

# GRADUATE STUDENT CONFLICT RESPONSE MATRIX

People often engage in conflict reactively and employ strategies that can make the situation worse. Intentionally choosing your conflict response can deescalate conflict and help you get what you want.

Adapted from Mediation Training Institute, Conflict Dynamics Profile, Eckerd College Leadership Development Institute, <https://www.conflictdynamics.org>

		Constructive	Destructive
Active	Perspective Taking	Putting yourself in the other person's shoes and trying to understand their perspective <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Example:</i> A project partner who has been less productive recently shares that they lost a relative, and you understand their delay in progress.</li> </ul>	<b>Winning at all Costs</b> <p>Focusing on getting your way despite potentially hurting relationships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Example:</i> Everyone in your project group supports moving in one direction, but you disagree and decide to do it your way despite their protests.</li> </ul>
	Creating Solutions	Brainstorming collaboratively with the other person to generate new solutions to a problem <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Example:</i> As housemates, you discuss cleanliness solutions and decide to pay for a cleaning service.</li> </ul>	<b>Displaying Anger</b> <p>Demonstrating visible signs of anger, e.g., yelling, cursing, pounding fist on table</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Example:</i> You raise your voice at a fellow graduate student for arriving late to your talk.</li> </ul>
	Expressing Emotions	Directly and honestly communicating your feelings about the situation to the other person <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Example:</i> You express to a labmate that you feel frustrated when they don't reply to your emails.</li> </ul>	<b>Demeaning Others</b> <p>Putting down the other person in a conflict, e.g., using eye rolls or sarcasm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Example:</i> Someone proposes an idea, and you scoff, "That's a terrible idea."</li> </ul>
	Reaching Out	Making the first move to restart communication after it has broken down or stalled <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Example:</i> You invite someone with whom you have had an icy relationship to coffee.</li> </ul>	<b>Retaliating</b> <p>Getting even or getting back at the other person</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Example:</i> You dislike the way someone spoke to you, so you exclude them from informal group conversations.</li> </ul>
Passive	Reflective Thinking	Analyzing the situation, weighing pros and cons <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Example:</i> You think through the value of raising concerns to your faculty advisor vs. finding a new advisor and starting over on a new project.</li> </ul>	<b>Avoiding</b> <p>Keeping your distance and acting aloof in conflict</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Example:</i> After a bad interaction with a labmate, you minimize interactions rather than speak directly with them.</li> </ul>
	Delay Responding	First cooling down from a highly emotional state before re-engaging with the conflict <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Example:</i> You wait for your anger to subside before talking to a labmate who moved your equipment and samples without notice.</li> </ul>	<b>Yielding</b> <p>Giving in to the other person and letting them have their way, rather than facing the conflict</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Example:</i> You do not share your opinion and simply go along with your faculty advisor's idea even though you know it is problematic.</li> </ul>
	Adapting	Being flexible and considering a range of potential solutions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Example:</i> After one person leaves the project, you and remaining collaborators discuss ways forward.</li> </ul>	<b>Hiding Emotions</b> <p>Repressing your feelings, may lead to outburst</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Example:</i> You do not communicate your frustration to a collaborator who does not complete their tasks.</li> </ul>
	Using the Ombuds Office	Getting consult from an impartial, confidential resource to best understand your options for both passive and active conflict engagement strategies.	<b>Self-Criticizing</b> <p>Replaying what you did wrong over and over</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Example:</i> After a blow-up with another student, you keep kicking yourself for what you did.</li> </ul>