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# Making a Difference by Being Yourself: Using Your Personality Type at Work and in Relationships

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# Describing Your Personality Type

## Adapted for learning purposes

### Describing Your Personality Type

The next step toward being able to use the strengths of your natural self is to learn how to describe yourself in a more systematic way. Swiss psychologist Carl Jung (1971) developed a framework for understanding personality types in the 1920s, and Isabel Briggs Myers and her mother, Katharine Cook Briggs, later helped refine that framework and developed the *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator*<sup>®</sup> (MBTI<sup>®</sup>) instrument. The framework is based on the following assumptions: you can use your left hand when needed—it just won't seem as natural or comfortable for you.

- An individual's personality type is determined by his or her preferences in four pairs of opposites, known as preference pairs.
- Neither side of a preference pair is better than the other; in fact, they complement each other.
- People have a natural or more accessible preference for one side of a preference pair over the other, but we all use both to some degree. Just as you may be naturally right-handed, you can use your left hand when needed—it just won't seem as natural or comfortable for you.
- The key to a well-developed personality is capitalizing on your preferences while accepting—even celebrating—others who show opposite preferences, instead of trying to be all things to all people or insisting that everyone share your preferences.

The eight preferences are highlighted in table 3.1.

Table 3.1: The Eight Preferences of the MBTI<sup>®</sup> Instrument

<b>E</b> EXTRAVERSION Tend to direct energy toward and receive energy from the external world of people, activities, and things	<b>I</b> INTROVERSION Tend to direct energy toward and receive energy from the internal world of ideas and experiences
<b>S</b> SENSING Tend to first perceive immediate, tangible facts through the five senses	<b>N</b> INTUITION Tend to first perceive possibilities, patterns, and relationships through insight
<b>T</b> THINKING Tend to make decisions based on logical analysis with a focus on objectivity and detachment	<b>F</b> FEELING Tend to make decisions based on personal or social values with a focus on understanding and harmony
<b>J</b> JUDGING Tend to live in a decisive, orderly, planned way and strive for closure in the external world	<b>P</b> PERCEIVING Tend to live in a flexible, spontaneous way and strive to stay open to new information in the external world

Source: Adapted from Isabel Briggs Myers, Mary McCaulley, Naomi L. Quenk, and Allen H. Hammer, *MBTI<sup>®</sup> Manual*, 3rd ed. (Mountain View, CA: CPP, Inc., 2003), 6. Copyright 1998, 2003 by Peter B. Myers and Katharine D. Myers. Used with permission.

Both sides of each preference pair contribute to situations at work and in relationships. Although personality type is more a matter of natural tendencies—not of abilities or even specific behavior—you will be better equipped to make a difference if you capitalize on the strengths of your natural tendencies. Knowing your natural tendencies gives you an edge in planning how to make a difference.

The first preference pair of the Jung/Myers-Briggs® framework, Extraversion–Introversion (E–I), focuses on where you direct as well as receive energy. People with a preference for Extraversion (E) are more externally oriented, directing their energy toward and receiving energy from the external world of people and things. People with a preference for Introversion (I) are more internally oriented, directing their energy toward and receiving energy from the internal world of ideas and experiences.

The second preference pair, Sensing–Intuition, describes how you naturally take in information about what is going on in the world around you. People with a preference for Sensing (S) tend to rely on their five senses to focus on the facts, details, and realities of their present situation. People with a preference for Intuition (N) tend to look at the world and immediately see possibilities and the connections between facts and details and what implications these may have for the future.

The third preference pair, Thinking–Feeling (T–F), looks at how you tend to make decisions. Those with a preference for Thinking (T) tend to rely on logic. They prefer to view the world objectively and naturally apply the principles of cause and effect to make their decisions. Those with a preference for Feeling (F) tend to be clear about their values and beliefs and want to make decisions consistent with those values and beliefs. They tend to be naturally agreeable unless their values are threatened.

Myers and Briggs added a fourth crucial preference pair, Judging–Perceiving (J–P), which describes how you tend to deal with the outside world. People with a preference for Judging (J) tend to make plans and seek closure, while people with a preference for Perceiving (P) tend to want to be more flexible and spontaneous and to keep their options open.

Altogether, the four preference pairs, comprising eight preferences, create sixteen possible four-letter type combinations, as outlined in [table 2](#), on pages 28–29. For more detailed information on the sixteen types, the interested reader might want to start with the booklet *Introduction to Type*® by Isabel Briggs Myers (1998).

