

## Conflict Resolution Skills

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### 8 Steps for Conflict Resolution

It's important to resolve all workplace conflicts quickly and professionally to keep you and your colleagues motivated and comfortable. If you find yourself in a conflict or want to help your colleagues solve theirs, developing strong conflict resolution strategies is important. It allows you to improve morale, teamwork, and motivation in the workplace. In this article, we look at what conflict resolution at work means, why it's important, and the skills and strategies you can use to resolve conflicts that arise.

#### What is conflict resolution?

Conflict resolution is the process of finding a solution to a disagreement between two or more people. Conflict can occur between anyone at work, such as two managers, a manager and their team, or you and another coworker.

Conflict resolution usually includes negotiation. Everyone involved should work together to come to a fair solution or ask someone not involved in the conflict to do so. Ultimately, it requires strong communication, negotiation, and interpersonal skills. Discussing the problem and finding a solution resolves issues quickly and develops a stronger working relationship between everyone involved.

**Related:** [Communication Skills: Definitions and Examples](#)

#### Why is conflict resolution important?

Disagreements are natural and may happen occasionally regardless of how well your team works together. The important thing is being able to resolve conflict in a way that benefits everyone involved. This ensures you can:

- Learn more about your colleagues' ideas, backgrounds, and beliefs, giving you the opportunity to gain a new perspective.
- Develop stronger working relationships to avoid future conflicts.
- Find fair solutions quickly, saving you time and energy. This motivates you and your colleagues to work better together and focus on your tasks.

#### How to resolve conflict in the workplace

When dealing with conflict in the workplace, here are some steps you can take to resolve it:

##### 1. Understand the conflict

You can't resolve the conflict until you fully understand what it is, especially if it's not your conflict. Consider how you feel about the conflict and what you want to happen. Then, think

about how the other person feels. Stopping to think about your feelings makes you realize that the conflict isn't as big of a deal as you originally thought. You both might've just gotten overwhelmed in the moment, or there may have been a miscommunication. Similarly, if you think about a potential solution before discussing it, you'll be able to bring ideas to the table to facilitate the conversation.

## 2. Find a safe, private place

It's easier to discuss a problem in private. Arguing in a shared space can lead to outside opinions from people that don't fully understand the issue. So, it's best to find an empty office or another place you all feel safe to discuss the problem and try to resolve it. Be sure to close the door so there's no risk of an interruption.

## 3. Create an open line of communication

Communication is key when trying to resolve any conflict at work. However, open communication can be tough, as everyone wants to say how they feel and what solution they think is best. To avoid people talking over each other and create an open line of communication, here are some tips to consider:

- **Let everyone participate.** It's important to give everyone involved a chance to talk to understand the problem better and come up with a solution that serves everyone.
- **Be honest.** Use this opportunity to talk about how you feel, why you reacted the way you did, and how you think you can all resolve the problem.
- **Be an active listener.** Then, when it's someone else's turn to talk, be an active listener. This means giving the speaker your complete attention so you can fully understand what they're saying and how they're feeling. This will also limit misunderstandings.
- **Remain calm.** Even if you disagree with something someone else is saying, it's important to remain calm. Getting angry or upset only escalates the situation and delays conflict resolution. So take a deep breath and remain as calm as you can. Try to encourage others to do the same by apologizing if it's warranted or simply listening without judgement.

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## 4. Be mindful of body language

Even if you create an open line of verbal communication, your non-verbal communication, such as your body language, can say something else. Project calmness in your speech and body language to put others at ease. Here are some ways to do this:

- Maintain eye contact
- Project a neutral expression or react appropriately
- Relax your body so you don't look tense or angry

- Speak in a neutral tone at a moderate speed and volume
- Avoid overly negative language or pointing out blame, such as saying "*this is all your fault*"

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## **5. Brainstorm possible resolutions**

Once you've created an open line of communication and everyone has had a chance to talk about how they feel, be ready to discuss possible resolutions. This could be the longest part of the process, especially if you all have different ideas about the best potential resolution. But, it's important to come up with a solution that benefits everyone or one party may end up feeling cheated or treated unfairly.

Consider feasible solutions and try to find a middle ground between them. Write as many ideas as you can all think of and work your way through the list to narrow it down. It's always better to have more options so both parties can discuss them and find something that works.

**Related:** [Answering "Tell Me About a Time You Had a Conflict at Work"](#)

## **6. Choose the best resolution**

After discussing all the potential solutions, it's time to pick one that works for everyone. Tweak them if you have to. For example, one idea may work for you while the other works for your partner. So, combine these ideas to find a middle ground. If you aren't able to come up with a solution on your own, move to the next step.

## **7. Use a third-party mediator**

Mediators exist to help people that are involved in a conflict to come to an agreement. You can find a professional mediator whose job it is to listen to both sides and choose a resolution that's fair to everyone. Or, it can be a colleague that is neutral to both parties. In most workplaces, this could be a manager or a member of the human resources team.

The mediator can even be present from the beginning of the conversation to keep both parties respectful and focused on the problem at hand. Once the mediator has heard both sides and encouraged brainstorming of potential solutions, they can find a common interest between the parties and offer a resolution. Everyone involved is less likely to be upset at a resolution that a mediator picks as it should be mutually beneficial.

## **8. Learn from the conflict**

Once you all reach a resolution, take some time on your own and consider what you learned from the situation. Think about how you can prevent it from happening again to create a more productive workplace.

Once everyone has had time to cool down and get over the conflict, work on rebuilding and strengthening your relationship. Compliment the other person's progress and find ways to

support and work well together. This will make you a much stronger team and encourage your colleagues to resolve their conflicts successfully as well. While small conflicts and disagreements may continue to arise from time to time, following these steps should help you de-escalate the issue quickly.

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### **Conflict resolution skills**

Following the above steps is a great way to resolve workplace conflicts. You can also improve your conflict resolution abilities by honing these skills:

- **Problem-solving skills:** to come up with a solution that benefits everyone, strong problem-solving skills come in handy. They allow you to think critically and come up with multiple resolutions.
- **Empathy:** empathy, the ability to understand how another person is feeling and share those feelings, makes you a better mediator and problem solver. Empathy gives you the tools to consider how the other person is feeling, so you can actively listen and brainstorm solutions.
- **Communication skills:** open communication is a crucial part of successful conflict resolution. Actively listen to the other party and they will give you the same respect. Express how you're feeling calmly and honestly so everyone understands.
- **Assertiveness:** this is an important skill to have for conflict resolution. It ensures you can take initiative and acknowledge your mistakes or approach a colleague directly when you need to address an issue. If you let disagreements go unchecked, they continue to build until the conflict escalates. So, it's important to be assertive and openly discuss any conflict you have at work.