Training kit · SkolarHub · PMP — ECO July 2026

Leading Projects Toward Worthy Value

Instructor Guide

> An operating guide. It does not explain the content — the book does that — but tells you what to say, when to ask, what has to land however you get there, and what to do when things don't go to plan.

Version	Scope	Exam version	Release date
v1.1-pilot	16 of 16 units · 1,285–1,557 minutes	PMP · ECO July 2026	August 16, 2026

Scope of this edition: This edition covers the full program: 16 of 16 units.

Unit 6 · Day 2

Conflict and Team Ground Rules

People: Manage Conflicts

Each participant leaves this unit able to diagnose a live conflict from their own work in three layers — source, context, and the cost of delay in numbers — then recommend the Thomas-Kilmann mode that follows from the diagnosis, and write a specific team ground rule with an enforcement mechanism.

Duration
75–85 minutes

Reference chapter
Chapter 6 of the Teaching Volume

Number of blocks
20

Enabling objectives

- Diagnoses the conflict in three layers — source (facts · methods · goals · values), context (time pressure · relationship · power balance), and the cost of delay, quantified — before choosing any mode.
- Recommends the Thomas-Kilmann mode that fits the diagnosis, and carries it out in a crucial conversation that is worded aloud, not just thought through.
- Writes a specific, verifiable team ground rule with an enforcement mechanism, and addresses a violation of it through a three-level escalation playbook, exhausted one level at a time.

What must not be cut from this unit

- Every participant leaves with a handwritten diagnosis of a live conflict from their own work — three layers, a cost of delay with a number, and a recommended mode that follows from the diagnosis, not from habit.

Materials

- Printed conflict diagnosis form — **one per participant + 5 spares**
- Team ground rule card — **one per participant**
- “When… I will…” plan card — **one per participant**
- Blank cards and pens — **two cards and a pen per participant**
- Teaching Volume — Chapter 6 — **one per participant**

Unit path in the Teaching Volume

1. The opening paradox · The capability gained
2. Why conflict avoidance fails: the deferred costs
3. Five modes and when each one works
4. Conflict diagnosis layers **· the room returns to them**
5. The spoken Crucial Conversations method
6. Team ground rules: from setting them to enforcing them
7. Three-level escalation playbook
8. From conflict to knowledge transfer and communication

Open this page twenty minutes before the session; it has everything you need to start. One thing can’t wait: before the room opens, write three words at the edge of the board — Source · Context · Cost of delay. Keep them visible for the whole unit; every diagnosis is built on them.

Friction map — Unit 6

These are not notes about participants but interventions aimed at them. The correction format is **explicit refutation**: name the belief, say it is wrong, then give the correct model. The first two beliefs come in sequence, not in parallel: this one precedes the correction, and the one on the next page is born of enthusiasm for the correction itself and costs points on the exam.

"A mature team doesn't disagree. Avoiding conflict protects harmony and serves productivity, and getting along matters more than confrontation." M61 · Misconception

Cause	Detection	Fix
A workplace culture of tact; classic leadership training that markets harmony as a goal rather than a means; and a mistaken idea of etiquette that makes objecting a form of disrespect. It is reinforced by the fact that avoidance really does work in nine situations out of ten — so it gets generalized to the tenth, which alone costs more than the other nine combined.	How many disagreements did your team put off this year to keep the atmosphere pleasant? And what happened after that?	That is wrong. In People Task 2, ECO 2026 uses the verbs manage and rectify, not avoid — addressing conflict is a required leadership act, not a matter of mood. Avoidance does not eliminate the conflict; it moves it from a visible, addressable surface to eroded trust, a sense of unfairness, and the loss of the people who object most professionally. A team that watches a violation go uncorrected concludes — rightly — that the rules are not binding, and the whole system collapses. Amy Edmondson argues in The Fearless Organization (2018) that a team whose conflict disappears is not more stable but less transparent: less transparent teams leave their errors unexposed until they grow.

Friction map — continued

“If avoidance is a fallacy, then any option that postpones a confrontation is wrong on the exam — and Collaborating is always the safe answer.” M62 · Exam trap

Cause	Detection	Fix
A reaction to the correction of the first misconception: someone who has just been persuaded that avoidance is not a solution overshoots and discards the mode entirely. It is the same logic that created the fallacy in the first place — turning a situational mode into a universal one, only in the opposite direction.	An exam-style question: one member bypasses the review rule for the fourth time, and another member disagrees with you on the scheduling approach. Which mode fits each?	Moving from “avoidance is not a solution” to “postponing is always wrong” is a mistake that costs points. A question built on this task does not reward a universal mode; it rewards a mode chosen from the diagnosis. Avoiding remains a correct answer in the two situations the text names: a trivial issue, and a delay to gather information — it is one of the five legitimate modes, not an outcast. Conversely, the option “postpone the discussion to preserve harmony” in the face of a **repeated violation** is built to tempt, and it is wrong on the exam. Collaborating is costly in time: imposing it on an immediate crisis is as wrong as postponing a repeated violation. This is where the exam and practice part ways: your office may reward you for postponing, but the option most consistent with ECO rewards it only in those two situations.

Friction map — continued

“These are tools for a leader with their team. My real conflict is with my direct manager — I have no authority over them, and no escalation playbook to protect me from them.” M63 · Resistance

Cause	Detection	Fix
A well-founded objection, not a knowledge gap. A skewed power balance is an explicit item in the second layer of the same tool, and the person raising the objection works in a real power structure where the other party controls their annual review. They are often the most experienced person at their table, and the room will measure the rest of the unit by your answer to them.	Who here has their most important conflict this month with the person who controls their annual review?	Do not correct this objection; it is not an error. Acknowledge it first, then reframe it in the objector’s favor: the tool holds up as it is — the three-layer diagnosis stays, the five-mode grid stays, and a skewed power balance is **an item in it, not an exception to it**. What flips is the direction of the playbook: lateral consultation — a trusted fellow leader, an HR representative, or a mentor — replaces escalation to governance. The crucial conversation has the same structure, except that the shared goal calls for double the respect for the other party’s authority. And documentation matters more here, not less.

