Six Types of Conflict

The Plot Thickens
What's a **Conflict**?

A **conflict** is a problem that the main character or characters face.

**Examples**

*An arctic adventurer struggles to survive hunger and cold.*  
*A brother and sister fight over control of the television.*

Every story worth reading has a **conflict**.  
If there is no **conflict**, there is no tension.  
Some stories has multiple **conflicts**.
Overview of Conflict Types

1. Person vs. Person
2. Person vs. Self
3. Person vs. Society
4. Person vs. Nature
5. Person vs. Supernatural
6. Person vs. Technology
Person vs. Person

The central character faces opposition from another person or group of people.

Examples

- Two girls compete for the same role in the school play.
- A ninja warrior fights a rival clan to avenge his master's death.
Person vs. Self

The central character faces an internal struggle.

Examples

• A young man goes through hard times after losing his father in a car accident.

• An Olympic athlete pushes his performance to the limit despite his physical disability.
Person vs. Society

The central character or group of characters battles against traditions, institutions, or laws.

Examples

• A student takes his fight against the school dress code all the way to the Supreme Court.

• A group of students protest in front of a university known for its unfair and racially motivated admission practices.
Person vs. Nature

The central character struggles against animals, the elements, or other natural forces.

Examples

• A castaway washes up on an island and must learn to survive with the available resources.
• A ship captain pursues a great white whale through stormy seas.
Person vs. Supernatural

The central character is challenged by forces that are not of this world.

Examples

• A boy wizard must use his powers to protect his community from evil monsters.

• A group of teenagers sleep in a haunted house and begin disappearing one by one.
Person vs. Technology

The central character struggles with or against the forces of technology.

Examples

• A group of strangers gets stuck in an elevator.
• A teenage boy is pursued by robots from space that transform into cars.
Practice

Read each description, identify the antagonist (opposing force) and the type of conflict.

Example

An archeologist attempts to escape a hidden temple overrun by a vampire army.

Antagonist: Vampire army

Conflict Type: Person vs. Supernatural
An elderly man struggles to learn how to use his new phone.
Answer

**Antagonist:** Cell phone

**Conflict Type:** Person vs. Technology
Two boxers who were formerly friends compete for the championship belt.
Answer

Antagonist: Former friend
Conflict Type: Person vs. Person
A young woman fights to gain admittance in an elite prep school that was only for boys.
Answer

Antagonist: Boys prep school / sexism
Conflict Type: Person vs. Society
A group of colonists struggle to survive the winter in a strange land
Answer

**Antagonist:** Cold weather / hunger

**Conflict Type:** Person vs. Nature
A student struggles against the urge to procrastinate and play video games rather than to do his homework.
Answer

Antagonist: Laziness / Procrastination
Conflict Type: Person vs. Self