



# STEAM BO.SS

boosting soft skills

## Thomas-Kilmann Matrix



Sapere utile



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The Thomas-Kilmann Matrix is a model developed to understand how people deal with conflict, presenting five main conflict management styles. This tool can be used in the classroom to help students develop proactivity and conflict management skills, especially in collaborative activities, group discussions and decision-making situations.

The model is based on two axes:

- **Assertiveness** (degree to which the person tries to fulfil their own interests)
- **Cooperativeness** (degree to which the person tries to satisfy the interests of others)

From these axes, five conflict resolution styles emerge:

1. **Competition** - High in assertiveness, low in cooperativeness.
2. **Collaboration** - High in assertiveness, high in cooperativeness.
3. **Compromise** - Medium in assertiveness and cooperativeness.
4. **Evasion** - Low in assertiveness and cooperativeness.
5. **Accommodation** - Low in assertiveness, high in cooperativeness.

### How to apply:

Using simulated conflict situations in group dynamics is an excellent way to work on the Thomas-Kilmann Matrix. The trainer can propose different scenarios where there is a conflict to be resolved (for example, a discussion about how to divide tasks in a group project).

### Group dynamics and simulations

**Scenario:** The students must decide how to divide up responsibilities in a group project, but everyone wants to lead.

**Application of the Matrix:** During the discussion, students can be encouraged to identify which of the five styles they are using. The trainer can guide them to explore other styles, such as collaboration, promoting the importance of listening to others and reconciling interests for a more efficient outcome.

### Regulated debates

Organising structured debates is another way of applying the matrix. The topic of the debate can be something controversial or that generates different opinions in the class.

**Scenario:** Debate on a current topic, such as the use of technology in the classroom.

**Application of the Matrix:** The trainer can ask each student to adopt one of the conflict resolution styles (competition, collaboration, compromise, etc.) during the debate and, at the end, discuss which style was

most effective and why. This allows students to explore different approaches to defending their point of view or to working together with colleagues.

### Problem solving in groups

Assign complex problems to small groups of students where it is natural to have differences of opinion about the best solution. The Thomas-Kilmann Matrix can be used as a tool to guide the resolution of conflicts that arise.

**Scenario:** Solving a complex social problem where different approaches can be proposed.

**Application of the Matrix:** During the discussion, students are encouraged to identify their own behaviours (competition, collaboration, etc.) and reflect on those of their colleagues. The trainer can intervene to suggest more collaborative alternatives when necessary.

### Self-evaluation and reflection

After collaborative activities, the trainer can ask students to do a self-assessment of how they managed conflicts and what conflict resolution styles they used. This encourages reflection on personal behaviours and how they can improve.

**Scenario:** After group work, each student fills in a self-assessment form identifying which conflict management style they used in the various phases of the project.

**Application of the Matrix:** The trainer discusses the results in class, promoting self-awareness and encouraging students to think of strategies to improve their proactivity and conflict management in the future.

### Role-Playing

Students take on different roles in fictional scenarios involving conflict. The aim is to experiment with different ways of dealing with conflict, using the styles.

**Scenario:** A fictitious meeting where one group of students represents a company, and others are dissatisfied customers. The trainer assigns each student a conflict resolution style to explore during the game.

