

**LEVEL 2: INTERPERSONAL**

# ALIGN YOUR PARTNERSHIPS CO-OP MODE

## Turn Individual Preferences into Shared Agreements

NAME	NAME	DATE
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You've identified how you work best. Now it's time to compare notes with someone you collaborate with regularly: a colleague, manager, direct report, or project partner.

This tool guides a structured conversation between two people about working styles. You'll discuss the same four dimensions from the Align Your Needs tool (Processing Style, Decision Speed, Execution Approach, and Context Preference), explore where your styles align or differ, and create explicit agreements about how you'll work together.

The goal isn't to eliminate differences. It's to make them visible so you can navigate them intentionally rather than letting them create friction.

### BEFORE YOU START

Ideally, both people complete the Align Yourself tool before this conversation. That self-reflection helps you articulate your preferences clearly and come prepared to discuss them.

If completing Align Yourself isn't feasible, you can still have this conversation. You'll reflect on each dimension together during the discussion itself. It just takes a bit longer.

## HOW TO USE THIS TOOL

### Logistics

- ◆ **Time:** Plan 60-90 minutes for your first conversation.
- ◆ **Space:** Choose a setting where you can talk openly without interruptions.
- ◆ **Mindset:** Approach this with curiosity, not judgment. You're trying to understand each other, not change each other.

### Ground Rules

Before starting, agree on these principles (add any others you need to have a safe and productive conversation):

- ◆ **Assume good intent.** Different working styles aren't personal attacks.
- ◆ **Speak for yourself.** Share your own preferences, not assumptions about the other person.
- ◆ **Honor difference.** Alignment is useful, but difference brings value too.
- ◆ **Commit to agreements.** Once you establish working agreements, both people follow them or raise concerns openly.

### How this Conversation Works

For each dimension, you'll:

1. **Share your preferences.** Each person describes where they fall on the spectrum and what they need.
2. **Explore the gap.** Discuss where your styles align, where they differ, and what that means for working together.
3. **Bridge the difference.** Create explicit agreements about how you'll navigate your different styles.

Take notes as you go. At the end, you'll document your working agreements so you can reference them later.

## 01

## DIMENSION 1

## PROCESSING STYLE


## SOLO MODE vs PARTY CHAT

WHERE YOUR THINKING HAPPENS

Some people think by talking. Ideas form and clarify as they speak them out loud. Others think internally first, needing quiet space to process before they're ready to share.

### Share Your Preferences (5 minutes)

#### Each person shares:

- ◆ Where you fall on the spectrum: **Internal Processor**  **External Processor**
- ◆ What you need from others when working through something complex?
- ◆ What happens when you don't get what you need (frustration, disengagement, slower thinking)?

#### Prompts to Guide the Conversation

- ◆ "When I'm working through a problem, I need..."
- ◆ "In meetings, I contribute best when..."
- ◆ "I feel most comfortable sharing ideas when..."

### Explore the Gap (5 minutes)

#### Prompts to Guide the Conversation

- ◆ Where do your processing styles align? Where do they differ?
- ◆ How might your different processing styles create misunderstanding if you don't name them?
- ◆ What value does each style bring to your partnership?

If your styles conflict significantly, consider: Is this a true need for each of you, or a strong preference that can flex in certain situations? Understanding this distinction helps you create agreements that honor what's essential while allowing flexibility where possible.

## 01

## DIMENSION 1

## PROCESSING STYLE

## SOLO MODE vs PARTY CHAT

WHERE YOUR THINKING HAPPENS

Now create explicit agreements about how you will honor both processing styles. Be as specific as possible, and really evaluate if these are commitments you can make to one another.

**Bridge the Gap (10 minutes)****Examples:**

- ◆ "Before discussing complex decisions, we'll share context 24 hours in advance so the internal processor can prepare."
- ◆ "In meetings, the external processor will signal when they're thinking out loud versus making a proposal."
- ◆ "We'll build in 2-3 minutes of silence during discussions so the internal processor can form thoughts."

**YOUR WORKING AGREEMENT**

## 02

## DIMENSION 2

## DECISION SPEED

## SCOUT AHEAD vs RUSH IN

HOW QUICKLY YOU COMMIT

Some people are comfortable making decisions with incomplete information. They trust they can adjust course as they learn. Others prefer to gather more data before committing, thinking through potential problems before moving forward.

### Share Your Preferences (5 minutes)

#### Each person shares:

- ◆ Where you fall on the spectrum: **Cautious/Data-Seeking** ↔ **Action-Oriented/Fast**
- ◆ What helps you feel confident enough to commit to a decision?
- ◆ What stresses you out more: moving too slowly or moving too quickly?

#### Prompts to Guide the Conversation

- ◆ "I'm comfortable making a decision when..."
- ◆ "I feel rushed when..."
- ◆ "I feel stuck when..."

### Explore the Gap (5 minutes)

#### Prompts to Guide the Conversation

- ◆ Where do your decision-making speeds align? Where do they differ?
- ◆ How might your different thresholds for "enough information" create tension?
- ◆ What blind spots does each style help the other avoid?

When your decision speeds conflict, explore whether either is actually a strong preference that can adapt in certain contexts. If both are true needs, discuss how to create conditions where each person gets what they need at different times, rather than expecting constant compromise.

