



## Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Modes

The **Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI)** is designed to assess an individual's behavior in conflict situations in which the concerns of different people appear to be incompatible. It explores two dimensions: 1) **assertiveness**, the extent to which the individual attempts to satisfy his or her own concerns, and (2) **cooperativeness**, the extent to which the individual attempts to satisfy the other person's concerns. These two basic dimensions of behavior can be used to define five specific methods of dealing with conflicts.

The five TKI modes are listed below, and are explained in more detail on the following pages.



**Competing**

**Accommodating**

**Compromising**

**Collaborating**

**Avoiding**



## Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Modes

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Competing</b></p> <p><b>My Score: _____ High, Moderate, Low</b> <b>Competing</b> is assertive and uncooperative – a power-oriented mode. When <b>competing</b>, an individual pursues his or her own concerns at the other person’s expense, using whatever power seems appropriate to win his or her position (weaknesses) – the ability to argue, rank, economic sanctions, and so on. Strengths of <b>competing</b> might mean standing up for your rights, defending a position you believe is correct, or simply trying to win.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Accommodating</b></p> <p><b>My Score: _____ High, Moderate, Low</b> <b>Accommodating</b> is unassertive and cooperative – the opposite of competing. When <b>accommodating</b>, an individual neglects his or her own concerns to satisfy the concerns of the other person (weaknesses); there is an element of self-sacrifice in this mode. Strengths of <b>accommodating</b> might take the form of selfless generosity or charity, obeying another person’s order when you would prefer not to, or yielding to another’s point of view.</p>
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**Compromising**

**My Score: \_\_\_\_\_ High, Moderate, Low**  
**Compromising** is intermediate in assertiveness and cooperativeness. In compromise, the objective is to find an expedient, mutually acceptable solution that partially satisfies both parties. **Compromising** falls on a middle ground between competing and accommodating, giving up more than competing but less than accommodating. It addresses an issue more directly than avoiding but doesn’t explore it in as much depth as collaborating. Strengths of **compromising** might be splitting the difference, exchanging concessions, or seeking a middle ground.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Avoiding</b></p> <p><b>My Score: _____ High, Moderate, Low</b> <b>Avoiding</b> is unassertive and uncooperative. When <b>avoiding</b>, an individual does not immediately pursue his or her own concerns or those of the other person (weakness). He or she does not address the conflict. Strengths of <b>avoiding</b> might take the form of diplomatically sidestepping an issue, postponing an issue until a better time, or simply withdrawing from a threatening position.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Collaborating</b></p> <p><b>My Score: _____ High, Moderate, Low</b> <b>Collaborating</b> is assertive and cooperative – the opposite of avoiding. When <b>collaborating</b>, an individual attempts to work with the other person to find a solution that fully satisfies all concerns. It involves digging into an issue to identify the underlying concerns of all and find an alternative that meets all concerns. Strengths of <b>collaborating</b> might take the form of exploring a disagreement to learn from each other’s insights, resolving a condition that would otherwise have them competing for resources, or confronting and trying to find a creative solution to an interpersonal problem.</p>
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## Effective Uses of TKI Conflict Modes

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Competing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Assertive and Uncooperative.</b></li> <li>• When quick, decisive action is vital – for example in an emergency.</li> <li>• On important issues where unpopular courses of action need implementing – for example, cost cutting, enforcing unpopular rules, discipline.</li> <li>• On issues vital to the group's welfare when you know you are right.</li> <li>• To protect yourself against people who might take advantage.</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Accommodating</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Unassertive and Cooperative.</b></li> <li>• When you realize that you are wrong – to allow a better position to be considered, to learn from others, and to show you are reasonable.</li> <li>• When the issue is much more important to the other people than it is to you – to satisfy the needs of others, and as a goodwill gesture to help maintain a cooperative relationship.</li> <li>• To build up social credits for later issues that are important to you.</li> <li>• When continued competition would only damage your cause – when you are outmatched and losing.</li> <li>• When preserving harmony and avoiding disruption are especially important.</li> <li>• To aid in the managerial development of your employees by allowing them to experiment and learn from their own mistakes.</li> </ul>
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<p><b>Compromising</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Intermediate in Assertiveness and Cooperativeness.</b></li> <li>• When goals are moderately important but not worth the effort or the potential disruption involved in using more assertive modes.</li> <li>• When two opponents with equal power are strongly committed to mutually exclusive goals – as in labor-management bargaining.</li> <li>• To achieve temporary settlements to complex issues.</li> <li>• To arrive at an expedient solution under time pressure.</li> <li>• As a backup mode when collaboration or competition fails.</li> </ul>
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<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Avoiding</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Unassertive and Uncooperative.</b></li> <li>• When an issue is trivial or of only passing importance, or when other, more important issues are pressing.</li> <li>• When you perceive no chance of satisfying your concerns – for example, when you have low power or you are frustrated by something that would be very difficult to change (national policies, someone's personality structure).</li> <li>• When the potential costs of confronting a conflict outweigh the benefits of its resolution.</li> <li>• To cool down, reduce tensions to a productive level, and regain perspective and composure.</li> <li>• When gathering more information outweighs the advantages of an immediate decision.</li> <li>• If others can resolve conflict more effectively.</li> <li>• When the issue seems tangential or symptomatic of another, more basic issue.</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Collaborating</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Assertive and Cooperative.</b></li> <li>• To find an integrative solution when the concerns of both parties are too important.</li> <li>• When your objective is to learn – for example, testing your own assumptions, understanding the views of others.</li> <li>• To merge insights from people with different perspectives on a problem.</li> <li>• To gain commitment by incorporating others' concerns into a consensual decision.</li> <li>• To work through hard feelings that have been interfering with an interpersonal relationship.</li> </ul>
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## **Responding To Conflict**

### **My Strengths and Growing Edges**

Review your TKI scores and the comments about each of the Five Conflict Resolution Styles on pages 13-14. Reflect on your own experience in dealing with conflict situations and make notes below about your own strengths. Also make notes about your “growing edge,” or the things you need to work on in order to effectively facilitate constructive conflict in your team as a leader.

**My Strengths**

**My Growing Edge**