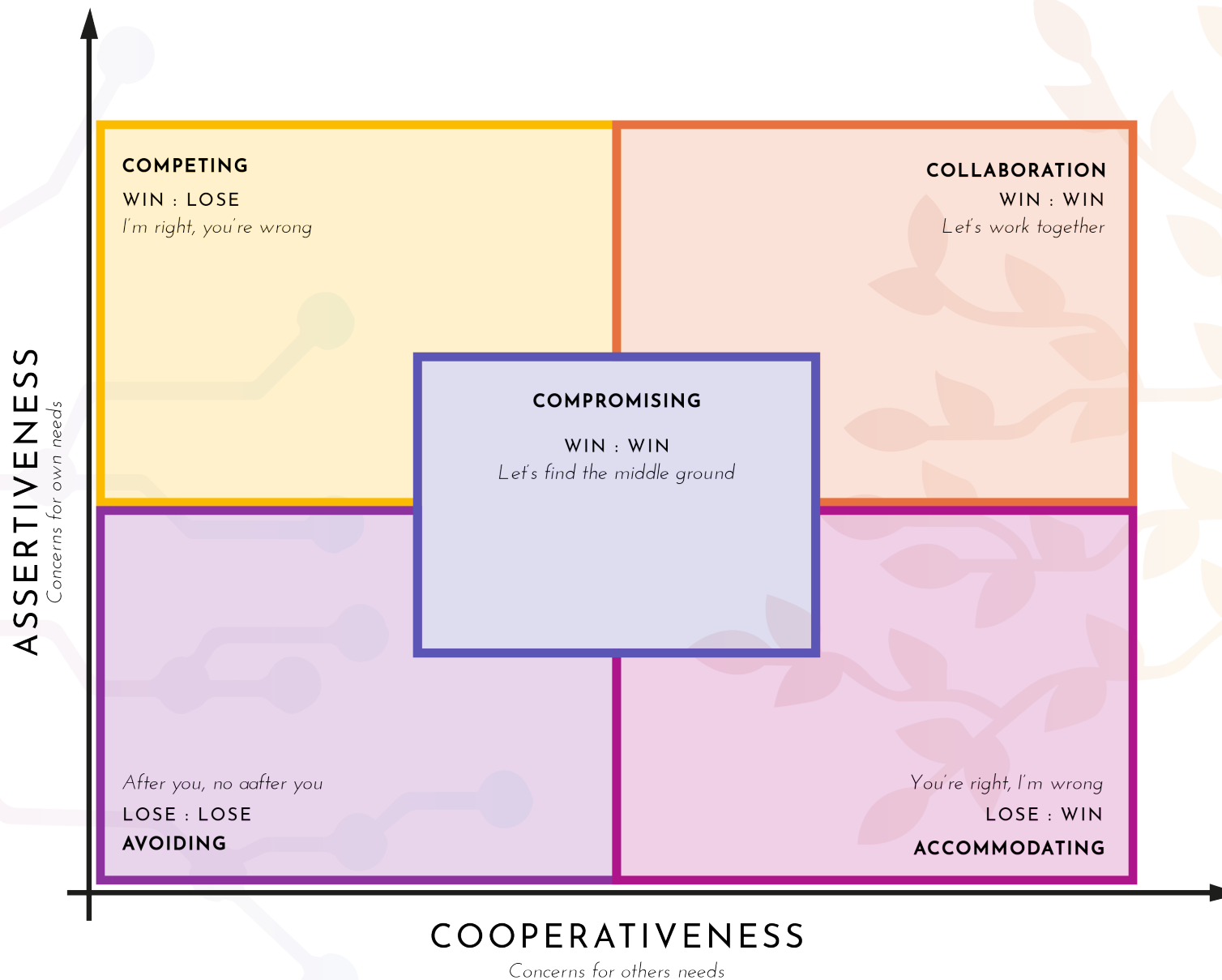
**Application of the Matrix:** At the end of the activity, the trainer leads a reflection on which styles worked best to resolve the conflict and promotes a discussion on how they can be applied in real teamwork situations.

### Benefits for students

**Proactivity:** Students learn to take initiative, express their opinions constructively and propose solutions in group contexts.

**Conflict management:** By understanding the different styles of conflict resolution, students become more adaptable and empathetic in interactions with colleagues, learning to manage disagreements effectively.

With these strategies, the Thomas-Kilmann Matrix can be a powerful resource for improving classroom dynamics, teaching students to be more assertive, co-operative and aware when solving problems and conflicts.





# THE BOOST THAT MAKES THE DIFFERENCE



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