



# WORKPLACE CONFLICT

***“When dealing with people, remember you are not dealing with creatures of logic, but creatures of emotion.”***

Dale Carnegie, American self-improvement writer and speaker

## 1. Workplace Conflict Discussion

1. What are the main causes of conflict between people at work?
2. What are some causes of conflict between different businesses?
3. Are conflicts inevitable at work? Are they common where you work? Have you ever had a conflict with a colleague? If so, what happened?
4. Do people tend to take sides when there is a workplace dispute? How does this affect the team's morale?
5. What are the best ways to resolve workplace disputes? What are some bad ways?
6. How are conflicts managed where you work? Do you think your company has been successful in resolving/avoiding conflicts?
7. Do you think some cultures are more confrontational than others? If so, which ones?
8. Is conflict always negative? Can it ever be advantageous?

## 2. Workplace Conflict Vocabulary

- **animosity** (noun) – *a strong dislike or hatred between people; hostility.*
- **to get it/something off one's chest** (verb) – *to talk about something, or express something, that has been worrying you or you have wanted to say but have been unable to.*
- **to bite one's tongue** (verb) – *to not say something because it will annoy, hurt, or upset another person.*
- **to get the wrong end of the stick** (verb) – *to misunderstand something.*
- **to escalate** (verb) – *to become more intense or more serious.*
- **to undermine** (verb) – *to gradually make someone or something weaker or less effective.*

**Using the vocabulary words above, complete the following sentences (remember to use the correct form of the word, e.g. verb conjugation or plural noun)**

1. If you're not happy at work, you should speak to your supervisor and \_\_\_\_\_.
2. I completely \_\_\_\_\_. I thought you said to send the email to everyone, not just to the members of our team.
3. Tensions \_\_\_\_\_ between the United States and the EU after the EU announced an investigation into Microsoft's unfair competitive practices.
4. Johnny was talking absolute rubbish in the meeting; I had to \_\_\_\_\_ so I didn't say something I'd regret.
5. Gareth is always \_\_\_\_\_ Sandra; he keeps making negative comments about her to other members in the team.
6. There is a lot of \_\_\_\_\_ between Amy and Laura; they absolutely hate each other.

### **Workplace Conflict vocabulary comprehension questions**

1. Have you experienced animosity at work?
2. Do you have the opportunity to get things off your chest at work?
3. When have you had to bite your tongue at work?
4. Why do some people get the wrong end of the stick at work? How can this lead to conflict?
5. What kind of things can escalate a workplace conflict?
6. Have you ever felt like you were being undermined at work?

### 3. Video: Dare to Disagree

You are going to watch a TED Talk by Margaret Heffernan called "Dare to disagree."

Watch the video here: <https://yourenglishpal.com/blog/business-english-conversation-lesson-plan-workplace-conflict/>

Watch the video and after, discuss the following questions:

1. Do you have someone who challenges your views? Whose views do you challenge?
2. Have we lost the ability to defend our points of view because we are too scared of conflict? Do people in your company feel comfortable defending their point of view?
3. Do you think intentionally trying to prove somebody wrong is a good way to solve problems? Have you ever done this?
4. Have you ever disagreed with somebody at work? What was the outcome? Was this constructive conflict?
5. Have you ever thought you were the only one with a concern at work?
6. Do you feel comfortable raising your concerns at work?

### 4. Workplace Conflict Conversation Questions

1. Do you try to avoid conflict? If so, how do you do this?
2. What can companies do to avoid conflicts between workers?
3. Is it always best to try and avoid conflict? What are the disadvantages of this?
4. Should a conflict be solved straight away or when we calm down? When might it be a good idea to resolve a situation straight away? When might it be better to wait?
5. How do workplace conflicts affect productivity? Do you have any examples of this?
6. Is there always a winner and a loser in a conflict? How can a win-win solution be found?
7. If there is no compromise and a dispute continues, what is the solution?
8. Are workplace disputes becoming more or less common? How do you think this will change in the future?

### 5. Workplace Conflict Writing Task

You have noticed that a member of your team has been causing conflict within the team. This person has been undermining his team leader and upsetting other colleagues. As a result of this, the team's performance has suffered. As a member of the HR team, write an email to this person explaining the situation, asking for reasons why this situation has arisen and offer solutions on how this situation can be resolved.

## 6. Workplace Conflict Answers

### 2. Vocabulary

1. get it off your chest
2. got the wrong end of the stick
3. escalated
4. bite my tongue
5. undermining
6. animosity