

Conflict Role-Play Cards

10 practice scenarios for trainers, educators and team leads | print and cut

How to run it (15-30 min): pairs draw a card and act the scenario for 3-4 minutes - one person plays the named role, the other plays the counterpart. The actor must handle the conflict **using the practice mode on the card**, even if it feels unnatural. Then debrief with the card's question and swap. The point is range: most of us default to one or two modes.

1. The Credit Taker

In the sprint review, a peer presents your analysis as their own work. Your manager is impressed.

Practice mode: **Competing**

Debrief: How do you assert the facts without torching the relationship?

2. The Deadline Clash

Two teams need the same designer in the same week. You lead one of the teams.

Practice mode: **Collaborating**

Debrief: What information did you need from the other lead before a joint plan appeared?

3. The Thermostat

A colleague keeps changing the office temperature. You are always freezing.

Practice mode: **Avoiding**

Debrief: When is letting a small thing go wise - and when does 'small' stop being small?

4. The Budget Split

Your department and another both have strong cases for the last \$50k of budget.

Practice mode: **Compromising**

Debrief: What did you each give up - and was the 50/50 split actually fair or just easy?

5. The Flawed Plan

A senior executive is championing a rollout plan your data says will fail.

Practice mode: **Collaborating**

Debrief: How do you disagree upward while keeping the executive's goals at the centre?

6. The Scope Creeper

A friendly client keeps adding 'tiny' requests that now total a week of unpaid work.

Practice mode: **Competing**

Debrief: Where is the line between service and self-harm? How did it feel to hold it?

7. The Feuding Reports

Two of your direct reports are in open conflict and both want you on their side.

Practice mode: **Collaborating**

Debrief: How do you avoid becoming the referee who owns everyone else's conflicts?

8. The Wrong Hill

You realise mid-argument that your position on the vendor choice is actually wrong.

Practice mode: **Accommodating**

Debrief: What does a graceful climb-down sound like? What stops people from doing it?

9. The Rota Nobody Wants

You and a peer must split weekend support cover for the next quarter.

Practice mode: **Compromising**

Debrief: What trade beyond 50/50 might have left you both better off?

10. The Line-Jumper

A teammate repeatedly reopens decisions the team already made, in front of stakeholders.

Practice mode: **Competing**

Debrief: How do you defend the team's process firmly without humiliating anyone?

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Scenarios are original teaching material inspired by the Thomas-Kilmann conflict-handling framework (1974). Not the official TKI(R) instrument.