



# Overview of the 5 Conflict Styles

by Sophia



WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, we'll discuss the five ways of responding to a conflict, as defined in the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Styles Assessment. The areas of focus include:

## 1. Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Styles Assessment

How do you typically respond in a conflict situation?

A great way to explore this question is through the **Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Styles Assessment**, which is one of the most commonly used assessment tools to determine a person's preferred conflict style. This tool was developed back in 1974, by Kenneth Thomas and Ralph Kilmann.

### Additional Resource

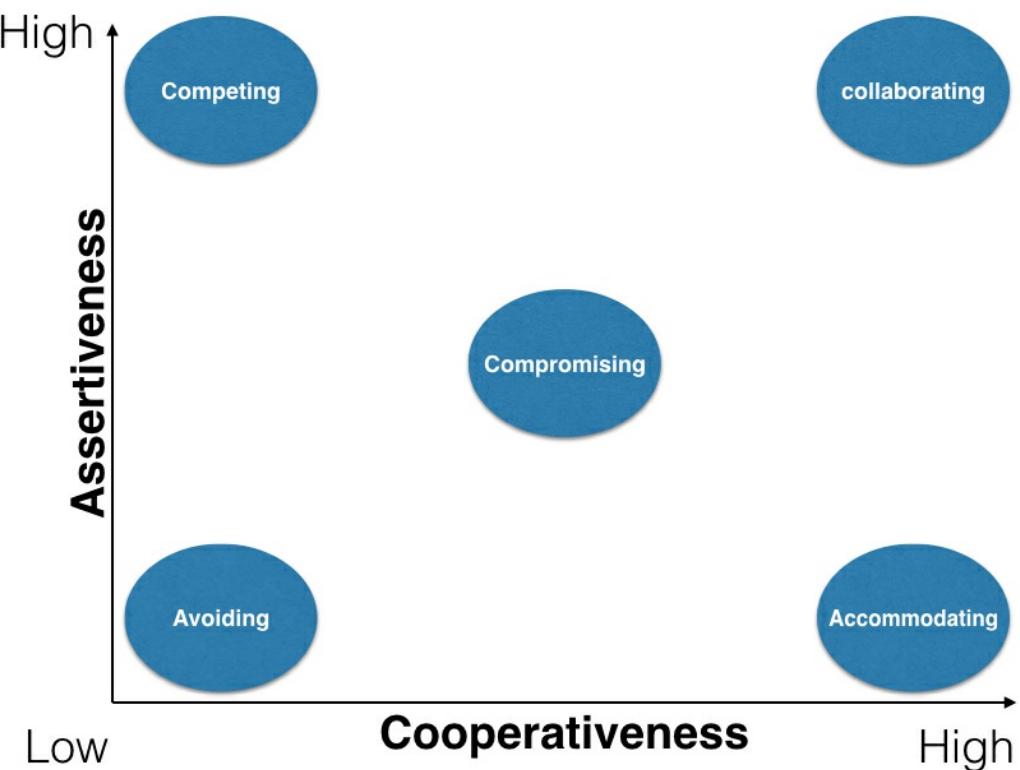
The Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Styles Assessment is a short assessment of 30 questions. Taking this questionnaire is a great way to provide personal context to this lesson, but it is not required that you take the assessment for this course. See the website below, where you can pay to take this assessment and receive a personal report through [Kilmann Diagnostics](#).

Additionally, you can take a free conflict style assessment on the [United States Institute of Peace Website](#).

Which conflict style are you? Is this what you expected?

(You won't be tested on this.)

You will also want to take a look at the chart below, which we will refer to throughout the lesson.



As you can see, one axis has **assertiveness**, or behavior in which a person confidently makes a statement without need of proof, affirming his or her rights without attacking another person.

The other axis has **cooperativeness**, or behavior in which parties work together to achieve their mutual and respective individual goals.

Each of the five conflict styles will fall somewhere on this graph, depending on whether they involve high assertiveness, low assertiveness, high cooperativeness, or low cooperativeness.



#### TERMS TO KNOW

##### **Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Styles Assessment**

One of the most commonly used assessment tools to determine a person's preferred conflict style.