Friction map — continued

“What we agreed verbally is enough. Writing the rule into a charter is a bureaucratic procedure that signals suspicion, and a team that understands one another doesn’t need paper.” M64 · Resistance

Cause	Detection	Fix
A verbal agreement does work in a small team whose members stay the same, so it gets generalized to everything that comes after. It is reinforced by the fact that in many of our offices writing is requested only after a crisis, so it became linked in memory with being called to account rather than with prevention — and whoever proposes it looks like they are preparing a file on a colleague.	A rule you agreed on verbally six months ago: who joined the team after that, and how did they learn it?	Do not correct the intention; correct what the rule rests on. A verbal agreement holds only as long as the same people are party to it; once a new member, contractor, or supplier arrives, there is no reference to appeal to, and the dispute shifts from the behavior to what was agreed in the first place — a dispute that cannot be settled. That is why the charter is written as behavior whose violation can be proven, together with the mechanism that enforces it. The escalation playbook itself is built on documentation: its second level is a written strategy with two signatures, and its third is not accepted without a file proving that the levels beneath it have been exhausted. An undocumented rule therefore brings down both levels and leaves its owner with no backing when they need it. Here, documentation protects that person before it constrains anyone else.

1 of 20
Opening
6 min
At ~0 min
Flexible
Compress or merge

Intent **The participant is willing to share their own conflict here: a mistake is information, and cases are told by roles, not names.**

Why this activity Collecting the one-word cards looks like needless procedure. They are the only evidence of the team's habit before the tool, and the debrief comparison rests on them.

In your own style: We've matched leadership style to each layer of the team. Now the test: two people on your team disagree, and you have to act today, not next week.

Say: The rule of this room is back: a mistake is information, not a flaw. The situations I set are deliberate. Most groups get this wrong, which is why the question is there. Miss it here and you'll know where to look on the exam.

In your words: One more condition: we talk about conflict as a phenomenon, not about specific people. No names, no organizations. Tell the case by roles: "an engineer," "a supplier."

Do: Have each table write one word on a card describing what their team usually does in a disagreement. Collect the cards without comment or reading any out. You'll return to them in the debrief.

Taught this unit before? Read only this

Frame the mistake with the script + the roles-not-names condition
Collect the one-word cards without comment
Don't discuss the modes here

Must land — what has to get across

- The script frames the mistake: "Most groups get this wrong, which is why the question is there."
- The unit rule is announced: cases are told by roles, not names.

Success criterion: "A mistake is information, not a flaw" was said word for word before any content, and you hold a one-word card from every table.

Slide ch06 · divider
Setup Blank cards · on the board: Source · Context · Cost
Watch for **R01**

Read the room · Diagnose · Act

◉ Cards come back saying "we work it out" or "we move on"
Means: Avoidance named in polite language
Do: Don't comment or correct. Save them for the "What we usually do" column in the debrief.

◉ A table names a person or organization in its case
Means: The account has shifted to individuals
Do: Rephrase it in roles: "a supplier and an engineer." Correct the wording, not the speaker.

2 of 20
Review
5 min
At ~6 min
Core
Do not cut

Intent **The conflict moves out of the participant's head onto a written card, and the visible topic is separated from its root before any tool is introduced.**

Ask: **Before I say anything: take a new card and write down a live conflict on your team right now. Two lines only. What are the two sides arguing about on the surface? And what's the root that produced that argument? You have two minutes, and nobody reads theirs to anyone.**

Do: Read two cards aloud without comment or correction, and write two columns on the board in their own words: "Topic" and "What's underneath." If the two columns come out identical on both cards, that is exactly what this unit addresses.

Ask, in your words: **And a third question, answered by gesture, not words. That conflict: was it addressed or postponed? Raise your hands for "postponed," and keep them up until I've counted.**

In your own style: Keep the card. It's the working material for this whole unit, and you'll come back to it in forty minutes with a tool you don't have yet.

Taught this unit before? Read only this

Recall a live conflict — in writing, before any correction
"Topic" and "What's underneath" columns on the board

Must land — what has to get across

- The conflict comes from the participant's own work, not a case from the book.
- The separation between the visible topic and the root came from the room before you named it.
- No correction and no comment in this block — recall comes before correction.

Success criterion: Every participant holds a two-line card about a live conflict, the board has two columns in their own words, and you have the count of hands for "postponed."

Book	**The opening paradox**
Slide	ch06 · retrieval
Check tool	A two-line card, then a count of hands for "postponed"
Watch for	**M61**

Read the room · Diagnose · Act

◉ **"We have no conflicts" from a whole table**
Means: The conflict is being called a delay, not a conflict
Do: Ask about a decision that was put off twice — repeated postponement is a postponed conflict, and that is what gets written down.

◉ **The two columns are identical on both cards**
Means: The visible topic was written in place of the root
Do: Do not correct. Point out the match and say it is exactly what the unit addresses.

Cards all about people → Redirect to the facts: "What sentence was said word for word?" A complaint becomes data once the labeling is stripped away.

3 of 20
Framing
3 min
At ~11 min
Flexible
Compress or merge

Intent **The participant knows the unit ends with a diagnosis and a rule they write by hand, not with information they hear.**

Say: What you just wrote is the material for this unit. So here's the question to start with: what does a professional do with this conflict? Avoid it to preserve harmony, or address it? ECO 2026 doesn't leave the answer to you. The two verbs it names in People Task 2 are manage and rectify.

In your words: Three things you leave this unit with:

- Diagnosing conflict in three layers before choosing any mode — diagnosis is the difference between a professional and someone who has mastered a single mode.
- Moving between five modes according to the diagnosis, not one best mode generalized to every conflict.
- A specific team ground rule with an enforcement mechanism, and a three-level escalation playbook exhausted one level at a time.

