



FREE TASTER

Free taster

# Manager Skills: Handling Conflict

---

A practical first step from the course: seeing the conflict in your team clearly, and knowing when to step in

---

About 20 minutes to read, then 15 minutes with the Team Conflict Map. Have your own team in mind.

---

Name

---

Date

---

**STARBUCK & ASSOCIATES**

COACHING & LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

## For managers caught in the middle

Manager Skills: Handling Conflict is a short online course for managers and team leaders. It helps you handle disagreement in your team early and fairly, step in between two people with confidence, and prevent the conflict that did not need to happen.

It helps when two people in your team have stopped talking, the same argument keeps coming back, you are unsure whether to step in or leave it, or you find yourself avoiding conflict or settling it too hard.

### How it works

Five short video lessons, each with a practical tool and a workplace task to try with your team. Knowledge checks help the ideas stick, and you receive a certificate of completion. It takes about 2.5 learning hours, and you have 12 months' access.

### What is inside

| LESSON OR AREA                                 | WHAT YOU GET                                                        |
|------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>01 Healthy and unhealthy conflict</b>       | Task, relationship and process conflict, and the Team Conflict Map. |
| <b>02 Your own conflict style</b>              | The five Thomas-Kilmann modes and the Mode Chooser.                 |
| <b>03 Interests not positions</b>              | A question bank, common needs and reframing: the Interests Finder.  |
| <b>04 Mediating between two team members</b>   | A step by step Facilitated Conversation Guide.                      |
| <b>05 Preventing conflict before it starts</b> | Clear roles and a Team Agreement Builder.                           |
| <b>Course workbook</b>                         | Key ideas, reflection questions and all five tools in one place.    |
| <b>Knowledge checks and certificate</b>        | Short checks after each lesson and a certificate of completion.     |

#### HOW TO USE THIS TASTER

Read page 2, then use the Team Conflict Map on page 3 with your own team. Page 4 shows where the full course goes next.

## Healthy and unhealthy conflict

Put capable people together on work that matters and they will disagree. That is normal, and often useful. Your job as a manager is not to remove conflict, but to keep it healthy and to notice early when it starts to turn.

### Three kinds of conflict

| KIND                | WHAT IT IS ABOUT                                        | WHAT IT TENDS TO DO                                               |
|---------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Task</b>         | The work: priorities, methods, deadlines, ideas.        | Handled well, it improves the work.                               |
| <b>Relationship</b> | The people: irritation, mistrust, feeling disrespected. | Usually makes the work worse, as energy goes into the tension.    |
| <b>Process</b>      | Who does what, and how decisions get made.              | Creates friction between reasonable people until it is clarified. |

### How it turns sour

Much relationship conflict starts as task conflict. One person feels dismissed, the next comment carries an edge, and soon each reads the other in the worst light. The turning point is when people stop talking about the issue and start talking about each other.

### Early warning signs

- Side conversations after meetings
- Emails copied to more people than they need to be
- Two people avoiding each other, or work routed around someone
- Sarcasm passed off as a joke

#### EXAMPLE

Tom and Aisha disagree about how to structure a client report. It starts as a useful debate. Then Aisha's idea is dropped without discussion, and she begins copying their manager into every email to Tom.

The report is no longer the issue. This is the moment for a quiet, early conversation with each of them.

#### WORTH KNOWING

If anyone describes bullying, harassment or discrimination, do not try to resolve it informally. Follow your organisation's policies and involve HR.

## YOUR TURN

# The Team Conflict Map

Take about 15 minutes. Map what you actually see in your team, not what you assume.

## How far has it gone?

| STAGE      | WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE                                               | WHAT USUALLY HELPS                                                           |
|------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Early      | An open disagreement about the work. People still talk directly. | Let it run. Keep the focus on the issue and make sure a decision is reached. |
| Growing    | Comments carry an edge. Side conversations start.                | A quiet, private check in with each person. Name what you have noticed.      |
| Entrenched | People avoid each other. Others in the team are affected.        | A planned, facilitated conversation, or HR if policy concerns arise.         |

## Exercise 1: Your map

| THE DISAGREEMENT | TASK, RELATIONSHIP OR PROCESS? | SIGNS I AM SEEING | STAGE | MY NEXT STEP |
|------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------|-------|--------------|
|                  |                                |                   |       |              |
|                  |                                |                   |       |              |
|                  |                                |                   |       |              |

## Exercise 2: Reflect

Which of these would cost the team most if I left it for another month?

---

---

What do I usually do first when tension builds, and is it working?

---

---

## Where the full course takes you

The first lesson helps you see conflict in your team clearly. The rest of the course helps you respond well: choosing your own approach, getting to what people really need, stepping in between two people and preventing avoidable conflict.

1

### **Know your own style.**

Lesson 2 looks at your default response to conflict, what it costs your team, and how to choose on purpose.

2

### **Get beneath positions.**

Lesson 3 gives you a question bank and a way of reframing complaints as needs.

3

### **Mediate between two people.**

Lesson 4 takes you through preparing for and running an informal facilitated conversation.

4

### **Prevent it upstream.**

Lesson 5 covers clear roles, a team agreement and early conversations.

## Who gets most from it

- Managers who tend to avoid conflict, or step in too hard
- Team leaders caught between two team members
- New managers who want a clear structure before the first difficult moment arrives

### HOW PEOPLE USE IT

A practical rhythm is one lesson a week, trying each tool with a real situation in your team before moving on.

The Facilitated Conversation Guide and the Team Agreement Builder are designed to be reused each time a new situation comes up.

## What I am going to do

Two or three small changes that you actually make will do more than a long list you never start.

### My three actions

| WHAT I WILL DO | WHEN | WHO I WILL TELL |
|----------------|------|-----------------|
|                |      |                 |
|                |      |                 |
|                |      |                 |

### Coming back to this

Put a date in your diary about a month from now and answer these three questions.

What has changed since I did this taster?

---

What did I not get to, and what got in the way?

---

What am I carrying forward?

---

#### READY FOR THE FULL COURSE?

### Manager Skills: Handling Conflict

Five short video lessons, each with a practical tool and workplace task, to help you handle team conflict, mediate between two people and prevent avoidable friction.

**£49 per person, one-off, inc. VAT**

Enrol at [academy.starbuckassociates.com/courses/manager-skills-handling-conflict](https://academy.starbuckassociates.com/courses/manager-skills-handling-conflict)

Part of the Starbuck Academy free resources from Starbuck & Associates. If you would like support using this across a team or a leadership programme, we would be glad to help. This taster is general learning and development material, not professional advice. © 2026 Starbuck & Associates Limited.