

How to prevent conflicts

Some conflicts are inevitable — and even healthy. Others are best avoided. Here's how to make sure you don't unnecessarily jeopardize professional relationships.

1. Prioritize relationships.

Every day is an opportunity to [build new bridges](#) or [maintain existing ones](#). Those who fail to treat relationship management as part of their job description are inviting conflict with colleagues and superiors.

2. Don't lose your temper.

Your emotions can determine whether or not a conflict gets off the ground. Remove yourself from situations when you become angry or spiteful. Ignore or deflect rude or hostile communications.

3. When in doubt, reach out.

Even if you don't know what's going on with a difficult colleague or superior, offer to help. Ask how you can make their lives easier. You'll be shocked at how the most intractable colleagues soften up when they know you're on their side.

4. Don't be petty or rude behind people's backs.

Have fun, goof off and build rapport in the office. But if you're about to say anything about someone that could cause a rift if it got back to the person, it's time to reassess. Gossip, bad-mouthing or taking sides against colleagues causes more trouble than it's worth.

5. Nip potential conflicts in the bud.

Deliver measured, constructive feedback to colleagues. Talk about issues when they start impacting your work. Let others know that their behavior is worrisome — before it becomes worse. Air your concerns firmly and politely. Conflict starts not because we raise an issue, but because we do so in a way that is accusatory or offensive.

Next: Go back to [Conflict Management](#) to view solutions to common problems, as well as other experts' perspectives hand-picked by our research team.