Transition: Let's start with a tunnel under the sea, where two teams met with rare engineering precision. Above it, they sued each other seventeen times.

Taught this unit before? Read only this

Three outcomes + manage and rectify, not avoid
The quickest block to compress when running late
Do not name the five modes here

Must land — what has to get across

- Addressing conflict is a leadership act specified in the ECO, not a matter of mood.
- The participant knows the unit ends with a diagnosis and a rule they write themselves, not with information.

Success criterion: A participant says aloud what they will write by hand before the unit ends — not what they will hear.

Book **The capability gained from this chapter**
Slide ch06 · points

Read the room · Diagnose · Act

◉ **A room that names Thomas-Kilmann before you do**
Means: Experience is already in the room, and explaining would bore them
Do: Do not explain. Ask: "Who here uses more than two modes in a single month?" and make their answer your way in.

An early question about the five modes
→ Defer it with one sentence: "We name them after the diagnosis, on purpose — whoever starts with the grid chooses by habit." Do not show them now.

4 of 20

Presentation · The avoidance bill

6 min

At ~14 min

Flexible
Compress or merge

Intent **Avoidance moves from a safe option to a bill with a monthly figure, before any tool is named.**

In your words: The Channel Tunnel. Two teams, British and French, met under the seabed with rare precision. Above it, they sued each other seventeen times in 1988–1994, and arbitration alone cost over £800 million, many times the cost of early resolution.

Say: The number that flips the meaning: every month the tunnel stayed unopened cost £5 million in debt interest. Postponing wasn't the safe option. It was the costliest option of all, paid monthly while no meeting ever saw the bill.

Ask, in your words: **Where did the conflict postponed there go during those months? Don't say it disappeared. Where did it move to?**

Discuss, in your words: Give it two minutes at most; write three lines on the board in their words. Draw out that the conflict moved from a visible, addressable surface to eroded trust, a sense of unfairness, and the loss of the people who object most professionally — then to an arbitration hearing.

Taught this unit before? Read only this

Three numbers: 17 lawsuits · £800 million · £5 million a month
The question: where did it move, not whether it disappeared
The conclusion comes from them, not from you

Must land — what has to get across

- Avoidance doesn't remove the conflict; it moves it from a visible, addressable surface to a deeper layer where it costs more.
- The cost of delay is a number, not a feeling: £5 million a month here.
- The conclusion came from the room before you named it.

Success criterion: Three lines on the board, in the room's words, say where the postponed conflict went — none in your handwriting.

Book	**Why conflict avoidance fails: the deferred costs**
Slide	ch06 · photo-case "The Channel"
Setup	Three blank lines under the two review columns
Watch for	**M61**

Read the room · Diagnose · Act

◉ **"A European case that isn't like ours"**
Means: They object to the example, not the structure
Do: Don't defend the case. Ask: "How many meetings have you postponed? What was the delay estimated to cost?"

◉ **Answers describe the feeling, not the destination**
Means: The conflict is still a mental state, not a cost
Do: Ask again: "Where did it move to?" Write three lines in their words, not yours.

No one knows the tunnel → Settle for the three numbers and one sentence on the two teams. Numbers alone carry the case.

5 of 20
Check

3 min

At ~20 min

Flexible
Compress or merge

Intent **The participant discovers, standing up, that they have no figure for the cost of their dispute — and the missing figure is the box they will fill in.**

Why this activity Moving to a position looks like a classroom routine, but here it is a measuring tool: answering simultaneously stops people copying the boldest view and gives you a number to build the rest of the unit on.

Instructions: **Stand up.** For the disagreement you postponed this year: go right if its cost **fell**, left if it **rose**, and to the middle if you **have no figure** to judge by. Move when I say "now."

Do: Count the three positions. The middle number is the one that matters: how many people have no figure. Say it aloud — that is exactly the box they will fill in shortly.

Say: And if you stood on the right: that's not a wrong answer. Avoidance is correct in two situations, and we'll name them shortly. The mistake isn't choosing it once. It's applying it every time.

Taught this unit before? Read only this

An inserted retrieval check at the segment boundary — three minutes that protect twenty
Count the "I have no figure" group and say the number aloud
Be fair to avoidance here, before the grid

Must land — what has to get across

- The whole room answered by moving at the same time — not just the enthusiastic ones.
- The trainer counted the positions and announced the "I have no figure" number.
- Avoidance is legitimate in two situations; the mistake is generalizing it.

What you see or hear **The counts for the three positions, and the middle number announced.**

Threshold **The whole room moved, and the number was said.**

If not met Take a position yourself first and restate the situation, then count a single row and announce that number.

Book **Why conflict avoidance fails: the deferred costs**

Slide ch06 · mechanism

Check tool Three positions: it fell · it rose · I have no number

Watch for **M62**

Read the room · Diagnose · Act

◉ **Most of the room has gone to "fell"**
Means: The drop is an impression, not a measurement
Do: Don't argue. Ask: "By what number did you know it fell?" The missing number shows itself.

◉ **Feet that move only after the neighbors move**
Means: The answer is copied, not worked out
Do: Restart the move on "Now"; late movers don't count.

"How do we calculate the cost of a conflict?" → Defer it to the layers block: "What value is under threat, and by what measure?"

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Presentation · Source: Layer 1

4 min

At ~23 min

Core

Do not cut

Intent **Each participant sorts their conflict into one of four sources and knows that each source calls for a different remedy.**

In your own style: The tool is called **conflict diagnosis layers**: three layers, read in order, ending in one recommendation. Anyone who opens the five-mode grid first is like a doctor writing a prescription before the examination.

Say: Layer 1: the source. Don't ask what the topic is; ask where the root is. There are four sources, and each calls for a radically different remedy:

- **Facts** — a dispute over what actually happened. The easiest: data, documentation, or a third-party arbiter settles it.
- **Methods** — agreement on the goal, disagreement on the path. Mutual concession or quick collaboration.
- **Goals** — disagreement over what must be achieved. It calls for amending the team charter or escalating for alignment — and a role dispute is, at its core, a goals dispute.
- **Values** — disagreement over what ought to be. The hardest: sustained collaboration with a mediator, or it is managed rather than resolved.

