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# **Conflict Prevention Module**

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# Outline

- Communication Skills
- **Conflict Prevention**
- Conflict Management
- Authorship
- Reflection & Self-improvement

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1. Sources of Conflict.
2. Reflection before Collaboration.
3. Setting up and Managing Expectations.
4. Tips for these Conversations.

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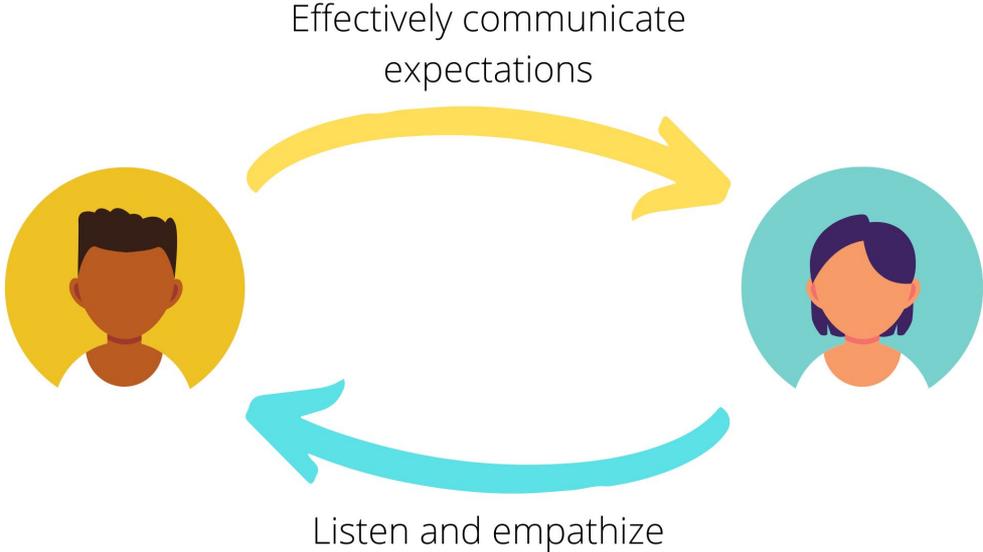
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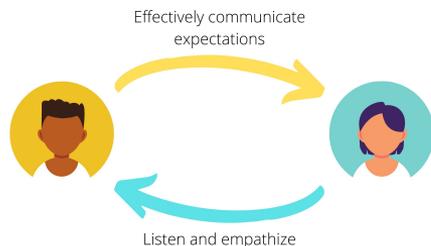
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# Collaborations Depend on People



# Sources of Conflict



## Differences

### Expectations

Each person has a **difference in expectations** about time commitment, funding, etc.

### Perception

Each person might have a **difference in how things** should be done.

## Willingness to Listen & Communicate

### Identity

Their personality, their **judgments** about you, unconscious biases, their **insecurities, self-awareness**, etc.

# Exercise.

(PolLEV)

What is (are) reason(s) for conflict in the following scenarios?

- A** A collaborator is **always making the final decision** on things, even when the choice may be **a subjective one**.
- B** A **collaborator** is suggesting that you make a **paper submission** when you do **not feel ready yet**.

**Expectations, Perception, Identity**

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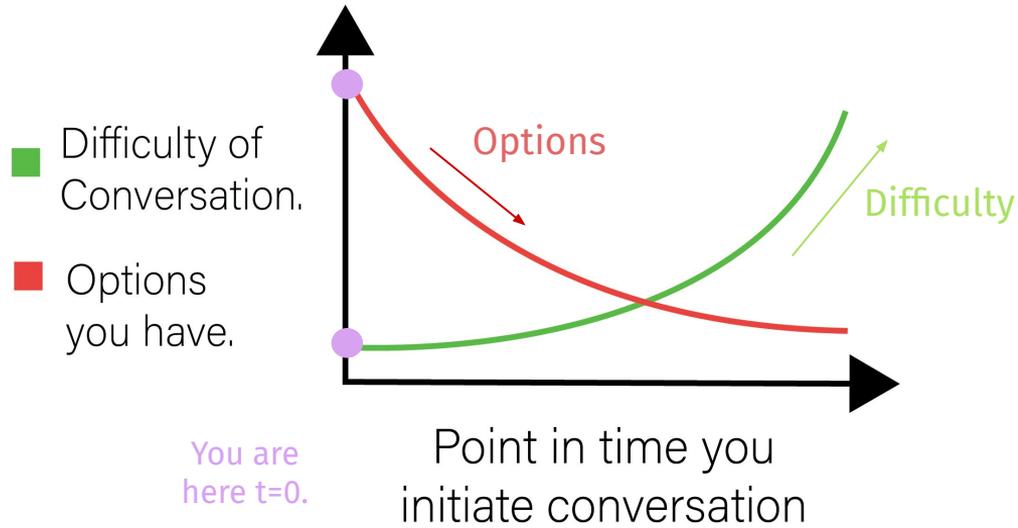
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# Sooner >> Later → Less Conflict!!



Choosing **WHO** you work with **MATTERS!**  
perhaps even more than what you work on...

You (almost) always have a CHOICE.

