

**Segment:** Problem Solving Styles

**Lesson Title:** Lesson 1: Conflict Escalator

**Grade Band:** 6-12

**Approximate Time to Complete:** 30 minutes plus 15 minute extension

**Objectives:** Students will be able to outline the progression of conflict.

**Materials/Set up:**

- Conflict Escalator Worksheet (5 copies per student)  
*Another option would be to have students to draw an escalator on five blank pieces of paper*
- Conflict Escalator: The Gulf Conflict (Educator Resource)
- Conflict Escalator Stories (Educator Resource)
- Conflict Escalator to display for the entire class (using a computer projection or as a drawing on a board).

**Resource:**

- Online Video Clip - [James Baker: The Man Who Made Washington Work: The Coalition Builder](#) (Watch 0:00-3:19)

## Overview

This exercise is designed to help students recognize that the incident described as the “conflict” is often the result of a longer exchange. At several points in the exchange there may have been opportunities for intervention or an alternate outcome. Students are asked to outline the progression of a conflict and identify points where an intervention or change is possible. This exercise includes a class discussion and group work.

## Instructional Plan

1. Introduce the term “escalate”, relating it to an escalator. Explain that when a conflict gets worse, or becomes more intense, it is said to “escalate”.
2. Draw the escalator on the board or project the Conflict Escalator for the entire class.
3. Read the first story on the Conflict Escalator Stories Worksheet aloud once. Then read it a second time and ask the class to signal you each time the conflict goes up

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another step on the escalator. Write the part of story on the step. Continue until you have reached the top of the escalator.

4. Review each step of the escalator and ask the class, "What do you think each person was feeling at this step on the escalator?" Write the responses under the escalator step (use a different color if necessary). There may be more than one feeling.
5. Return to the first conflict escalator story. At each step ask the class what options exist at this step to de-escalate the situation? Write the responses next to the escalator step (use a different color if necessary). There may be more than one option.
6. Distribute a Conflict Escalator Worksheet to each student.
7. Tell the students that they are going to hear another conflict story similar to the one that was analyzed as a class. As they listen to the story they should individually chart the escalation of the conflict on the steps of the conflict escalator.
  - a) After reading and charting the conflict escalation, tell the students to write the feelings associated with each step.
  - b) Review the steps in the conflict and the feelings as a class.
8. Distribute another blank Conflict Escalator to each student.
9. Tell the students that they are going to watch a three minute video describing the events leading up to the United States' military action in Kuwait in January 1991 and chart the various steps of the conflict on the Conflict Escalator.
10. Online Video Clip - [James Baker: The Man Who Made Washington Work: The Coalition Builder](#) (Watch 0:00-3:19). In this segment Baker must put together a coalition of different countries to try to persuade Iraq to withdraw its troops from Kuwait. First Baker must convince Russia to condemn Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, even though Russia and Iraq have always been friendly in the past. Later, Baker had to persuade the United Nations to agree to military action to remove Iraqi troops from Kuwait. Finally, Baker tries to convince Iraq to withdraw its troops voluntarily, but fails.
11. Review the Conflict Escalator as a class. (See the educator resource, Conflict Escalator: The Gulf Conflict)

## Extending the Lesson (15 minutes)

1. Distribute another Conflict Escalator Stories Worksheet.
2. Repeat the exercise as a class, individually, or in small groups, or as homework with the remaining conflict scenarios.

## **Conflict Escalator Stories**

### **Conflict Escalator Story 1**

#### **A Hat Full of Trouble**

Tyrone wanted a new baseball cap, but couldn't get one. Shanda came to school wearing a new Orioles hat (insert favorite team here) and Tyrone told her that it looked stupid. Shanda said, "Not as stupid as that old one you wear." Tyrone grabbed Shanda's cap and put it on his head. Shanda tried to grab it back, and it fell on the floor. Tyrone stepped on it to keep Shanda from picking it up and left a big footprint on the cap. Shanda was furious. "You jerk! You're going to buy me a new cap!" she yelled. Then she grabbed Tyrone's shirt. When he tried to get away from her, his shirt ripped. "You're going to buy me a new shirt," he yelled.