Taught this unit before? Read only this

Diagnosis before the grid — a prescription only after an examination
Four sources, each with its own remedy
A role dispute is a goals dispute, not a facts dispute

Must land — what has to get across

- Diagnosis comes before choosing a mode — and this is what you never cut from this unit.
- The four sources have been named, each with a radically different remedy.
- A role dispute is a goals dispute at its core.

Success criterion: A participant names the four sources and states each one's remedy, different from the other three.

Book	**Conflict diagnosis layers**
Slide	ch06 · cards
Setup	Printed form with three boxes, handed out before the block

Read the room · Diagnose · Act

◉ A table classifies all of its conflicts as "values"
Means: The label is a judgment of intentions, not an examination
Do: "What sentence was actually said, word for word?" Most of what gets labeled values is a goals dispute.

◉ They use "goals" and "methods" interchangeably
Means: The line between the two sources isn't drawn
Do: Say the line out loud: agreement on what, disagreement on how = methods.

"And where does a role dispute fall?" →
A role dispute is a goals dispute at its core. Name it and move on; don't open up the organizational structure.

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Presentation · Context and cost of delay

3 min

At ~27 min

Core

Do not cut

Intent **The three layers come together, and the third layer is not accepted without a number.**

> **In your words:** Layer 2 is context: time pressure, the size of the future relationship, and the balance of power. That's the same axis you plotted your stakeholders on earlier. Layer 3 is the cost of delay, as a number: what value is under threat, and by what agreed measure?

Do: Draw a single line on the board: source × context × cost of delay → recommendation. Then name the four failure patterns, pointing to where on the line each one occurs: confusing the topic with the source, ignoring context, a cost of delay with no numbers, and jumping to the grid before diagnosing.

Taught this unit before? Read only this

Source × context × cost of delay → recommendation
Layer 3 comes with a number, or it isn't a layer
Name the four failure patterns by pointing to them

Must land — what has to get across

- Layer 3 is quantitative: a cost of delay with no number is not a third layer.
- The balance of power is the salience map's own axis — not a new tool.
- The four failure patterns have been named, the first being confusion of topic with source.

Success criterion: The board shows one line ending in the word "recommendation," and a participant names the three layers in order without looking at the form.

Book	**Conflict diagnosis layers**
Slide	ch06 · plate "Diagnosis before mode"

Read the room · Diagnose · Act

◉ **The cost box says "a lot" or "big"**
Means: Layer 3 is a description, not a measurement
Do: Write two questions on the board: What value is under threat? By what measure? And don't accept "a lot."

◉ **"Our whole context is time pressure"**
Means: One item has swallowed Layer 2
Do: Ask about the future relationship and the balance of power: the three together drive the choice, not any one alone.

A request for a precise formula for the cost → Don't give a formula. An order-of-magnitude estimate is enough: hours wasted × cost per hour, or delay × cost per day.

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Presentation · The five-mode grid

3 min

At ~30 min

Core

Do not cut

Intent **The mode becomes a choice that follows diagnosis, and Avoiding gets its due in its two legitimate uses.**

> **In your words:** Thomas-Kilmann (1974) defined five modes along assertiveness and cooperativeness. The ECO doesn't name them, but they organize a choice it asks for. We keep the original English terms, as the references do.

Say: Each mode has a place where it works:

- Competing — high assertiveness, low cooperativeness: an immediate crisis, or a necessary unpopular decision.
- Collaborating — high and high: major decisions with long-lasting impact. It costs time, so it is not forced onto a crisis.
- Compromising — medium and medium: balanced power and tight time, or a temporary solution.
- Avoiding — low and low: a trivial matter, or postponing to gather information. Those are the two uses I promised you earlier.
- Accommodating — low and high: the relationship matters more than the issue, or the other person is right.

Worth repeating

Five modes along assertiveness/cooperativeness; Avoiding is legitimate in two places.

Must land — what has to get across

- The grid is a tool for organizing, not an ECO requirement: you move among the five modes according to the diagnosis.
- Avoiding is legitimate in two named situations: a trivial matter, and postponing to gather information.
- Collaborating costs time, so it is not forced onto a crisis.

Success criterion: At least one table names a situation where Avoiding is the right choice.

Book **Five modes and when each one works**

Slide ch06 · table

Watch for **M62**

If it fails No screen? Draw the assertiveness and cooperativeness axes and place the five modes on them.

Read the room · Diagnose · Act

◉ **"Which mode is best?"**

Means: The question itself is the fallacy

Do: Don't answer with a mode name. Turn the question around: "Best for which source and which context?"

◉ **A table that can't come up with an example for Avoiding**

Means: The grid is memorized, not understood

Do: Give half an example — "a disagreement over the color of a slide" — and let them fill in the second use.

A room that already knows the grid →

Don't explain it. Ask for a situation where Avoiding is right, then move on.

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Presentation · When a mode turns into a flaw

5 min

At ~33 min

Extension
If time allows

Intent **A mode shifts from a trait of the person to a choice with a cost once it becomes the default.**

In your words: These are tools, not identities. Every mode has a tipping point: once it becomes the default, it turns into a flaw. Default competing gives you a suppressed team that tells you nothing. Default accommodating gives you exhaustion and exploitation. And default avoiding is what you saw in the tunnel under the sea. Competence is in moving between modes, not in mastering one.

Do: Write three columns on the board: Default mode · The flaw it produces · When it is right. Fill in the first column, then the second, from the room, and fill in the third only after they have.

Transition: Diagnosis gives you the mode. But a mode isn't carried out in your head. It's carried out in a sentence you say to the person in front of you. That's where most leaders fall down.