##### **Assertiveness**

Behavior in which a person confidently makes a statement without need of proof, affirming his/her rights without attacking.

##### **Cooperativeness**

Behavior in which two parties work in concert to achieve their mutual and respective individual goals.

## 2. The Five Conflict Styles

According to the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Styles Assessment, there are five different conflict styles:

- Accommodating
- Avoiding
- Competing
- Compromising
- Collaborating

Let's take a closer look at each conflict style while referring to the graph above to determine where each falls in terms of cooperativeness and assertiveness.

| Conflict Style | Description   | Position on the Graph   |
|----------------|---|---|
| Accommodating  | One party helps to meet another's needs by sacrificing his/her own.                   | People who use this style are highly cooperative and willing to work with others. However, this style is low on assertiveness, meaning people who use this style are less likely to speak up when something is bothering them.      |
| Avoiding       | One party does not acknowledge or try to resolve the conflict.                        | Avoiding is low in both cooperativeness and assertiveness. People who are using this style are not going to say how they feel, and they're also not really working with others.   |
| Competing      | One party seeks to meet his or her own needs at the expense of another party's needs. | As we would expect, competing is high in assertiveness; people who use this style are speaking up about their wants or needs. However, This style is very low in cooperativeness.   |
| Collaborating  | Parties work together to try to meet everyone's needs.                                | Collaborating is high in assertiveness because the party who is collaborating is speaking up about its own needs. It is also high in cooperativeness, as this style is willing to work with others in terms of their needs as well. |
| Compromising   | Parties agree to sacrifice some of their needs in exchange for having others met.     | A compromising style is right in the middle in terms of both assertiveness and cooperation.   |



## TERMS TO KNOW

### Accommodating

A conflict resolution style in which one party helps to meet another's needs at the expense of his/her own.

### Avoiding

A conflict resolution style in which a party does not make any attempt to address or resolve the conflict.

### Competing

A conflict resolution style in which one party seeks to meet his/her own needs at the expense of another party's needs (sometimes also referred to as forcing).

### Collaborating

A conflict resolution style in which parties work jointly to try to meet all of each other's needs

(sometimes also referred to as problem solving).

### Compromising

A conflict resolution style in which parties agree to sacrifice some of their needs in exchange for having others met.

## 3. Preferred Conflict Style

You may now wonder which out of these five is the preferred or best conflict style. However, the **preferred conflict style** is simply the conflict style an individual most often or habitually uses.

When you take this questionnaire, you may find that there's one of these styles that you tend towards; it's the one you're most comfortable with in most situations.

That preferred style isn't right or wrong, and it doesn't prevent you from using any of the other styles. In fact, an individual can use any and all of these styles in a given situation.



### TERM TO KNOW

#### Preferred Conflict Style

The conflict style an individual most often or habitually uses.



### BIG IDEA

Because different situations may call for different styles, it's important to remember that you are capable of using any style. The preferred style is only meant to signify that we as individuals typically have one that we tend towards.



### SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned about the **Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Styles Assessment** and how it can be used to determine which of the **five conflict styles** you most often use: accommodating, avoiding, competing, compromising, or collaborating. You now understand that while the quiz may help you find your **preferred conflict style**, the result doesn't mean that it is the only style of conflict you can or should use.

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### TERMS TO KNOW

#### Accommodating

A conflict resolution style in which one party helps to meet another's needs at the expense of his/her own.

#### Assertiveness

Behavior in which a person confidently makes a statement without need of proof, affirming his/her rights without attacking another's.

**Avoiding**

A conflict resolution style in which a party does not make any attempt to address or resolve the conflict.

**Collaborating**

A conflict resolution style in which parties work jointly to try to meet all of each others needs (sometimes also referred to as problem solving).

**Competing**

A conflict resolution style in which one party seeks to meet his/her own needs at the expense of another party's needs (sometimes also referred to as forcing).

**Compromising**

A conflict resolution style in which parties agree to sacrifice some of their needs in exchange for having others met.

**Cooperativeness**

Behavior in which two parties work in concert to achieve their mutual and respective individual goals.

**Preferred Conflict Style**

The conflict style an individual most often or habitually uses.

**Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Styles Assessment**

One of the most commonly used assessment tools to determine a person's preferred conflict style.