



American  
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# Dealing with Disagreements

## Social-Emotional Learning Objective: Conflict Resolution

Just like in life, conflict in a classroom is inevitable. Teach students a process for resolving their disagreements with this ready-to-use lesson.



## Why it matters?

Whether we like it or not, conflict is a part of life — and learning how to resolve conflict is a critical life skill for children. Learning effective conflict resolution techniques benefits children in many ways:

- ✓ Children can become empowered to assert their feelings while respecting the feelings of others.
- ✓ Conflict resolution helps students develop empathy and learn to see things from the perspective of someone else.
- ✓ Learning how to manage conflict along with your own strong emotions results in more fulfilling friendships and social success.
- ✓ Strong conflict resolution skills improve a student's resiliency and builds confidence.
- ✓ Students take responsibility for resolving conflicts peacefully.
- ✓ Becoming more proficient in conflict resolution enhances a student's leadership capabilities.
- ✓ Helping students hone their conflict resolution skills creates a classroom environment that is more conducive to learning.

**Bottom line:** Knowing how to resolve conflict gives students a powerful social and emotional tool they can carry with them into adulthood.

**Goal for the lesson:** Provide practice with using conflict resolution techniques and give students the vocabulary they need to express their feelings during a conflict.

**Grade levels:** Kindergarten–Grade 5

**Suggested time needed:** 50 minutes

**Materials for each student:** Chart paper and marker; copy of "A Conflict Can Make Me Feel..." mini poster; copy of the "Conflict Scenario Cards," cut apart and stored in a small paper lunch bag; class supply of small index cards

**Additional Materials:** Large sheet of chart paper labeled as shown on the next page



## Bell-Ringer Activity

1. Write the word “**CONFLICT**” on the board.
2. Ask each student who enters to think of a quick pose that comes to mind when they hear the word conflict. When the bell rings, ask everyone to strike their pose for a few seconds or have groups of students take turns doing their pose. If desired, snap a few photos of different groups holding their poses. **For younger students**, explain that the word on the board is another word for a disagreement. Then demonstrate how to strike a pose and hold it for a few seconds.
3. Discuss students’ poses as a class. What are common themes? Then write this definition of conflict on the board: a strong disagreement between people. Ask students, “Why is it important to resolve conflicts?” (Unresolved conflicts can cause resentment, the problem can get worse, other people can end up taking sides in the dispute, it can end up resulting in more conflicts, etc.) Explain that the class will explore ways to deal with conflicts in a responsible way.



## Whole-Group and Small-Group Activity

1. Ask students to raise their hands if they have ever had a disagreement with someone. (Of course everyone has!) Point out that conflict is part of life because people don’t always agree with one another. Share a conflict you have experienced, how it made you feel, and how you and the other person resolved it.
2. Explain to students that there are steps they can take to resolve conflicts in positive ways. Display the chart you prepared to look like the one below.

### Sample

1. Calm down and cool off.
2. Explain why you are upset: “When you (state the problem), I feel (explain your feelings) because (share the reason), so what I would like is (suggest a solution).”
3. Ask the other person to tell you what he or she heard you say.
4. Come up with a resolution you both are satisfied with.

**As you go over the conflict resolution steps with students, ask these questions:**

- What are some things you can do to calm down and cool off? (take deep breaths, walk away, draw a picture, get a drink of water, count to 10, etc.)
- What types of information do you share when you follow Step 2? (the problem, your feelings and reasons for them, what needs to happen to move forward)
- Why is Step 3 important? (It ensures that both parties understand the conflict.)

# Teacher Directions

- Why is it important that both people agree with the resolution? (Without an agreement, the conflict is not really resolved, running the risk that it may come up again in the future.)
- 3. To demonstrate how to use the conflict resolution steps, ask two students to help you act out a conflict from a familiar fairy tale, "The Three Little Pigs." Assign one student to be one of the three little pigs and the other to be the Big Bad Wolf. The pig is upset because the wolf just tried to blow his house down. Explain that Mother Goose (you) has agreed to help the two characters resolve their conflict. As you and the students role play the scenario, encourage the rest of the class to offer suggestions if the pig and wolf struggle with any of the steps.
- 4. Repeat Step 3 with two other students, one acting as Cinderella (who wants to go to the prince's ball) and the other student acting as the Wicked Stepmother (who wants Cinderella to stay home).



## Partner Activity

1. Reread Step 2 on the conflict resolution chart with students. Explain that sometimes it can be hard to identify your feelings during a conflict. Display a copy of the mini poster "A Conflict Can Make Me Feel..." and discuss it with students. Point out that students can use the list to identify exactly how a conflict makes them feel.
2. Divide the class into pairs. Have each pair draw one of the conflict scenario cards from the bag. Direct each pair to complete an "I feel..." statement for their scenario, using the list of feelings to help them.
3. Provide time for partners to share their scenarios and "I feel..." statements with the class.
4. Post a copy of the feelings list beside the conflict resolution chart for ongoing use. Tell students to come to you with their "I feel..." statements whenever they want to resolve a conflict. Then meet with the two students and help them work through the steps. (As students become more comfortable with this process, they should be able to hold the meetings without your involvement.)



## Exit Activity

Ask each student to copy and complete this sentence starter on a small index card: **"Resolving conflicts is important because \_\_\_\_\_."** Post the cards around the conflict resolution chart in your classroom.



## Take-Home Task

Modeling "The Three Little Pigs" activity, have each student write a "mini-play" that describes a recent conflict he or she was involved in, including how (or if) it was resolved. Then have the student write a paragraph to explain how he or she could have used the conflict resolution steps to resolve the conflict. Review the mini-plays in advance; then anytime you have a few minutes to spare in class, invite small groups of students to act out the mini-plays and discuss the resolutions. These Conflict Resolution Theater mini-performances will be a popular sponge activity that will also keep conflict resolution top of mind.

# Conflict Scenario



You set your tray down on a table in the cafeteria. A classmate at the table says, "You can't sit there. I'm saving that seat for someone else."

Another student cuts in front of you while you are waiting at a water fountain. When you tell the student to go to the end of the line, the person ignores you.

A classmate asks to copy your homework. When you say no, the classmate calls you a mean name.

You loaned your favorite pen to a friend. When you ask for it back, the friend tells you that she lost it.

Your friend who always plays with you on the playground is playing with someone else.

The student who sits next to you keeps trying to talk to you during a lesson. You want to pay attention, but this student is making that almost impossible.

A classmate accidentally spills water on your art project.

You catch a classmate looking in your backpack without your permission.

You just found out that someone who you thought was your friend has been saying hurtful things about you behind your back.

A friend tells you that he will walk to the library with you. Later, you see that your friend is walking with someone else.

A classmate has made up a nickname for you that you don't like. The classmate is encouraging others to call you by this nickname.

When you get to class, you wave at your friend. Your friend frowns and turns her back to you.

You and several classmates are brainstorming ideas for a group project. A fellow group member tells you your idea is "stupid."

You tell your friend a secret, asking her not to tell anyone else. Before the day is over, you find out your friend has shared the secret with two other people.

# A Conflict Can Make Me Feel...

angry

annoyed

anxious

awful

confused

disappointed

discouraged

disgusted

embarrassed

frustrated

hurt

ignored

insulted

irritated

lonely

mad

nervous

resentful

sad

scared

stressed

threatened

unaccepted

uncomfortable

uneasy

unhappy

upset

worried