## 02

## DIMENSION 2

## DECISION SPEED

## SCOUT AHEAD vs RUSH IN

HOW QUICKLY YOU COMMIT

Now create explicit agreements about how you will balance speed and thoroughness. Be as specific as possible, and really evaluate if these are commitments you can make to one another.

**Bridge the Gap (10 minutes)****Examples:**

- ◆ "For major decisions, we'll set a clear deadline for gathering input so both people know when we'll commit."
- ◆ "We'll distinguish between reversible decisions (move fast) and irreversible ones (gather more data)."
- ◆ "When the cautious thinker asks for more time, they'll specify what information they need and when they'll be ready."

**YOUR WORKING AGREEMENT**

## 03

## DIMENSION 3


## EXECUTION APPROACH

## EARLY ACCESS vs FULL LAUNCH

WHEN YOU POLISH YOUR WORK

Some people optimize for momentum. They value iteration, shipping quickly, and refining as they go. Others optimize for thoroughness. They want to get it right the first time, even if it takes longer.

**Share Your Preferences (5 minutes)****Each person shares:**

- ◆ Where you fall on the spectrum: **Refine then Execute**  **Execute then Refine**
- ◆ What "ready to ship" means to you?
- ◆ How you feel when the pace is faster or slower than you'd naturally choose?

**Prompts to Guide the Conversation**

- ◆ "I know something is ready when..."
- ◆ "I feel uncomfortable shipping work that..."
- ◆ "I get frustrated when..."

**Explore the Gap (5 minutes)****Prompts to Guide the Conversation**

- ◆ Where do your execution approaches align? Where do they differ?
- ◆ How might your different definitions of "ready" create friction?
- ◆ What does each approach protect against?

If your approaches to quality and iteration conflict, consider whether these are needs or preferences. Some people genuinely need more refinement time to maintain standards; others can adapt their threshold based on the stakes of the work. Understanding this helps you create agreements that honor what's essential.

## 03

## DIMENSION 3

## EXECUTION APPROACH

## EARLY ACCESS vs FULL LAUNCH

WHEN YOU POLISH YOUR WORK

Now create explicit agreements about how you'll honor different approaches to quality. Be as specific as possible, and really evaluate if these are commitments you can make to one another.

**Bridge the Gap (10 minutes)****Examples:**

- ◆ "For player/client-facing work, we'll agree on quality standards upfront. For internal prototypes, we'll default to shipping fast."
- ◆ "We'll explicitly label work as 'draft for feedback' or 'ready for release' so both people know the expected level of polish."
- ◆ "When one person feels uncomfortable with the pace, they'll name what specific quality concern needs addressing."

**YOUR WORKING AGREEMENT**

## 04

## DIMENSION 4

## CONTEXT PREFERENCE

## FULL LORE vs QUEST OBJECTIVE

HOW MUCH CONTEXT YOU NEED

Some people need the full picture before they can act. They want to understand background, history, and how pieces connect. Others want the headline first. Give them the bottom line, and they'll ask for details if they need them.

**Share Your Preferences (5 minutes)****Each person shares:**

- ◆ Where you fall on the spectrum: **Bottom Line First** ↔ **Context and Background First**
- ◆ What helps you understand something new most effectively?
- ◆ What happens when you get too much or too little context?

**Prompts to Guide the Conversation**

- ◆ "When you bring me information, I need you to..."
- ◆ "I feel lost when..."
- ◆ "I feel overwhelmed when..."

**Explore the Gap (5 minutes)****Prompts to Guide the Conversation**

- ◆ Where do your context preferences align? Where do they differ?
- ◆ How might your different information needs create misunderstanding?
- ◆ What does each style help you see that the other might miss?

When context preferences conflict, explore whether the need for context (or brevity) is consistent across all situations or varies by stakes, complexity, or familiarity. This helps you create agreements that adapt to different types of information rather than applying one rule everywhere.

Now create explicit agreements about how you'll share information effectively. Be as specific as possible, and really evaluate if these are commitments you can make to one another.

### Bridge the Gap (10 minutes)

#### Examples:

- ◆ "In emails, we'll lead with a one-sentence summary, then provide background. That way the bottom-line thinker can stop reading if they have what they need."
- ◆ "When starting a conversation, we'll name whether this is a 'quick update' or 'full context discussion' so both people know what to expect."
- ◆ "The context-seeker will ask clarifying questions rather than assuming the bottom-line thinker is withholding information."

#### YOUR WORKING AGREEMENT



CLOSING

**SAVE POINT**

MAKE IT ACTIONABLE

**Document Your Partnership Agreements:**

You've discussed four dimensions and created working agreements for each one. Write them down somewhere both people can access easily:

- ◆ A shared document or note
- ◆ Your team's collaboration tool
- ◆ Meeting notes you both reference

**Set a Check-in:**

Plan to revisit these agreements in 4-6 weeks. Ask:

- ◆ Are our agreements actually working?
- ◆ What's improved since we established them?
- ◆ What needs adjustment as our work together evolves?

Working agreements aren't permanent. They should adapt as your partnership does.

**You've completed Align Your Partnerships. Use these agreements to reduce friction, communicate more clearly, and work more effectively together.**

**WANT TO GO DEEPER WITH YOUR TEAM?**

This is one of Mattering Lab's Free DLC tools. Book a discovery call at [calendly.com/matteringlab](https://calendly.com/matteringlab).