

CFM CAREER MANAGEMENT: CM.5 CAREER READINESS SKILLS

Managing Workplace Conflict and Difficult Conversations

Detailed practice, calculation, decision-making, and assessment

GRADES 9-12	TIME 2 x 42 min	GROUPING I / pairs / whole	PRODUCT Plan
YOUR CHALLENGE Separate facts from interpretations, choose an appropriate response, and prepare a respectful problem-solving conversation.			

New York CFM Connections: Conflict Management, Feedback, Reliability, and Time Management

Workplace conflict is a disagreement about tasks, information, resources, expectations, or behavior. Career-ready workers slow down, identify the issue, listen, use specific evidence, focus on shared goals, propose realistic solutions, and know when a concern requires a supervisor or safety process.

Term	Student-friendly meaning
Conflict	A disagreement that affects work or relationships.
Position	What a person says they want.
Interest	The underlying need or concern behind a position.
Active listening	Listening to understand and checking meaning.
De-escalation	Reducing tension so a problem can be addressed safely.
Escalation	Taking a concern to an authorized person or process.
CLASSROOM USE All people, employers, figures, brackets, and documents in this packet are fictional. Never place a real Social Security number, employer ID, bank number, or tax document in classroom work.	

Part 1 - Analyze a Fictional Team Conflict

A student design team misses a deadline. Ari says Sam never uploaded a file; Sam says Ari changed the instructions without telling the team.

Statement	Fact, interpretation, or missing information	Evidence needed	Neutral restatement
Deadline missed			
File not uploaded			
Instructions changed			
Sam never communicates			
Ari controls everything			
Client is angry			

Avoid blame words such as always and never unless supported.

Part 2 - Identify Positions and Interests

Compare each team member’s stated position with possible underlying needs.

Person	Position	Possible interest	Question to ask
Ari			
Sam			
Quality checker			
Team lead			
Client contact			

Possible interests are hypotheses, not facts.

Part 3 - Compare Conflict Responses

Evaluate avoid, compete, accommodate, compromise, collaborate, and escalate.

Response	Possible benefit	Risk	Best-use condition
Avoid			
Compete			
Accommodate			
Compromise			
Collaborate			
Escalate			

No single style is best in every situation.

Part 4 - Plan a Difficult Conversation

Use observation, impact, question, listening, solution, and confirmation.

Conversation step	Student wording
Neutral opening	
Observed fact	
Work impact	
Open question	
Listening check	
Proposed solution	
Written confirmation	

Do not use threats, sarcasm, or unsupported motive claims.

Part 5 - Write a Conflict-Resolution Recommendation

Create a 150–200 word plan including prevention and follow-up.

Plan element	Action/evidence
Core issue	
Known facts	
Missing facts	
Shared goal	
Response choice	
Agreement	
Escalation trigger	
Follow-up date	

Immediate safety, harassment, or legal concerns may require direct escalation.