### **Conflict Escalator Story 2**

#### **Pencil Pushing Problems**

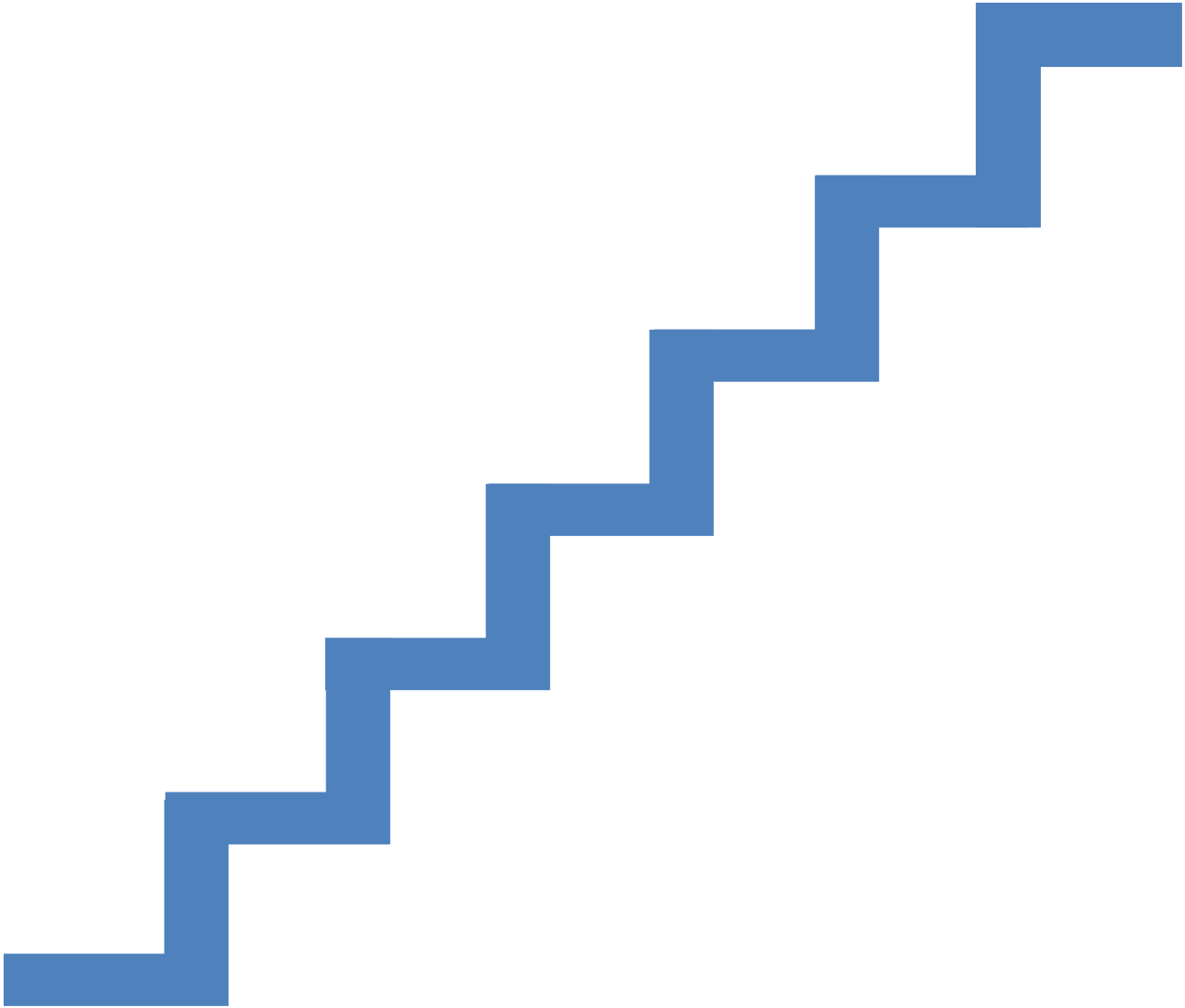
Jermaine and Janet sat at the same desk in science class. Jermaine asked Janet if he could borrow a pencil. Janet was trying to hear the teacher so she said, "Will you shut up!" This made Jermaine mad, so he pushed Janet's arm away. Janet pushed Jermaine back. Jermaine pushed Janet's books onto the floor. The teacher said, "What's going on over there?" Jermaine and Janet pointed to each other and said at the same time, "He/She started it!"