Taught this unit before? Read only this

The limit of each mode once it becomes the default
Competence lies in moving between modes, not in mastering one
Don't open the conversation here — it's the next block

Must land — what has to get across

- Each mode turns into a flaw once it becomes the default: competing suppresses the team, accommodating exhausts the one who does it, and avoiding is what you saw in the tunnel under the sea.
- Competence lies in moving between modes, not in mastering one.
- A mode isn't carried out in the head — it is carried out in a sentence said to a person in front of you.

Success criterion: At least one participant has named their default mode and the flaw it produces when applied everywhere.

Book **Five modes and when each one works**
Slide ch06 · table

Read the room · Diagnose · Act

◉ **"That describes my personality; it isn't a tool"**
Means: The mode was understood as a trait, not a choice
Do: Separate the two: "Which mode did you choose in your last dispute, and why?" The question is about the choice, not the trait.

The room names one mode for everyone
→ Ask for a counterexample: one situation where they used a different mode. Its existence proves that moving between modes is possible.

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Presentation · Setting the goal before the performance

2 min

At ~38 min

Extension
If time allows

Intent **Participants write down their expectation before they see the performance: without a written expectation, there is nothing to check against afterward.**

In your words: Anyone who chose collaboration in their head and then stumbled on the first sentence slid into avoiding. That isn't weaker intent; it's a lack of verbal training. That's why I won't describe the approach to you. I'll perform it in front of you twice: once as it should go, and once as it slips.

Instructions: Before I begin: write on the edge of your card the hardest sentence you would have to say to a specific person in your conflict. You'll compare it with the approach's sentences in a moment.

Setting the goal

- Each participant writes on the edge of their card the hardest sentence they would have to say to a specific person in their conflict.
- They don't announce it now — they compare it with the approach's sentences after the performance.

Taught this unit before? Read only this

Perform, don't describe — the difference is in the words, not the intent
The goal is written down before the performance
Don't name the five sentences before you perform them

Must land — what has to get across

- The difference between competence and intent lies in the words: whoever stumbles on the first sentence slides into avoiding.
- The goal is written before the performance, not after.
- The approach isn't named before it is performed — explaining first turns it into mere information.

Success criterion: Each card has one sentence written on its edge before the performance begins.

Book	**Crucial Conversations: a method for tense conversations**
Slide	ch06 · worked
Setup	An empty chair facing you · STATE on a sheet in your pocket

Read the room · Diagnose · Act

◉ **A participant can't find a hard sentence**
Means: They are looking for a sentence, not a person
Do: Ask about a specific person: "In front of whom is it hardest to say, 'Correct my understanding'?"

A room that asks for the names of the sentences first → "You'll hear them performed, then we'll name them." Naming before performing turns the approach into information.

11 of 20

Presentation · The conversation as performed

4 min

At ~40 min

Core

Do not cut

Intent **Participants see the approach performed, not described: a shared goal, then five spoken sentences.**

Do: Stand, address an empty chair, and perform the conversation on one case: a team where code is merged without review. Start with the shared goal, then speak the five sentences one by one — and don't read them off the sheet.

Do: Write STATE vertically on the board — one letter with each sentence you speak — and the shared-goal sentence above it. And say where it comes from: the Crucial Conversations method, not a term in the ECO.

Modeling

- **The right version:** on the unreviewed-code case: shared goal first — "We both want a team that works to a high standard, and what I'm about to raise serves that goal" — then Share the facts: "I noticed the latest pull requests didn't go through review"; then Tell the story: "I understood, perhaps wrongly, that review as it's currently worded wastes your time"; then Ask: "I want to understand your point of view"; then Talk with a trial step: "If it's a blocker, we can adjust it"; then Encourage: "Correct my understanding if it's wrong."
- **Underlying principles:** shared goal first · facts before story · the story is told as interpretation, not fact · ask, then propose · invite correction of your view

Taught this unit before? Read only this

STATE goes after the shared-goal sentence — not before it

Speak to an empty chair — and don't read from a sheet

Must land — what has to get across

- The approach was performed, not described, and the shared goal came before the disagreement.
- Stated outright: STATE comes from Crucial Conversations, not from the ECO.
- The story is offered as interpretation, not fact, and the invitation to be corrected is part of the method, not mere politeness.

Success criterion: STATE is on the board with the shared-goal sentence above it, and every sentence was heard spoken aloud, standing, not read off a sheet.

Book **Crucial Conversations: a method for tense conversations**

Slide ch06 · worked

Read the room · Diagnose · Act

◉ Laughter or embarrassment at the empty chair

Means: The performance is read as a game, not training

Do: Name the awkwardness: "This is what it feels like to walk into a conversation with no wording prepared," then carry on.

◉ "People don't talk like that in our offices"

Means: The objection is to the vocabulary, not the structure

Do: Change the vocabulary, not the structure: "I noticed" and "correct my understanding" can be said in any dialect.

12 of 20

Modeling · The conversation as it slips

5 min

At ~44 min

Core

Do not cut

Intent **The room names the moment of the slip from collaborating to avoiding in a polite conversation.**

Why this activity Deliberately performing the wrong model looks like a waste of time, and the right conversation alone is forgotten: the difference shows only when the two stand side by side.

Do: Perform the same conversation the common way: open with the problem directly — "There's a problem with the reviews" — then offer your interpretation as fact, not as a story: "Clearly you don't have time to review." Then, when the person across from you tenses up, back off: "Fine, forget it, we'll look at it later."

Ask, in your words: **That conversation was polite and ended with no quarrel. At what moment did it shift from Collaborating to Avoiding?**

Discuss, in your words: Lead the discussion until the moment emerges from them, not from you. Then name the outcome: the conflict remained, and the ground rule was not corrected.