# Reflect.

(with pollEV)

Which set of questions do you align with more when deciding whether to enter a research collaboration with someone?

## A

- Research alignment?
- What can they contribute?
- Technical background and expertise?

## B

- What are they like to work with?
- What are their expectations of me?
- Are they kind?

# Checklist of Behaviors to Seek

## Respect!

- 01** Actively listens and engages with your ideas.
- 02** Is honest and open about mistakes or problems (academic or personal).
- 03** Values and appreciates your contributions.
- 04** Treats you as an equal (not a subordinate).
- 05** Collaborative (not competitive) about authorship.

# Some Red Flags

Makes demands.

- Finish this for me by Tuesday.

- When do you think you could get this done by?/Would you be able to get this done by Tuesday?
- That was my mistake, thanks for pointing it out.

Defensive about mistakes.

- I didn't do anything wrong.

Does not value your work.

## *critical*

- What you did is all wrong. This is not the right approach...
- Your code doesn't do much that is novel.

Vs.

## *constructive*

- Have you thought of doing it this way? It might be helpful because X, Y, and Z.
- It would be cool if we could add this feature to the code.

Competitive about authorship.

## *competitive*

- Compared to what you have done, I have done more.
- Just because you've done X, Y, and Z doesn't mean you should get first authorship. I've done way more.

## *collaborative*

- I think we have both contributed a lot to this project. Do you think it would be helpful to have a conversation about authorship?

# Quiz.

(TODO: on your own)

## Advisor Compatibility

Academic interest matter, **but people and lab culture matter TOO!!**

meetings are...

informal      formal

---

meets with students every...

week      other week      month      need-based

---

helps with...

high-level      low-level  
(e.g. brainstorming, choosing direction, etc.)      (e.g. coding, proofs, writing etc.)

---

publishing expectations...

content-based      at some regular frequency

work hours

9 am-5 pm      >9 am - 5 pm      get stuff done

---

vacation/sick days

flexible      inflexible

---

allow other commitments

flexible      inflexible

---

conversation content

academic      personal

# Quiz.

(TODO: on your own)

## Lab Group Compatibility

Academic interest matter **but** people  
and lab culture matter **TOO!!**

openness to collaborating  
not open very open  


lab meals are...  
informal formal

lab meals are...  
infrequent frequent  


inclusivity (invitations, speaking)  
not open very open  


lab group promotes...  
collaboration competition

lab management  
not organized very organized  


Don't always ask advisor or lab  
group directly (conflict of interest).

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# Reflect.

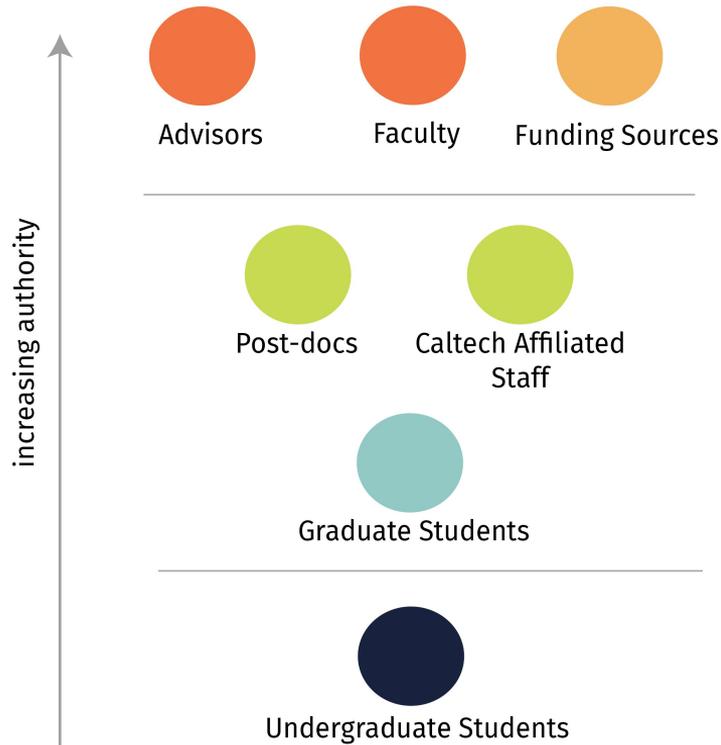
(with pollEV)

What are some reasons you might not want to initiate a conversation about expectations?

# Top Reasons:

1. The **power-dynamics** among research collaborators.
2. **Awkwardness** of conversation, don't want intentions to be misinterpreted.
3. **Don't know what/how** to talk about expectations.

# Collaboration Types



Advisors recognize students might hesitate to talk with them because they:

- Might feel like they should be responsible for figuring it out themselves.
- They might be judged for wanting to have this type of conversation.

