we'll discuss how parties often perceive conflict in one of two ways:

1. Disadvantages of Conflict
2. Advantages of Conflict

## 1. Disadvantages of Conflict

In terms of conflict, a **disadvantage** is a perception that continuing a conflict impedes a party's goals or needs.

➦ **EXAMPLE** The sign outside a shop was wobbling in a strong wind, and Mary Ellen were unlucky enough to be standing underneath it when it fell, giving them a minor concussion. They consider suing the shop owners because they think they can prove that they knew the sign was at risk of falling and hurting someone. But as they begin the process of hiring a lawyer, they learn that the potential upfront costs of the lawsuit, in terms of money and effort, might be more than her minor injury was worth to them. They might decide that making their legal case is more of a disadvantage than an advantage.

➦ **EXAMPLE** Let's say you've been dating someone for some time, and there always seems to be a little bit of conflict erupting in this relationship. You care for the person and enjoy their company, but it just feels like hard work. After weighing the pros and cons, you decide that putting up with the conflicts is too much of a disadvantage. They are draining your personal energy and time, so you end the relationship.

Let's look at a more in-depth example of how a personal conflict may appear disadvantageous.

### IN CONTEXT

Jonah is having a conflict with his brother-in-law, Steve, over some yard work that Steve said he would do but never completed. This dispute has brought some tension into the relationship, and these two men now don't spend very much time together. However, the families have always enjoyed being together; in fact, there's a family gathering coming up.

Jonah begins to consider if he needs to let go of his conflict with Steve for the sake of their families. Jonah continues to feel that he is in the right, and that Steve owes him work, or to pay him back for

the materials that Jonah supplied for the work, or at least an apology. But their spouses and children are friends, so Jonah decides that he will let it go so that their families can be together without tension.



#### TERM TO KNOW

### Disadvantage

A perception that continuing a conflict impedes a party's goals or needs

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## 2. Advantages of Conflict

An **advantage** is a perception that continuing a conflict in and of itself fulfills a party's goals or needs.

➦ **EXAMPLE** A labor union is in conflict with an employer; the workers need safer working conditions, and the employer is unwilling to provide them. After negotiations fail, the union calls for a strike, which is when the union members stop working until the employer is willing to concede. The strike is an escalation of the conflict, which is an advantage for the labor union because the strike will draw public and media attention and hurt the employer. The hope is that this attention will improve the union's bargaining position.

➦ **EXAMPLE** Anna and her roommate, Michaela, have never gotten along very well, and now Anna would like Michaela to move out so that Anna could find a new roommate who is a better fit. But Michaela has not indicated that she plans to move out any time soon, and her name is on the lease. It would be an advantage for Anna to increase conflict between her and Michaela because an unpleasant roommate relationship might turn the conflict into a disadvantage for Michaela, which would make her move out.



#### BIG IDEA

If a party sees a conflict as being to their advantage, this could be a disincentive to resolve the conflict.



#### THINK ABOUT IT

Consider the most recent conflict you encountered in your life:

- Did you perceive this conflict as an advantage or as a disadvantage?
- How did this perception influence the way you approached the conflict?



#### TERM TO KNOW

### Advantage

A perception that continuing a conflict in and of itself fulfills a party's goals or needs.



#### SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned that **conflicts can be perceived as either advantageous or disadvantageous** to the parties involved. You now understand that if a conflict is perceived as

advantageous, that perception could result in a party not wanting to resolve the conflict quickly. Good luck!

Source: Adapted from Sophia tutorial by Marlene Johnson.



## TERMS TO KNOW

**Advantage**

A perception that continuing a conflict in and of itself fulfills a party's goals or needs.

**Disadvantage**

A perception that continuing a conflict impedes a party's goals or needs.