Modeling

- **The wrong version (performed deliberately):** no shared goal, an interpretation delivered as fact, and a gentle retreat at the first sign of tension. It stays on display next to the right one.
- **Underlying principles:** shared goal first · facts before story · the story is told as interpretation, not fact · ask, then propose · invite correction of your view

Taught this unit before? Read only this

The wrong version is performed deliberately and stays on display

The moment of the slip is named after the discussion, not before it

A gentle retreat is avoidance, even if it looks like good manners

Must land — what has to get across

- The wrong model was actually performed, not described.
- The room named the moment of the slip: no shared goal, and an interpretation delivered as fact.
- The gentle retreat is avoidance, and the ground rule was not corrected.

What you see or hear **A participant names the moment it flipped.**

Threshold **Two tables name the moment without your help.**

If not met Perform just the first two sentences again and ask: "Which of the two sentences closed the door?"

Book **Crucial Conversations: a method for tense conversations**

Slide ch06 · worked

Watch for **M61**

Read the room · Diagnose · Act

◉ **The room finds the second conversation acceptable**
Means: Politeness is read as competence
Do: Don't argue. Ask: "Two weeks later, what is the state of the unreviewed pull request?"

◉ **They place the slip at the moment of tension, not at the start**
Means: The absence of a shared goal went unseen
Do: Perform the first sentence alone again and ask: "What wasn't said here?"

A table defends the postponement as politeness → Separate the wording from the decision: the first conversation isn't less polite; what differs is that it ended with a step and a date.

13 of 20

Guided practice · Individual diagnosis

4 min

At ~49 min

Core

Do not cut

Intent **Diagnosis moves from an example in the book to the participant's own conflict: three layers and a number.**

Instructions: The conflict card you wrote at the start of the unit is in front of you. Diagnose it now on the form. The source: facts, methods, goals, or values? The context: time pressure, the size of the relationship, and the balance of power. And the cost of delay as a number, even an estimated one. Then one last line: the recommended mode. Four minutes, individually and in silence.

Activity spec

- **Invitation:** Diagnose your own conflict in three layers, then recommend a mode that follows the diagnosis, not habit.
- **Space:** Individual and silent, a printed diagnosis form for each person, and a pen.
- **Participation:** Everyone writes first — no discussion before time is up.
- **Groups:** No groups at this stage; pairs form afterward.
- **Sequence:** Four minutes: silent individual diagnosis on the form → last line: the recommended mode

Taught this unit before? Read only this

Their own conflict — not a case from the book
Forms already handed out — one in front of every person
Four silent individual minutes

Must land — what has to get across

- The conflict comes from the participant's own work, and the diagnosis is in their own handwriting.
- The third layer carries a number, which is what changes the recommendation.
- The mode came from the diagnosis, not from habit.

What you see or hear **Handwritten forms: three layers and a mode in one line.**

Threshold **Every participant, with a number in the third layer.**

If not met Write an estimate for one example on the board in front of them, then go quiet and give them a minute.

Book **Conflict diagnosis layers**

Slide ch06 · practice

Watch for **M63**

If it fails Out of forms? Draw three boxes on the back of the card.

Read the room · Diagnose · Act

◉ **The source box holds the topic itself**
Means: The root hasn't been separated from the argument
Do: One question on the paper: "This is what they're arguing about — so what produced it?"

◉ **The cost-of-delay box is empty on most forms**
Means: Layer 3 is being read as optional
Do: Stop the writing for ten seconds and say: "An estimated number is enough; a blank is not."

A participant who sees no conflict in their team → Let them use a colleague's conflict and play the questioner twice. Don't give them a case from the book: a canned case produces a canned diagnosis.

14 of 20

Guided practice · Cross-examination and round

5 min

At ~53 min

Flexible
Compress or merge

Intent **One question, "By what number?", tests the diagnosis, and you collect the round's count for the debrief.**

Instructions: Now, in pairs. The first presents their diagnosis in one minute; the second keeps asking "By what number?" across the three layers. Then switch. Don't tell the story of the conflict. Test the diagnosis.

Do: Walk the tables and read ten forms, cost-of-delay box only. Circle anything with no number; don't comment. Call the switch at two minutes and the end at four.

Activity spec

- **Invitation:** Test your partner's diagnosis with one question, "By what number?" Don't explain your conflict.
- **Space:** Pairs at the same table. You move; they stay seated.
- **Participation:** Everyone presents once and questions once — no silent listener.
- **Groups:** Pairs within the table, ideally not a manager with a direct report: a conflict told in front of the boss is a different conflict. If the pairs can't be swapped, question only the written diagnosis, with no spoken account.
- **Sequence:** Two minutes: first presents, second asks "By what number?" → two minutes: swap roles → meanwhile: trainer's walk-around and circles on ten forms

Taught this unit before? Read only this

One question across the three layers: "By what number?"
Circles on ten forms, no comment
Announce the switch at 2 and the end at 4

Must land — what has to get across

- Everyone presented once and questioned once — no silent listener.
- Circles are marked without comment; the count is shown in the debrief.
- Keep a manager and a direct report apart if you can; if not, swap the pairs after the first round.

What you see or hear **Your circles on ten forms, and a written count of those with no number.**

Threshold **Everyone presented once and was questioned once.**

If not met Stop the second round and read five forms: the number matters more than a finished exchange.

Book **Conflict diagnosis layers**
Slide ch06 · practice
Watch for **R01**

Read the room · Diagnose · Act

◉ **Most cost boxes have no number**
Means: The third failure pattern, not one person's slip
Do: Two or more tables → stop the round, write the two questions on the board, rerun for two minutes.

◉ **A pair narrates the conflict instead of testing it**
Means: A story is easier than cross-examination
Do: Stop them, ask the question for them once: "By what number?" Then move on.

Odd number → One trio: presenter, questioner, and an observer who watches for the four failure patterns and speaks first in the debrief.

15 of 20

Presentation · Team charter

3 min

At ~58 min

Core

Do not cut

Intent **The rule becomes a behavior whose violation can be proven, with an enforcement mechanism behind it, not a slogan hung on a wall.**

In your words: Diagnosis treats a conflict that has already happened. The structure that makes conflict less likely is built before it: the team charter. And the key word here isn't rules. It's common: built by the team, not dictated from above.