### **Conflict Escalator Story 3**

#### **Brother Bothers Brother**

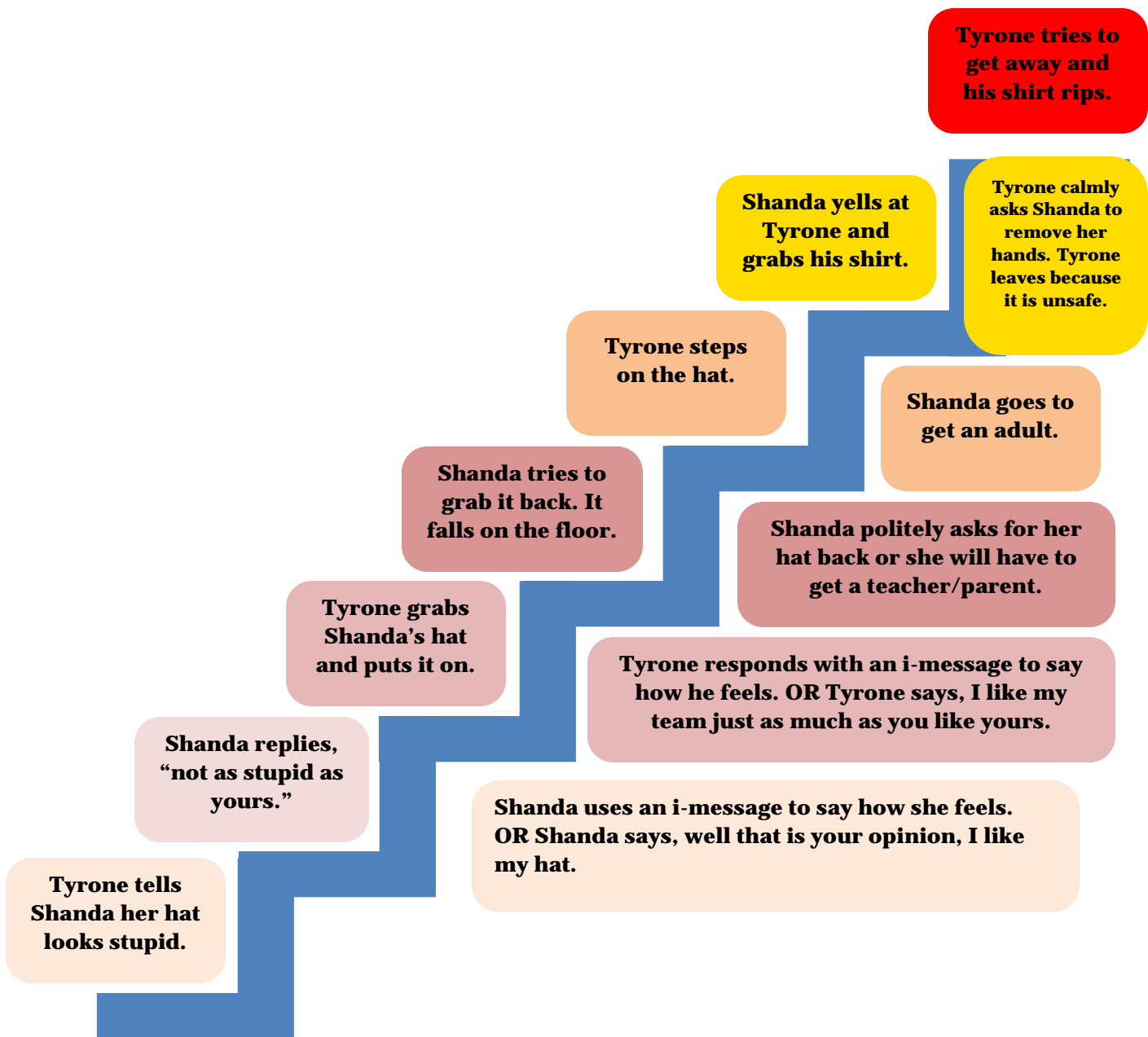
Russell's younger brother Curtis (11) borrowed Russell's (15) bike without asking. Russell was so angry that he took Curtis' favorite model airplane and hid it. Curtis went into his room and saw that the plane was gone and got back at Russell for ripping a poster off Russell's wall. Russell threw the model airplane into the trash. Curtis took his water bottle and threw water in Russell's face. Now they are rolling on the kitchen floor fighting.

