

ProTalk

Discussion Files

afaq

Language Center

C1. Conflict management

Afaq Language Center

Goals

- Can identify and recall some more advanced expressions for managing conflicts.
- Can solve misunderstandings in a variety of difficult and complex situations using these phrases.





Conflict is an inevitable part of our lives but it doesn‘t have to be **stressful**.

This lesson will show you how to **manage conflict** easily.

Conflicts

What kinds of situations are conflicts most likely to arise in?





Conflicts

Have you ever had a **conflict** with a colleague at work?

How did you **solve** it?



Conflicts

Do you think you are good at conflict management or do you get angry quickly?





Conflict management vs conflict avoidance

- **Conflict management** means ensuring that conflicts **do not get out of hand** and **can be solved**.
- **Conflict avoidance** means **not solving a conflict** and potentially **making things worse**.



Stop avoiding the conflict – you're making it worse!

What not to do

It is important to try to **manage conflict**, particularly in **work** environments. Below are some things you should **not** do or say when a conflict arises.

- **Overly negative reactions** provoke the same in return and can cause someone to lose face.
- **Placing blame** is unhelpful and makes people go on the defensive.

Overly negative reactions	Placing blame
That's a ridiculous idea!	It's John's fault.
Don't be absurd!	That was Mark's responsibility so we should blame him.
What a load of nonsense!	If something goes wrong, it all comes back to you.

Conflict avoidance

Do you prefer to avoid conflicts or do you take the bull by the horns and face up to problems?





Conflict avoidance

What kind of problems could conflict avoidance provoke?



malicious gossip

simmering resentment

Conflict

Have you ever been part of a **conflict** that involved the kind of **harsh language** and **blame placing** that was exemplified on p. 8?



How to manage conflict

Below are some things you should keep in mind when you want to **manage** and **solve** a **conflict**.

Focus on the problem and the outcome, not who is to be blamed.

Soften everything you say but still be direct.

Ask for more reasons and focus on giving facts yourself.

Try to find common ground and an outcome which is satisfactory for both parties.



Softening what you say

- It is important to not use **harsh** or overly **direct language** in a **conflict situation**.
- Below are some phrases you can use to **soften your tone** but still remain **direct**.

- I think…
- Maybe…
- I‘m afraid…
- Shall we…?
- Let‘s try…



Focusing on the problem and common ground

Here are some phrases you can use to ensure that you remain **focused** on the **problem** and on finding **common ground**.

Focus on the problem	Find common ground
I think this would be a better way to go.	Perhaps we can find a compromise.
Let's try to solve this together.	How about we incorporate both of our ideas?
Unfortunately, that fails to solve the problem.	I appreciate your support and input.
Let's focus on the main issue at hand.	There might be a third position that we are ignoring.

Asking for reasons or clarification

Here are some phrases that you can use to ask for **clarification** on something or **reasons** for something during a conflict.



Could you expand on your reasons for that?

Please could you rephrase that; I may have misunderstood you.



Calming the situation down

At times, a **conflict** might **get out of hand**. Here are some phrases you might want to use in such a situation.

Please do not raise your voice.

Would you mind sitting down?

Let's not let this escalate.

There is no reason for us to argue over this.



Saying no

Here are some phrases you can use to **reject** a colleague's **proposal** or to express your **disapproval** of something.

- We do not condone those methods here.
- We do not want to escalate the situation further.
- Please do not endorse using such methods.
- I'm afraid that is unacceptable.



Dialogue

Read through this dialogue with your teacher. Decide how you would change the dialogue to manage the conflict better.



That's absolutely absurd! There's no way we can agree to repacking the order before Monday.

Stop being pig-headed and take the blame for this – you're the one who packed the order for shipment.





This isn't my fault. If it's anyone's fault, it's yours. You didn't double check the order before it went out.

You're being ridiculous. I shouldn't have to double check orders because you are incompetent.



Solve the conflict

Look at the situation below and think about the possible ways you could solve this conflict.

- Your colleague often leaves work unfinished and you have to finish it. Now he/she is asking for a day off next Monday, which is right before the deadline of your current project.





- Your colleague often takes days off and you never do. You want to take a day off next Monday because your cousin is getting married.

Role play

Now role play the conflict on the previous page with your teacher or classmates. Try to make sure that things do not get out of hand.

I think...





Let's try to find a compromise

Student A or teacher:
You do not want your colleague to have the day off.

Student B or teacher:
You need the day off to go to your cousin's wedding.

Read the text and summarize it.

Conflict

Here is another example of a conflict in an office.
Read through it with your teacher.

Student 1: You promised to make a project successful because you were under the impression that you had a bigger budget for it. You didn't say anything when you received the project because you thought you could make it happen anyway. Now you realise, four days before the deadline, that you cannot complete the project or fulfil the expected quality standards with the allocated budget. You complain to your boss.

Student 2: One of the people in your team agreed to finish a project under a certain budget. Meanwhile, you have already told the client that the project will be completed by a certain date. Now your team member is telling you that he/she cannot finish the project or fulfil the expected quality standards with the allocated budget. However, your client is very picky when it comes to quality. You talk to your team member.



Role play

You are going to role play another situation.

This time, student B (or the teacher) is going to try to escalate the conflict and student A (or the teacher) must try to calm him/her down.

Let's not escalate the situation.





This is ridiculous!

Student A or teacher:

You agreed to do the project but now cannot meet the conditions.

Student B or teacher:

You are very angry and cannot control your anger.

Dialogue

Now you are the senior partner of a company and your teacher is an employee. You are going to have a discussion about the dress code. Try to come to a solution which is satisfactory to everyone.

I'm afraid...





Unfortunately...

It's intolerable...





Surely we can...

Presentation

Look at the samples below of things you should and shouldn't do when trying to solve a conflict.

Prepare a two-minute presentation about conflict management. Include several reasons to support your point of view.

Give your presentation to the class. Answer questions and get feedback.



be overly negative

soften your tone

place blame

focus on the problem

focus on the outcome

find a compromise

ask for reasons