Say: Three elements. Drop any one and the whole charter collapses:

- **A specific behavior** whose violation can be proven: "No code is merged without a reviewer other than the author" — not "We respect each other" and not "We commit to quality."
- **Built together**: a rule dictated by leadership loses its meaning; a rule the team builds binds, because the team owns it.
- **Enforcement mechanism** — procedural, interactive, or periodic. A rule with no enforcement mechanism is a joke.

Taught this unit before? Read only this

common not rules

Specific behavior + built together + enforcement mechanism

A rule with no enforcement mechanism is a joke

Must land — what has to get across

- The charter is built by the team, not dictated to it — common, not rules.
- The three elements stand or fall together: drop one and the whole charter collapses.
- A specific behavior's violation can be proven to a third party; "we respect each other" cannot.

Success criterion: A table rewrites "we respect each other" as a behavior whose violation can be proven, and names its enforcement mechanism.

Book	**Team Ground Rules: From Establishment to Enforcement**
Slide	ch06 · compare
Setup	Rule cards distributed before the block
Watch for	**M64**

Read the room · Diagnose · Act

◉ **"Our rules are written in the company policy"**
Means: A policy is being treated as a charter
Do: Two questions: "Who wrote it? And who is alerted when it's violated?" With no alert, it is not a team charter.

◉ **Every example is of the "we respect each other" type**
Means: A value is written where a behavior belongs
Do: Take one and rewrite it with them on the board until its violation can be proven.

"Dictating is faster than building" →
Don't deny the speed. Ask about the cost: a dictated rule gets violated with no alert, and correcting it later costs more than building it would have.

16 of 20

Presentation · Three-level escalation ladder

3 min

At ~61 min

Flexible
Compress or merge

Intent **Escalation becomes a condition — the current level exhausted and documented — not a mood and not a waiting period.**

Say: And when a rule is violated: an unintentional violation needs only a brief Accommodating, a gentle reminder, because the relationship matters more than one incident. A repeated one calls for Collaborating on the root cause. A deliberate one calls for Competing: enforcement reasserted through documented leadership intervention. Avoiding isn't an option here, because it tears down the environment the leader claims to be building.

Do: Draw a ladder of three levels and name each one as you climb: team norms and a crucial conversation, with an internal record — about 80% · a written strategy with dates, a review, and two signatures — about 15% · institutional escalation with a full file — about 5%. Then say the condition aloud: every level is exhausted before you climb.

Taught this unit before? Read only this

80% · 15% · 5% — exhaust before you climb

Unintentional · repeated · deliberate — each with its own mode

Avoiding is not an option here

Must land — what has to get across

- Each degree of violation has its own mode: unintentional Accommodating · repeated Collaborating · deliberate Competing.
- The escalation ladder is worked through one level at a time: jumping ahead squanders the leader's authority, and delaying too long lets the team collapse.
- Avoiding a repeated violation tears down the environment the leader claims to be building.

Success criterion: The ladder is drawn on the board with its three levels and their percentages, and the exhaustion condition was said aloud.

Book	**Three-Level Escalation Playbook**
Slide	ch06 · plate "Three-Level Escalation Ladder"
Setup	Right third of the board kept empty for drawing the ladder

Read the room · Diagnose · Act

◉ **"Escalating here counts as snitching"**
Means: Escalation is read as an attack, not as a request for a result
Do: Reframe it: it is a documented request for a result, and it is not accepted without first exhausting the two levels before it.

"So when do I escalate?" → The answer is in the condition, not in a length of time: when the current level has been exhausted and documented, and the behavior still has not changed.

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Independent practice · The rule and its mechanism

4 min

At ~64 min

Core

Do not cut

Intent **The first solo performance: a rule whose violation can be proven, and its enforcement mechanism.**

Instructions: You're on your own now, with no partner. On the rule card: one team ground rule that would have prevented the conflict you diagnosed — a specific behavior whose violation can be proven, in one line, and its enforcement mechanism, in one line.

Do: Don't walk between the tables during this block, and don't answer any question aloud. The silence is deliberate — this is the first solo performance in the unit.

Activity spec

- **Invitation:** On your own, write a rule that would have prevented your conflict, and its enforcement mechanism — procedural, interactive, or periodic.
- **Space:** Individual, on the rule card, with your diagnosis form in front of you.
- **Participation:** Everyone writes at once; no showing and no comments until time is up.
- **Groups:** None — the scaffold comes down here, on purpose.
- **Sequence:** Four minutes: the specific behavior and its enforcement mechanism

Taught this unit before? Read only this

Solo performance — the scaffold comes down here
Two lines: a behavior whose violation can be proven · its mechanism

Must land — what has to get across

- The performance was completed solo and without a scaffold: this is evidence of capability.
- The rule's violation can be proven to a third party, and its mechanism is named by type.

What you see or hear **A card with a behavior whose violation can be proven, and its mechanism.**

Threshold **Three-quarters of the cards have both lines.**

If not met Two contrasting cards, no names: which card's violation can be proven?

Book **Three-Level Escalation Playbook**

Slide ch06 · faded

If it fails Out of cards? Two lines on the back of the diagnosis form.

Read the room · Diagnose · Act

◉ **A general rule such as "We respect deadlines"**
Means: A slogan, not a behavior whose violation can be proven
Do: One question, no dictating the answer: "How would its violation be proven to a third party?"

◉ **The behavior is written and the mechanism line is empty**
Means: The rule was written but never activated
Do: Point to the blank and name just the type: "Procedural, interactive, or periodic?"

Levels — for anyone who hasn't started · expected of everyone · for early finishers

Rescue
Stuck? Give them the formula — no X without Y — and have them fill in both parts from their own conflict.

Baseline
A behavior whose violation can be proven · its enforcement mechanism · its level on the ladder.

Extension
Write who would object to your rule and why, and which clause of the charter you would answer with.

