THE COMPLETE LEADER

COACHING GUIDE

DIPLOMACY & TACT

The ability to treat others fairly, in a sensitive and effective way, regardless of personal biases or beliefs.

LEADERS LEAD OTHERS

One of the 25 leadership competencies

SECTION 01

WHY DIPLOMACY & TACT MATTERS

Diplomacy & Tact is one of the 25 core competencies that define a complete leader. As you grow this capability, you'll notice real shifts in how you lead yourself and influence others.

This guide is built for a 90-day journey. You'll explore the foundations, assess where you stand today, practice new behaviors, sidestep common traps, and track your progress, at your own pace or alongside a coach.

WHAT STRONG DIPLOMACY & TACT LOOKS LIKE

- You maintain positive relationships across every level of your organization
- You can disagree without being disagreeable
- You influence through genuine support rather than pressure

> **REFLECT**
>
> *Why does Diplomacy & Tact matter to you personally? How might developing it change your effectiveness as a leader?*

SECTION 02

FOUNDATIONS OF DIPLOMACY & TACT

THE DEFINITION

The ability to treat others fairly, in a sensitive and effective way, regardless of personal biases or beliefs.

Like any skill worth mastering, Diplomacy & Tact rests on a few core building blocks. Understanding them gives you a vocabulary for your own growth.

THE CORE ELEMENTS

1 **Looking at facts openly**

Considering all the facts without letting class or group identification bias a judgment. Leaders weak in this identify people by category, and let that predetermine their reaction without supporting evidence.

2 **Valuing difference**

Being open to the fact that others don't share your cultural heritage, background, or lifestyle, and accepting that. Assumptions based on superficial characteristics hurt others and reflect poorly on you.

3 **Influence, not coercion**

Gaining support, inspiring people, and engaging imagination. Leaders without this skill try to exert influence through coercion and manipulation, which is really force, and it does not work.

REFLECT

Which element feels most familiar? Which one feels like a stretch right now?

SECTION 03

YOUR STARTING POINT

Before you move forward, take an honest look at where you are today. Read each statement and mark how often it's true of your leadership.

I am always polite and courteous towards others, regardless of their positions or attitudes towards me.

☐ Never ☐ Sometimes ☐ Often ☐ Always

Others have commented that I am able to disagree without being disagreeable.

☐ Never ☐ Sometimes ☐ Often ☐ Always

In conversations, I stay aware of what I am saying and doing, and how I am being received.

☐ Never ☐ Sometimes ☐ Often ☐ Always

I am comfortable being respectful towards others while maintaining my commitment to resolving difficult issues, without intimidating or being intimidated.

☐ Never ☐ Sometimes ☐ Often ☐ Always

I look at the facts of a situation openly, without letting my personal biases decide the outcome.

☐ Never ☐ Sometimes ☐ Often ☐ Always

I influence others through respect and reason rather than pressure or positional authority.

☐ Never ☐ Sometimes ☐ Often ☐ Always

REFLECT

Looking at your answers, where is your greatest opportunity for growth? What patterns do you notice?

SECTION 04

DIPLOMACY & TACT IN PRACTICE

Competencies grow through deliberate practice. Work through the activities below in order, or choose the ones most relevant to your context.

ACTIVITY 01 45 min

Learning From Others

Understanding comes from talking with people whose experience differs from yours, for genuinely different reasons. Plan on four conversations.

TRY IT

1. Name four people with backgrounds or experiences different from yours, each chosen for a different reason.
2. Make an appointment with each to learn about their experiences.
3. After each conversation, write down three things you learned.

ACTIVITY 02 45 min

Find a Role Model

Diplomacy is easier to learn from someone who lives it.

TRY IT

1. Identify someone in your organization or personal life who exemplifies diplomacy and tact.
2. Talk with them about their life experiences, outlook, and behaviors.
3. Ask whether they practice it consciously or it comes naturally, and what you can borrow.

ACTIVITY 03 30 min

Ask for Tact Feedback

How you’re received is information only other people have.

TRY IT

1. Ask two or three colleagues for specific feedback on how you could be more tactful.
2. Ask about both your words and your manner: how you come across, not just what you say.
3. Choose one piece of feedback and practice it for a month.

ACTIVITY 04 10 min

Read the Room

Gestures and manner often tell you more than words do. Practice daily for a week.

TRY IT

1. In your next several conversations, watch deliberately for verbal and non-verbal cues.
2. Note what the cues suggest the person is actually feeling.
3. Adjust how you’re communicating in the moment based on what you observe.

ACTIVITY 05 20 min

Move Criticism Out of Public

Never give personal criticism in any public forum.

TRY IT

1. Review recent instances where you gave feedback in a group setting.
2. For any that were personal, plan how you’d handle it one-to-one instead.

3. Make a standing rule: critical feedback happens in a private meeting.

ACTIVITY 06 30 min

Map the Politics

Understanding the personalities and politics around you lets you use that knowledge constructively.

TRY IT

1. Write down the key personalities and political dynamics currently at play in your workplace.
2. Identify where your needs and goals could be balanced with others' to mutual benefit.
3. Build one mutually beneficial relationship across a level of your organization.

SECTION 05

COMMON DIPLOMACY & TACT TRAPS

As you practice, watch for these common pitfalls. Naming them now makes them easier to catch in the moment.

01 **Letting category predetermine your judgment**

Identifying people in terms of class or group, then reacting accordingly, produces decisions with no supporting evidence behind them.

02 **Confusing coercion with influence**

Forcing people to do what you want, often against their will, isn't influence. It does not work, and it costs you the relationship.

03 **Public criticism**

Personal criticism in any public forum damages the person and your own standing. Reserve feedback for a private conversation.

04 **Treating disagreement as deficiency**

There is always more than one way to look at a situation. Someone disagreeing with you doesn't make them less intelligent, less able, or less right.

REFLECT

Which trap feels most familiar? How will you stay aware of it as you practice?

SECTION 06

YOUR 90-DAY PRACTICE

Lasting change comes from a few focused habits, practiced consistently and tracked honestly. Build your plan below, on your own or with your coach.

CHOOSE YOUR THREE HABITS

Based on everything above, which three habits will make the biggest difference in growing your Diplomacy & Tact over the next 90 days?

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

BUILD IN WEEKLY ACCOUNTABILITY

Write questions you can answer each week to measure progress and surface obstacles. The best ones are answered with “yes,” “no,” or a number.

Q1 _____

Q2 _____

Q3 _____

Accountability partner: who will you share these with?

_____

Completion date: when will you evaluate & celebrate?

_____

Measurements of success

How will you celebrate?

SECTION 07

GO DEEPER

Keep building your Diplomacy & Tact with these resources. Explore them, then capture what stands out to you.

BOOK

The Complete Leader, Ch. 3.5: Diplomacy & Tact

The full framework and examples behind diplomacy and tact.

PODCAST

The Complete Leader Podcast

Episode 70 explores diplomacy and tact in practice.

ONLINE

Diplomacy & Tact competency library

Videos, articles, and podcasts at TheCompleteLeader.org.

> CAPTURE YOUR INSIGHTS
>
> *As you work through these resources, which ideas most apply to your own growth in Diplomacy & Tact?*

KEEP GOING

YOU'VE GOT THIS

Developing Diplomacy & Tact is an investment in yourself and everyone you lead. Return to this guide often: revisit the activities, reread the traps, and celebrate small wins along the way.

Every complete leader started exactly where you are now.