# Conflict Escalator

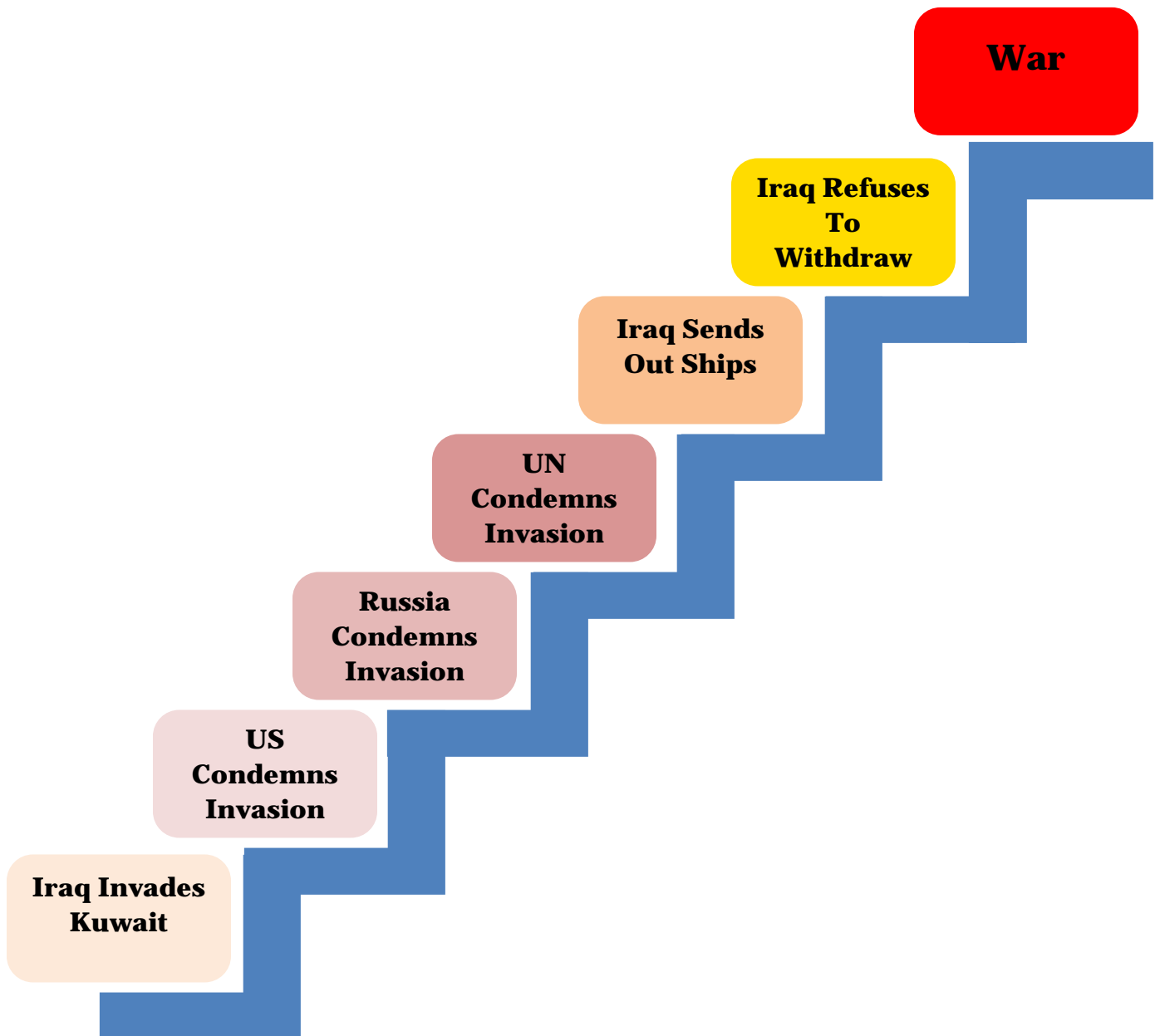


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## Conflict Escalator/De-escalator: Scenario #1- Educator Resource



## Conflict Escalator: The Gulf Conflict- Educator Resource



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