Table 3.2: Characteristics Frequently Associated with the Sixteen Types

<p><b>ISTJ</b> Quiet, serious, earn success by thoroughness and dependability. Practical, matter-of-fact, realistic, and responsible. Decide logically what should be done and work toward it steadily, regardless of distractions. Take pleasure in making everything orderly and organized—their work, their home, their life. Value traditions and loyalty.</p>	<p><b>ISFJ</b> Quiet, friendly, responsible, and conscientious. Committed and steady in meeting their obligations. Thorough, painstaking, and accurate. Loyal, considerate, notice and remember specifics about people who are important to them, concerned with how others feel. Strive to create an orderly and harmonious environment at work and at home.</p>
<p><b>ISTP</b> Tolerant and flexible, quiet observers until a problem appears, then act quickly to find workable solutions. Analyze what makes things work and readily get through large amounts of data to isolate the core of practical problems. Interested in cause and effect, organize facts using logical principles, value efficiency.</p>	<p><b>ISFP</b> Quiet, friendly, sensitive, and kind. Enjoy the present moment, what's going on around them. Like to have their own space and to work within their own time frame. Loyal and committed to their values and to people who are important to them. Dislike disagreements and conflicts, do not force their opinions or values on others.</p>
<p><b>ESTP</b> Flexible and tolerant, they take a pragmatic approach focused on immediate results. Theories and conceptual explanations bore them—they want to act energetically to solve the problem. Focus on the here and now, spontaneous, enjoy each moment that they can</p>	<p><b>ESFP</b> Outgoing, friendly, and accepting. Exuberant lovers of life, people, and material comforts. Enjoy working with others to make things happen. Bring common sense and a realistic approach to their work, and make work fun. Flexible and spontaneous, adapt readily to new people and</p>

be active with others. Enjoy material comforts and style. Learn best through doing.	environments. Learn best by trying a new skill with other people.
<b>ESTJ</b> Practical, realistic, matter-of-fact. Decisive, quickly move to implement decisions. Organize projects and people to get things done, focus on getting results in the most efficient way. Take care of routine details. Have clear set of logical standards, systematically follow them and want others to do so. Forceful in implementing their plans.	<b>ESFJ</b> Warmhearted, conscientious, cooperative. Want harmony and work in determination to establish it. Like to work with others to finish tasks on time and accurately. Loyal, follow through in small matters. Notice what others need in their day-to-day lives and try to provide it. Want to be appreciated for who they are and for what they contribute.
<b>INFJ</b> Seek meaning and connection in ideas, relationships, and material possessions. Want to understand what motivates people and are insightful about others. Conscientious and committed to their firm values. Develop a clear vision about how best to serve the common good. Organized and decisive in implementing their vision.	<b>INTJ</b> Have original minds and great drive for implementing their ideas and achieving their goals. Quickly see patterns in external events and develop long-range explanatory perspectives. When committed, organize a job and carry it through. Skeptical and independent, have high standards of competence and performance—for themselves and others.
<b>INFP</b> Idealistic, loyal to their values and to people who are important to them. Want an external life that is congruent with their values. Curious, quick to see possibilities, can be catalysts for implementing ideas. Seek to understand people and to help them fulfill their potential. Adaptable, flexible, and accepting unless a value is threatened.	<b>INTP</b> Seek to develop logical explanations for everything that interests them. Theoretical and abstract, interested more in ideas than in social interaction. Quiet, contained, flexible, and adaptable. Have unusual ability to focus in depth to solve problems in their area of interest. Skeptical, sometimes critical, always analytical.
<b>ENFP</b> Warmly enthusiastic and imaginative. See life as full of possibilities. Make connections between events and information very quickly, and confidently proceed based on the patterns they see. Want a lot of affirmation from others, and readily give appreciation and support. Spontaneous and flexible, often rely on their ability to improvise and their verbal fluency.	<b>ENTP</b> Quick, ingenious, stimulating, alert, and outspoken. Resourceful in solving new and challenging problems. Adept at generating conceptual possibilities and then analyzing them strategically. Good at reading other people. Bored by routine, will seldom do the same thing the same way, apt to turn to one new interest after another.
<b>ENFJ</b> Warm, empathetic, responsive, and responsible. Highly attuned to others' emotions, needs, and motivations. Find potential in everyone, want to help others fulfill their potential. May act as catalysts for individual and group growth. Loyal, responsive to praise and criticism. Sociable, facilitate others in a group, and provide inspiring leadership.	<b>ENTJ</b> Frank, decisive, assume leadership readily. Quickly see illogical and inefficient procedures and policies, develop and implement systems to solve problems. Enjoy long-term planning and goal setting. Usually well informed, well read, enjoy expanding knowledge and sharing it. Forceful in presenting their ideas.

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