18 of 20

Independent practice · Your level on the ladder

2 min

At ~68 min

Core
Do not cut

Intent **The participant places their conflict on a level of the ladder and justifies it by showing the levels beneath it were exhausted.**

In your words: And a third line: which level of the escalation ladder are you on in this conflict right now, and why does the level beneath it count as exhausted?

Activity spec

- **Invitation:** Write your level on the ladder, and the reason the level beneath it counts as exhausted.
- **Space:** Individual, on the same card, with the ladder displayed on the board.
- **Participation:** Everyone writes at once; no showing and no comments.
- **Groups:** None — this is a judgment about your own conflict.
- **Sequence:** Two minutes: the escalation level, then a self-check — can a violation of the rule be proven?

Taught this unit before? Read only this

Third line: the level and its reason
Exhaustion, not impression

Must land — what has to get across

- The escalation level is justified by the exhaustion condition, not by impression.
- The self-check was done: can a violation of the rule be proven to a third party?

What you see or hear **A third line with a level, and under it the reason the levels below it count as exhausted.**

Threshold **Three-quarters of the cards have the third line.**

If not met Read one level aloud and ask: “What hasn’t been exhausted yet?”

Book **Three-Level Escalation Playbook**
Slide ch06 · faded

Read the room · Diagnose · Act

◉ **The level is written and the reason line is empty**
Means: The level was chosen by impression
Do: Ask without dictating: “What have you tried at the lower level?”

◉ **Most cards start at the third level**
Means: The ladder is being read as a shortcut, not as exhaustion
Do: Point to the first level and say: “What is left in it that hasn’t been tried?”

19 of 20
Debrief

7 min

At ~70 min

Flexible
Compress or merge

Intent **The participant compares the mode they actually applied with the mode their diagnosis now recommends.**

Debrief: Run the debrief with the questions below, in order. Don't open with "What did we learn?" — open with where they paused, because that is what unlocks the rest.

Do: Show the number from your round: of the ten forms you read, how many had a cost with no number. Say the number as it is, without softening it.

Do: Read out the one-word cards from the opening and write them in a column headed "What we usually do," with "What your diagnosis recommends" beside it — unedited.

Debrief

- **Goal:** Participants compare the mode actually applied with the mode their diagnosis now recommends.
- **Frame:** Two stages here — the pause · the facts. The principle and the next step come in the Close.
- "Which of the three layers stopped you longest? Don't explain why yet — just the layer."
- "Who found that the mode they actually applied goes against what their diagnosis recommends? Hands up before anyone speaks."
- **Data:** The number of circles across the ten forms you read in the cross-examination round.

Taught this unit before? Read only this

Start with where they paused, not with "What did we learn?"
Show the circle count from your round
The one-word card comes back here

Must land — what has to get across

- A real number from the room was shown in the debrief, not an impression of it.
- The opening word was compared with the mode now recommended — the gap is on the board.
- The discussion stays on the diagnoses, not on the people who made them.

What you see or hear	**Three different tables spoke, and the round's number was said aloud.**
Threshold	**Three tables, before you offer any conclusion.**
If not met	Read one line from the "What we usually do" column and ask its owner directly about the gap.
Book	**Conflict diagnosis layers**
Slide	ch06 · pillars
Watch for	**R01**

Read the room · Diagnose · Act

◉ **Silence, with writing, after the first question**
Means: Processing, not failure
Do: Stay quiet for ten seconds and don't rephrase: processing comes before speech.

◉ **A table starts with analysis, not with where it paused**
Means: It jumped to the second question
Do: Redirect without blame: "That answers the next question — first: where did you pause?"

Silence runs past the ten seconds → Turn the question into a choice: "Source or cost of delay? Hands up." Choosing is easier than composing an answer.

20 of 20
Close

6 min

At ~77 min

Core
Do not cut

Intent **The intention moves out of the head and into a "When… I will…" sentence tied to a specific situation and a specific person.**

Instructions: The plan card is in front of you. Write one sentence in exactly this form: "When … I will …" The form isn't decoration. A sentence with no "when" doesn't get carried out.

In your words: And three verbs that sum up the unit — write them above your sentence: diagnose, then choose, then say. The third verb is the one that usually drops out: a conversation you haven't put into actual words never gets said.

Do: Collect a photo or a copy of the cards. They go back to participants after thirty days — an agreed date, not a promise.

Transition: We've diagnosed the conflict and written the rule. So how does knowledge transfer, and how is communication framed, before the next conflict? That's the question for Unit 7.

"When… I will…" plans

- "When (a specific situation, tied to a day or a meeting) … I will (one action with a specific person)."
- *When I'm asked to postpone a disagreement to keep the atmosphere pleasant, I will write the cost of postponing as a number before I agree.*

Taught this unit before? Read only this

Example if they get stuck: "When the overstepping happens again, I will open with the shared goal."
Diagnose, then choose, then say
The "When… I will…" form is a requirement, not decoration

Must land — what has to get across

- The plan uses the "When… I will…" form on a specific situation — "I will manage conflict better" is not a plan.
- The cards were collected and the return date, thirty days out, was announced.
- The bridge was stated: from conflict to knowledge transfer and communication framing.

Success criterion: Every card carries a "When" and an "I will," a situation tied to a day or a meeting, and a specific person.

Book	**From Conflict to Knowledge Transfer and Communication**
Slide	ch06 · close
Slide	ch06 · bridge
Setup	Plan cards distributed · a phone for photographing the cards
If it fails	No phone? Collect the cards on paper and return them on the agreed day.

Read the room · Diagnose · Act

◉ **Plans such as "I will manage conflict better"**
Means: A general intention with no trigger
Do: Put one card in front of everyone and rewrite it with them aloud.

◉ **A "when" with no day and no meeting**
Means: The trigger can't be observed
Do: Three questions: "Which meeting? Which week? And with whom?"

Objection to photographing the cards →
Take a written copy with no name, or let the owner photograph it on their own phone and send it on the date.