Want to be in the loop  
Sooner >> Later

# What are some things to discuss?

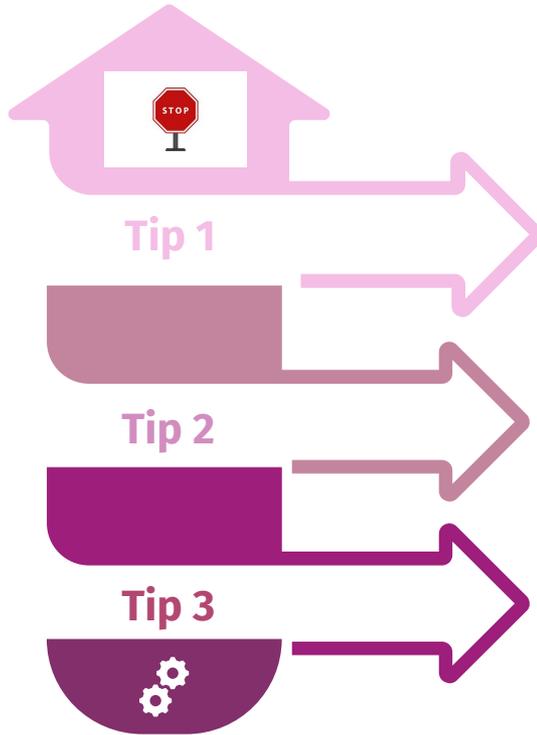
01	Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What are some high-level goals?</li><li>• What is the division of tasks/responsibilities?</li></ul>
02	Time Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How frequently should you meet? (regular vs. need based)</li><li>• Time commitment?</li><li>• Professional and social availability?</li></ul>
03	Conflicts of Interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Are there any conflicts of interests (competing or parallel projects)?</li></ul>
04	Inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What are your criteria for adding someone else in the project (a-priori discussion, etc.)</li></ul>
05	Disagreements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What steps would you like to take to manage a disagreement when it comes up? (poll, mediation, etc.)</li></ul>
06	Revisiting Expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What time/event trigger do you want to use to indicate you should have a conversation to revisit/manage expectations?</li></ul>

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# Helpful tips for initiating conversations.



## Preparation

Make sure you're in the **right emotional headspace** to have a conversation. Make sure you have reflected on **outcomes** you want from conversation.

## Keep it relatively casual.

"Hey, we have been working on this project for a bit and it seems we're making good progress. I was wondering where you saw it going?"

## Ask them what they think.

"Do you think it would be helpful if we had a conversation about expectations?"

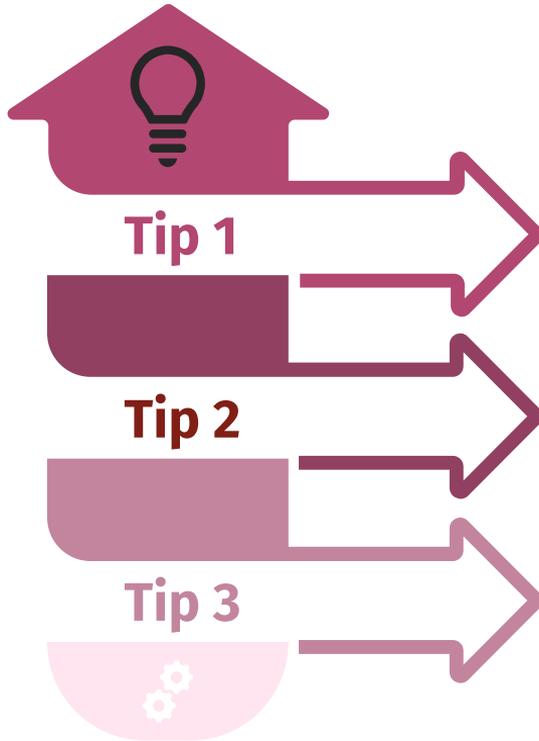
# Practice.

(with polleEV)

What would you say if...

Early on in a collaboration, you want to ask a collaborator what **they are expecting** out of the project **you both are currently working** on and **how much time** they expect to work on it.

# Helpful tips for having conversations.



## Make sure two-sided.

### Discussing your expectations but also theirs!

“I was also wondering if you would mind sharing with me what you were thinking of with respect to this collaboration as well!”

## Motivate why you want to know.

### Intentions should be mutually beneficial and honest.

“I was hoping to talk about these things to make sure we are aligned about expectations for this project so that we can collaborate effectively together.”

## Use positive language.

### Affirm what is/has been helpful.

“When you give me feedback in such and such a way, I find it very valuable in improving my draft/code, etc.”  
“I find it helpful when we meet regularly (once a week) to talk. Can we continue doing this?”

# Practice.

(with polleEV)

## What would you say if...

You know you are **over-committed** at the moment, and someone asks you to **work with them** on another project. How would you bring up **your expectations** about time you might want to **spend on their project?**

# Extra Practice.

(with polleEV)

How do you have a conversation with someone who expresses interest in working on a problem in a way similar to what you have previously expressed?

You are mentoring a SURF student this summer. You want to make sure they are asking for enough (but not too much) help. How do you set up expectations on when they should ask you for help?

# Special Thanks To...

**Faculty:** Richard Murray, Yisong Yue, Adam Wierman, Pete Seiler

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**Chief Compliance Officer:** Grace Fischer-Adams

Note, some infographics inspired from <https://slidesgo.com/>

**Thanks for listening!**

**Any Questions?!**