

Stages of conflict

Judge how far a conflict has gone, so the response, and who leads it, fit that depth.

STAGE	WHAT YOU SEE	GLASL, ROUGHLY	WHO CAN HELP
Latent	A difference bothers someone; nobody acts yet	Before step 1	You: clear roles, early talk
Emergent	Open disagreement; people still talk and use facts	Group 1: both can still gain	You moderate, if you are not a party
Escalated	Emotions lead, sides form, calm talks stop	Groups 2–3: win–lose, then lose–lose	A mediator; then someone who decides

The ICB4's three stages (4.4.7.2) in our words, with our rough match to Glasl's groups. A crisis is not on this ladder.

WHAT IT IS

Conflicts deepen if nobody acts. The ICB4 (IPMA's Individual Competence Baseline) sums up the theories in three broad stages: **latent**, **emergent** and **escalated** (4.4.7.2). Friedrich Glasl (1982) gives nine steps in three groups: both can still gain; each wants to win at the other's cost; both lose. The deeper it goes, the more outside help it needs. A **crisis** is not a stage: it arrives at full heat.

HOW IT WORKS

- 01 Find the source: what to do, how, or who people are.
- 02 Place the conflict on a stage, with the evidence.
- 03 Choose who acts: you only if not a party; else a mediator or a decider.
- 04 Name the sign of the next stage, and watch.

MID-LEVEL · WORKED EXAMPLE

Apply it well

The situation: A city team has eight months to move resident parking permits online. The warden supervisors and the software supplier disagree openly about the new handheld check screen.

They still meet and argue with test results: emergent. The project manager has no stake in either design, so she moderates, and both sides test the screen together on the street. One side acting alone is the sign of the next stage; then the steering group decides.

In the exam: Name the stage **with evidence** ('they still meet, and argue with facts'), who acts and why, and the sign of the next stage.

SENIOR · WORKED EXAMPLE

Design and lead it

The situation: A city is joining 14 online services under one login over 30 months. Its 6 integration specialists serve all its projects, and department heads compete for them.

Each head has found allies and blames the others: escalated. The project manager needs the specialists too, so she is a party and does not moderate. She asks the portfolio meeting to decide, on criteria agreed before any project is named, and keeps talking to each head.

In the exam: Design who acts at each depth: you, a mediator, the decision owner. Show the trade-off between speed and agreement, and how relations are restored after a decision.

WHERE IT SITS

IPMA · ICB4	PMI · PMBOK® GUIDE 8 · PMP® EXAM	APM · BOK 8 · PMQ EXAM
4.4.7 Conflict and crisis: three broad stages (4.4.7.2); moderate early if not involved (4.4.7.3)	Guide p. 156; no stage model; the team first, then the project manager. Exam outline: People task 2	BoK (APM's Body of Knowledge) §4.2.1: escalation as rising steps, seen in body and voice; §4.2.2 mediator or arbitrator. PMQ (APM's Project Management Qualification) 11a–11b

Sources: IPMA ICB4 (2015); Glasl (1982); PMI, PMBOK® Guide, 8th ed.; PMI, PMP® Examination Content Outline (2026); APM Body of Knowledge, 8th ed.; APM, PMQ handbook (v6, 2026)

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